

Australian Anglican



Schools Network

## REPORT TO GENERAL SYNOD SEPTEMBER 2010

### PURPOSE

The Australian Anglican Schools Network (AASN) 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.

AASN 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 150 Anglican schools located in twenty Dioceses across Australia. Our schools educate almost 150,000 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 six times a year, of which three meetings are face-to-face and three are by teleconference.

The current Management Committee comprises:

President: The Reverend Peter Laurence

President-Elect: Mr Stephen Norris

Immediate Past President: Mrs Lynne Thomson

State Representatives

Queensland: The Reverend Paul Bland

New South Wales: Mr Tony Cummings

Victoria: Mr Stephen Higgs

Tasmania: Mr Stephen Norris

South Australia: Mr Philip Grutzner

Western Australia: Ms Anne Ford

Chaplain: Vacant

## **NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

Over the past decade, our focus as a Network has been to provide a national forum for member schools to meet and discuss issues of common interest. The primary means for this to occur is through our annual National Conference, which is held in August or September each year, in a different state on rotation. Approximately 200 governors, Principals, Chaplains and other senior staff attend each year. The Primate and a number of Archbishops and Bishops from across Australia have attended the conference. Our recent Conference themes have included:

- Faith in Action: Living the Gospel in Anglican Schools
- Beauty for Brokenness: The Appeal of Anglicanism
- Burning but not Consumed: Faith through the Fire

## **CHAPLAINCY SHADOWING**

AASN has played an important role in supporting and nurturing School Chaplains through our Chaplaincy Shadowing Program. 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. So far approximately fifty pairings have taken place since the program commenced, with most encouraging reports received from both Chaplains and schools.

## **TRAVELLING SCHOLAR**

In 2008, the AASN Travelling Scholar Program was inaugurated. Dr Trevor Cooling, Director of The Stapleford Centre in the United Kingdom and one of the UK's leading Religious Education advisors, travelling to each state in August/September, conducting over sixty group and individual presentations, workshops and meetings. This month of activity focused on better equipping staff in Anglican schools to engage with students in the vital learning area of Religious and Values Education.

## **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

Also in 2008, the Network commissioned researcher Dr Jennifer Barr to examine the numerous initiatives being undertaken in Anglican schools Australia-wide in the field of Indigenous education today. Dr Barr travelled to each state and territory and met with principals, teachers, students and other leaders in school education, to gain first-hand knowledge of the stories, the successes and the struggles. Her report titled *Building Relationships* was published last year.

This research is ground-breaking for Anglican schools. It paints a picture of the many and varied responses that our schools - single sex and co-educational, long-established and

newly-founded, boarding and day – are making to the challenge of providing Indigenous young Australians with the educational opportunity that should be available for all Australians. It also reveals how Indigenous Australians are enriching the lives of students in Anglican schools, through building mutually rewarding relationships. The partnerships are two-way.

Whilst the research into current practice is revealing, it goes further. It challenges all involved in Anglican schooling to consider how we can play a more effective role as partners in our Nation's and Church's commitment to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous young people. That is a mission imperative for all Anglican schools as we prepare to enter the second decade of the 21st century.

## **A SHORT HISTORY**

Last year, we also published *A Short History of AASN*. Written by the Network's founding President, Mr Phillip Heath, it tells the story of the challenging years leading to our formation in 1999, and the subsequent decade of growth.

Both the *Building Relationships* report and *A Short History of AASN* are available on the AASN website – [www.aasn.edu.au](http://www.aasn.edu.au)

## **ADVOCACY**

AASN took a significant step forward at the 2009 Annual General Meeting, where our Constitution was amended to enable the Network to take more of an advocacy role. We would be remiss if we did not position the Network to engage with a changing world of school education in Australia – the move to a greater 'national' focus and involvement by and with the Commonwealth Government. Such a step will enable AASN to play some role in 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. In so doing, the Network must not lose sight of the very strength of Anglican schooling being based on their independence and local governance.

## **NEW INITIATIVES**

New initiatives this year include the introduction of:

- an online Prayer Diary for schools which will enable schools to pray for each other systematically throughout the school year; and
- an annual Anglican Schools Celebration - a focus on what it means to be an Anglican school, by way of services at Diocesan or Provincial level in which schools, staff and students give thanks to God for this remarkable educational and missional enterprise.

## **CONCLUSION**

As Phillip Heath writes in his Short History of AASN,

*The formation of the AASN in 1999 came at a time of profound change both in the Anglican Church of Australia and in the national life. The experience of difficulties that forged and refined the nature of the Network forced us to focus our energies on the things that united Anglican Schools rather than divide them. The frustrations of those who established the National Anglican Schools Consultative Committee (in the 1990's) have been honoured by the vibrancy of the present Network (which) gently binds together schools of vastly different natures. It is a beautiful thought that this is accomplished by vision and by prayer as opposed to the forces of pragmatism.*

The Reverend Peter Laurence  
PRESIDENT