

President's Report
Australian Anglican Schools Network,
11th Annual Conference 2002
General Meeting, St Mary's Karrinyup, WA.

1. Introduction:

At the 10th annual conference of the Australian Anglican Schools Network, held at Brighton Grammar School in Victoria in July 2001, the Vision Statement of the Network was adopted unanimously. At the heart of this Vision is to provide a network that will facilitate discussion on spiritual, moral and values issues that have a bearing on education in our Anglican schools. The primary vehicle to meet this objective is our annual national conference, and it is therefore a great honour to present this report at our 11th conference of the Network.

Furthermore, the Network has the obligation to be an effective servant of the General Synod and to be a forward-looking and dynamic organisation. The challenge of meeting these goals remains considerable, and to some extent impossible under the present constraints. This report will provide a summary of the activities of the Network since our Brighton meeting in July 2001, and will offer a number of issues pertaining to our Statement of Agreed Principles (1999) for consideration.

2. The Management Committee:

The past twelve months has been a period of further consolidation of the Australian Anglican Schools Network. Our Statement of Agreed Principles provides for a Management Committee nominated by the various Anglican Provinces and the Diocese of Tasmania and appointed by the relevant Diocesan for all positions, other than that of President and President Elect.

The Management Committee charged with the task of meeting the objectives set down at our last General Meeting in Brighton has comprised:

President: Phillip Heath, Head of School, St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney

President Elect: Tony Horsley Principal, Gippsland Grammar School, Victoria

NSW Representative: Colin May, Principal, Arden School, NSW

Victorian Representative: Michael Urwin Headmaster, Brighton Grammar School, Victoria

South Australian Representative: Michael Hewitson (until August 2002);

from September, Stephen Matthew, Principal, St John's Grammar School, Belair SA

Western Australian Representative: Barbara Godwin (until June 2002);

from July, Lynne Thomson, Principal, St Mary's School, Karrinyup, WA

Queensland Representative: Gilbert Case, Executive Director, Brisbane Anglican Schools Office

Tasmanian Representative: Bruce Fairfax, Head of Campus, Launceston Church Grammar School

6. Acknowledgements:

It is important to acknowledge the wonderful work of Mr Christopher Ellis and Mr Andrew Luckhurst-Smith, both from South Australia. Christopher Ellis retired from Pedare Christian School at the end of 2001 and his remarkable contribution to Australian education drew to a close at that time. He was a vigorous part of the original group of individuals who formed the forerunner to the AASN (the National Anglican Schools' Consultative Committee) and was the first Executive Officer of the Network, born under this name in 1999. His dedication to the great cause of Anglican schools in Australia is inspirational and the Network stands so well advanced today due in no small manner to his wonderful contribution for more than a decade.

Likewise, Andrew Luckhurst-Smith, accepted the position of foundation President of the Network. Importantly, Andrew brought to the post deep commitment coupled with an irreplaceable capacity to understand the intricacies of constitutional issues, deploying his legal expertise from his own professional life in this critical early period of the Network. He, too, is worthy of our recognition.

Mrs Barbara Godwin retired from her position as Principal of St Mark's Anglican Community School this year. Although her time on the Management Committee has not been long, she has been an active participant in the AASN and in its forerunner, the NASCC from its inception. She is rightly regarded as one of the leading Anglican lay leaders in Australia and the AASN will miss her greatly.

4. Activities of the Committee:

The Management Committee conducts meetings generally twice per term by means of teleconferences. A day meeting was held at St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney in February 2002. The Management Committee is guided by the vision statement of the AASN and each member seeks to promote the Network to the province from which that member comes. I am very grateful to all of the Management Committee team for their support and commitment over the past year. Though much is still to be done, much has been accomplished.

Gilbert Case took on the role of Executive Officer of the Network from Christopher Ellis, thus providing much-needed stability in the administration of our activities. The Network owes much gratitude to the Brisbane Anglican Schools Office, and in particular to Roseann Whyte, who has managed much of our secretarial tasks whilst still coping in a very busy Diocesan office. Gilbert has kindly represented the AASN at various national forums including briefings with the NCISA. In addition, Michael Urwin and Gilbert Case have attended meetings of the National Schools Forum of the Christian Churches held from time to time in Melbourne. The role of AASN delegates is generally to observe these meetings since our Statement of Agreed Principles precludes any comment being made on behalf of Anglican schools 'm Australia.

5. Constitution:

At the Brighton Conference, the Management Committee was encouraged to begin work on drafting a constitution for the AASN at a later time. The task of providing a constitution for the Network will not be an easy one. A short explanation is appropriate.

6. The AASN is the offspring of the National Anglican Schools Consultative Committee.
- ii. The NASCC met annually through the 1990s providing an important forum for Chaplains and Heads to consider their mission as Anglican schools.
- iii. Difficulties arose between established schools and the newer low-fee schools and the systems that supported them. These difficulties were generally related to matters pertaining to commonwealth funding provisions. The wide variety of Anglican schools in Australia reflects the diversity of the Anglican communion itself. The challenge for any national Anglican network would be to focus on those things that unite our schools and diminish those things that divide us.
- iv. The 1998 Conference in South Australia resolved a potential impasse by setting the Agreed Principles that were ultimately adopted in 1999 at All Saints Merrimac, and further elucidated at Canberra Grammar School in 2000.

Under the terms of our Vision Statement, the AASN shall be an effective network of the General Synod, to achieve the recognition of Anglican schools as an important part of the mission of the Anglican Church, and be a dynamic and forward-looking organisation. It is becoming clear that the Vision Statement and the Statement of Agreed Principles do not easily align.

The AASN, from time to time, is asked to support the General Synod office with advice about the present situation in Anglican schools across Australia. It is difficult to do this when the structure of membership of this network is relatively informal, and yet our Vision Statement obliges us to support the General Synod in its own thinking about the future role of Anglican schools in the Church's mission.

It is important to note that a network of the systems operating low-fee Anglican schools has been established and meets with officials from the Commonwealth from time to time to discuss funding and related policies. This body does not purport to represent all Anglican schools.

6. Website and Communications:

The principle task of the AASN is to hold annual conferences. Our annual conferences attract attention because of the high calibre of presentations and the important opportunity to meet others involved in Anglican schools across Australia. The 2002 Conference promises to enhance the strong reputation of AASN gatherings and the Network acknowledges the hard work of the Conference committee in Western Australia, led so well by Lynne Thomson. Our thanks is warmly extended to the students, staff and Council of St Mary's Anglican School, Karrinyup.

The best form of communication in a national network of this size and scope is our website. Our thanks go to Colin May from NSW for establishing the website to date. The management of the site will pass to the Brisbane Anglican Schools Office.

It has long been our intention to provide members with a regular newsletter both through the web site and in hard copy. Limited resources in time and in funds militate against these kinds of initiatives and the AASN will need seriously to consider its options in this respect. It may be the right time to formalise membership on a proper funded basis. To this end, the Management Committee shall propose an option for consideration during our Perth Conference.

The 12th Annual AASN Conference will be held at St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School, Brisbane from 1st to 3rd August 2003. The theme for this conference is to be:

"The Economics of Vision: Governing, Leading and Living the Values-Centred School".

Already a conference planning team has been working under the leadership of Mrs Vicki Waters, Principal of St Margaret's, with very promising results. The venue for the Conference even now is being built! Lest we flatter ourselves that we have reached such heights as to warrant a purpose built conference facility, St Margaret's expect that their new Arts Centre, which boasts panoramic views over the river and the city of Brisbane, will be completed by the time of our arrival and the School will kindly allow us to make use of this building.

Conclusion:

It has been a tremendous honour to be the President of the Network and I look forward to serving the AASN in 2003. We face many difficulties as we seek to prosper those things that bind our communities in faith. I pray that God will enrich our fellowship as we seek to serve Him through our daily work in Anglican schools.

May our schools enrich the nation, for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Phillip Heath
September 2002.