

Anglican
Schools
Australia



REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE JUNE 2017

PURPOSE OF THE NETWORK

Anglican Schools Australia (ASA) is a Network of General Synod to which all Australian Anglican schools are eligible members. ASA is a collegial body comprising a diverse range of schools – urban, regional and rural, low through to high fee, single sex and co-educational, independent and systemic, day tuition and boarding. Overall, there is a strong commitment to the socially disadvantaged through bursaries and scholarships, Indigenous education initiatives, community service and extension of the offering of each school's activities into local communities and parishes. Each Australian Anglican school has a School Council in place to ensure it is governed effectively at the local level, is fulfilling its Christian, academic and pastoral mission, is well managed financially and is meeting the needs of the school and wider community.

ASA is recognised by the General Synod of The Anglican Church of Australia under Part V of the *Strategic Issues, Task Forces and Other bodies Canon 19, 1998* as a Network. Our purpose is as follows:

The Network, giving honour to God, putting God first and working within God's will, seeks to:

- Provide a forum at National level for Anglican schools to facilitate discussion particularly on spiritual, moral and values related issues as they have a bearing on education.
- Be an effective network of General Synod of the Anglican Church.
- Achieve recognition of Anglican Schools as part of the mission of the Anglican Church.
- Engage with the Commonwealth Government, national Anglican agencies, other national education bodies and industry groups on matters which affect the Church's mission through Anglican schools.
- Be a forward-looking, dynamic organisation aiming to develop a strong unity of purpose among Anglican Schools.
- Report to General Synod on major matters discussed at the Network.

ANGLICAN SCHOOLS

There are over 160 Anglican schools located in 20 Dioceses across Australia. Our schools educate close to 160,000 pupils. Anglican schools are the third largest schooling sector in Australia, after government and Catholic schools.

MANAGEMENT

The work of the Network is managed throughout the year by an elected Management Committee. The Committee meets on five days each year, most of which are face-to-face, with additional meetings held by teleconference as required.

The 2016 Management Committee comprised:

President	Mr Jim Laussen
President Elect	Dr Mark Sly
Past President	Mrs Fiona Godfrey
Chief Executive Officer	The Reverend Peter Laurence OAM
State Representatives	
Canberra & Goulburn	Ms Heather Walsh
New South Wales	The Reverend Dr Nick Foord
Queensland	Ms Sherril Molloy
South Australia	Mr Chris Prance (resigned December 2016)
Tasmania	Mrs Judith Tudball
Victoria	Mrs Debbie Dunwoody
Western Australia	Mrs Lynne Thomson
Chaplain	The Reverend Andrew Mintern (resigned August 2016)
Chaplain	The Reverend Natasha Darke (from August 2016, resigned January 2017)
Chaplain	The Reverend Matthew Shorten (from August 2016)

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Achievements 2013-2016

In June 2016 ASA's Management Committee met with a strategic planning consultant for a one-day workshop to set the network's direction for the next four years. Deliberations began with a discussion of ASA's major achievements during the 'life' of the organisation's first Strategic Plan, 2013-2016. Committee members identified six areas in which significant advances had been made: communication, chaplaincy, conferences, alliances, advocacy and financial independence.

Improved communication, especially the introduction of ASA NEWS - the network's quarterly e-Newsletter, and the launching of Facebook Pages for ASA and ASA Chaplains (a closed site) were seen as key developments marking the period. So too initiatives for supporting School Chaplains such as the development of online resources and support for theological studies together with the formation of a national Chaplains Consultative Committee and the inclusion of a second Chaplain on the Management Committee were highlighted.

It was also noted that the themes of national conferences are now more closely aligned to the intent of ASA's Strategic Plan.

The emphasis that has been placed on developing alliances with other school networks (locally, nationally and internationally), Anglican agencies and industry (travel agreements with Campus Travel, Virgin Australia and its partner airlines and Etihad Airways) was acknowledged.

Over the last three years the President and Executive Officer have held meetings with The Primate of the day (The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall and The Most Reverend Dr Philip Freier respectively); the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA); the Shadow Federal Minister for Education; and key advisors to the Federal Minister for Education. Meetings have also been held with various State Ministers for Education. These meetings have ensured that ASA is consulted by government and other key industry players when shaping policies which impact Anglican schooling. It is important that the 'Anglican Brand' of schooling is promoted and understood. In addition, Ms Sherril Molloy, Executive Director of the Anglican Schools Commission, Queensland and a member of ASA's Management Committee is a member of the Royal Commission Working Group established by the Anglican Church's Standing Committee in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Ms Molloy represents ASA's interests on this group. The Executive Officer meets regularly with his counterpart at Anglicare Australia as well as other key Anglican agencies.

In what is a major step forward for the network, ASA is now one-third of the way to becoming financially independent of the Anglican Schools Commission (Inc.) (WA), which is a significant achievement. An annual increase in membership subscriptions since 2015 has made this possible. The network hopes to achieve its goal of financial independence in 2020.

Strategic Plan 2020

Central to the strategic planning process ASA's Management Committee asked members to complete a detailed survey on ASA's priorities as well as possible future directions. 130 members responded which was a significant increase on the number of respondents to the survey released prior to the drafting of the inaugural strategic plan (2013). Management Committee used the data to inform its thinking and discussion during the planning session in June, resulting in the identification of seven key priorities upon which ASA will focus during the next four years. These priorities are:

- Creating opportunities for collaboration and mutual support, including connecting members between ASA conferences.
- Enhancing support for School Chaplains, recognising that ASA is one of their major collegiate networks.
- Stimulating discussion and sharing of knowledge on key issues and opportunities impacting Anglican schools.
- Undertaking collegial research and development projects which build the capacity of Anglican schools as contemporary Christian communities.
- Strengthening advocacy for Anglican schools with a particular focus on Government and the Church.
- Building social justice partnerships with Anglican agencies and extending the network to embrace New Zealand Anglican schools.
- Being open to new ways to support the work of Anglican schools as faith-inspired communities of learning.

ASA's Strategic Plan 2020 will be delivered through three Core Activities, all contributing to the Christian life of Anglican schools:

- Collegiality and Collaboration
- Research and Development Initiatives
- Advocacy and Alliances

In one exciting development a Religious Studies teacher has been employed by the Anglican Schools Commission in Western Australia to work with ASA in 2017 to develop more online units for teachers.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

- Develop induction packs for new Principals and Chaplains
- Foster partnerships with other Anglican school entities in New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore
- Promote Anglican schooling as a national brand
- Research and publish stories about alumni of Anglican schools who went on to become School Chaplains or who took up particular ministries
- Develop online units of work for use by Religious Studies teachers
- Refocus attention on Chaplaincy Shadowing
- Promote the adoption of Reconciliation Action Plans
- Recognise outstanding service, contribution and commitment to ASA through the awarding of Life Memberships and Long Service/Distinguished Service awards.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

ASA's National Conference continues to be the network's key annual event. Held in August in a different state each year, the Conference provides the opportunity for over 250 governors, principals, chaplains and senior staff to meet and discuss issues of common interest.

Keynote speakers in Adelaide (2016) challenged delegates to think about Anglican schools as communities of hope. The theme – Rivers in the Desert: Anglican Schools as Communities of Hope' was taken from Isaiah 43:19 'I am about to do a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.'

Professor Erica McWilliam, Adjunct Professor, Creative Industries at Queensland University of Technology encouraged conference participants to encourage students to adopt a "not yet" rather than a "can't do" attitude, emphasising that "staying in 'the grey' of not yet" is not comfortable". She also challenged delegates to help learners discover "the pleasure of the rigour of high-challenge learning". Since good teachers look for good questions she urged teachers to encourage their students to ask "better questions".

The Reverend Dr Denis Edwards, Professorial Fellow, Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University in Adelaide presented a paper on Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical about the environment, *Laudato si*. He presented a "Theology of Hope based on a holistic understanding of creation". He challenged delegates to what the Conference Prophet, Bishop Garry Weatherill called "ecological conversion".

Australian of the Year, Lt General David Morrison AO, shared his experience of learning about gender discrimination in the military and its subsequent consequences. He challenged delegates to “find the one big challenge that only you can solve”. He defined culture as “The stories we tell ourselves about ourselves” and said Australia’s national culture “can always be better” as “too many people are denied opportunities on questionable grounds of gender, religion and sexuality”.

A number of other keynote speakers presented challenges to the conference.

Participants in a panel discussion on ‘Hope in Reconciliation’ agreed that progress has been made in relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but there is still “a way to go”. They regretted the level of ignorance that is prevalent and encouraged schools to have a Reconciliation Action Plan. Jack Egan, Senior Religious Education teacher at St Joseph’s College, Katherine, encouraged delegates “to build a scaffolding of understanding about Aboriginal matters and then go local”. The other panellists were Bishop Chris McLeod, Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Adelaide with special responsibility for Aboriginal people, and Nakoma-Sioux Wilson, an Adelaide university law student of Aboriginal descent.

Congratulations to Mr Chris Prance, Principal of St Peter’s Woodlands Grammar School, and the South Australian organising committee for bringing together such a challenging and diverse program of speakers coupled with an engaging social program. Our attention now turns to Brisbane in August this year, where we will focus on the theme of ‘Joy’.

CHAPLAINCY SHADOWING

ASA continues to play an important role in supporting and nurturing School Chaplains through the network’s Chaplaincy Shadowing Program.¹ In 2016, 12 Chaplains met for the Shadowing Workshop in Adelaide, prior to the ASA Conference. Four Chaplains participated in the program in 2016 and a further two have organised shadowing experiences in 2017.

ADVOCACY

ASA plays an important role in advocacy, engaging with the Commonwealth Government, national Anglican agencies, other national education bodies and industry groups on matters which affect the Church’s mission through Anglican schools. Reference has been made above to the various people and groups with whom we have met over the past year.

PRAYER DIARY

ASA provides an online Prayer Diary for schools to enable the members and others to pray for each other systematically throughout the year.

COMMUNICATION

After 3 years of working as our Communications Manager, Mrs Wendy Hillman retired in March. Wendy was instrumental in developing and implementing a much-improved communication strategy for our Network. Of particular note, Wendy created and edited ASA News, our national publication which is sent to member schools 3 or 4 times a year. Wendy’s exceptional communication skills and enthusiastic approach to all she does will be missed.

A new position of Communication and Community Relations Manager has been created, funded jointly by the Anglican Schools Commission (ASC) in Western Australia and ASA. At the time of writing, interviews were being conducted for this position.

NATIONAL OFFICE

The ASA office is located at the ASC in Perth.

The work of ASA is carried out by the Management Committee, who are assisted by the staff at the ASC under the direction of The Reverend Peter Laurence OAM, who is also the ASC CEO. The Network is supported by levies from each member school. The ASC continues to underwrite many of the costs associated with running the national Network, for which we are most grateful.

Mr Jim Laussen
PRESIDENT

¹ The purpose of Chaplaincy Shadowing is to provide an opportunity for Chaplains to share with each other, become refreshed/re-energised and refocused, to get new ideas and to develop a spiritual mentor/buddy with whom to ‘share the journey’. Two Chaplains, generally from different dioceses, are paired for a period of one to three years, spending one week a year in each other’s schools.