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AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN SCHOOLS NETWORK A SHORT HISTORICAL SUMMARY

AASN VISION STATEMENT

The AASN was established in 1999

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

- Provide a forum at the national level for Anglican schools to facilitate discussion on spiritual, moral and values related issues as they have 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.
- Be a forward-looking, dynamic organisation aiming to develop a strong unity of purpose among Anglican Schools.

MR PHILLIP HEATH

JANUARY 2009

Australian Anglican



Schools Network

PREAMBLE

The following paper is offered at the request of the Network Management Committee in 2008 in an attempt to preserve the history and memory of the AASN. It is written from personal recollection without access to general archival material. In due course, it would be prudent for the AASN to make good this gap by sourcing a detailed history.

The story of the formation and development of the AASN demonstrates how vision and prayer can overcome pragmatism and fear. Formed during a period of rapid change and development in the national educational and political landscape, the AASN and its forerunner, the NASCC, faced the task of developing a climate of cooperation and unity between schools whose identity had been characterised by rugged autonomy. At the heart of this narrative is an exploration of Anglican mission within our schools and the search for a common mind and common language to support this mission.

1 ORIGINS

The Anglican Church of Australia is a loose federation of provinces and dioceses rather than a centralised administrative system. Consequently, the formation of national policy within the Anglican Church is difficult. With the exception of *Anglicare*, which is the welfare arm of the Church, there is little history of national approaches to any issues within the life of Australian Anglicanism.

Anglican schools, however, have been in existence virtually since the commencement of European settlement in Australia. The formation of these schools generally reflects the passion and commitment of local Anglican clergy, laity or churches, and was motivated by an intention to provide schooling for children in the absence of state education as an expression of the zeal for Anglican mission in Australian society. For the schools that have survived around the country, their character and heritage has been forged through the refining fire of endurance.

Many Australian Anglican schools that possess this powerful sense of identity were formed in the second half of the nineteenth century. A second wave of schools was established in the early decades of the twentieth century. A period of relative inactivity is evident in the post-war period, which was broken by a spectacular period of vigorous activity that witnessed the formation of dozens of new Anglican schools, especially in Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales. The majority of these new schools commanded lower fees than their counterparts.

It was within this context of a two-tiered formation of Anglican school education in Australia that, in the early 1990s, a number of dedicated lay people from around the country sought to facilitate regular gatherings of Anglican schools, with a view to developing a shared sense of mission and fostering the formation of new Anglican schools at a time when government policy was conducive to this endeavour.

The National Anglican Schools Consultative Committee (NASCC) was formed in Adelaide in 1992. Anglican Schools Commissions existed in NSW, WA, Qld and SA, and leading figures from within these commissions provided the initial impetus for the NASCC. Amongst others there was Harry Macdonald from Victoria, Mike Bromilow from WA,

Laurie Davies from NSW, Peter Coman from Qld and Christopher Ellis from SA. By the sixth annual conference, which was held at Melbourne Girls Grammar School in South Yarra in 1997, the delegate list had exceeded one hundred and included the Primate of Australia, the Rt Reverend Dr Keith Rayner, Archbishop of Melbourne, and the General Secretary of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, the Reverend Dr Bruce Kaye.

The NASCC was led by Harry Macdonald AM from Victoria. Mr Harry MacDonald was the Head of The Peninsula School from 1971 to 1991 and was a stalwart within the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) and the Anglican Church in Victoria. Harry Macdonald was the second Head of a school that was formed in 1961, the first new independent school established in Melbourne for over fifty years. He was an active participant in the Social Issues Committee of AHISA beyond his retirement from The Peninsula School and appeared before several Senate Committees representing AHISA. He also represented the Anglican Church at the National Schools Forum of the Christian Churches through this same period.

All members of the NASCC were committed to further the mission of the Anglican Church through the formation of Anglican schools that were accessible to the people living in the growth areas of Australia's cities. The NASCC gazed with some interest at national education organisations within other churches such as the Lutherans, the Roman Catholics, the Christian Schools' Association and the Uniting Church of Australia. No such equivalent organisation existed within the Anglican Church of Australia and the NASCC regarded this as a major weakness to fulfilling the Anglican mission.

The NASCC, however, had no formal constitution or formal relationship with the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia. In order to do so, a new pathway had to be set in place to provide a central voice for Anglican schools throughout the country. The pursuit of such a formal relationship, coupled with the perception of some established schools that the NASCC only sought to foster the formation of new low fee schools, meant that the pathway towards a formal identity was a difficult one.

2 CONTEXT OF NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Since the mid-eighties, successive Australian governments have provided support for the establishment of new schools. This policy arises in part from a genuine sympathy by political leaders for the constructive contribution towards good citizenship made by faith-based schools, and also from a pragmatic understanding of the value of private effort in supporting the development of national infrastructure, such as schools in growth areas that surrounded Australian cities in the final decades of the twentieth century. Support by way of per capita funding, building grants and, in some states, even a subsidy to assist with interest repayments for capital developments resulted in an increase in the proportion of children attending non-government schools. Despite attempts to draw out divisions in the electorate by reviving the State Aid debate of the 1960s, the growth of independent schools has continued.

The experience of the Roman Catholic Church has an important bearing on early attempts to form an Anglican school education strategy. The Federal government permitted groups of schools to coalesce into a 'system' and to fund all the schools within the 'system' at the same rate. Consideration of strategies to maximise government funding in order to support the development of new schools was one of the informal priorities of NASCC discussions. Could a national Anglican system be considered? Can the Anglican Church find a voice to negotiate with national government of the day on behalf of Anglican schools? It was a matter of frustration to many in the NASCC that the Anglican Church could not express a representative view to the enquiries on government policy including on reviews of funding policies to non-government schools.

The rapid development of new schools through the latter part of the Hawke Government coincided with a recession in the Australian economy – the so called 'recession we had to have' (1991-1992). This recession had an impact on enrolments in some established schools in places like Sydney and Melbourne. As we have seen, the NASCC was formed in 1992 and its early years were set against the backdrop of a bimodal pattern of growth in one sector of Anglican schools and threat in another.

The work of people like Mr John Lambert (NSW), Dr Peter Coman (Qld) and Mr Des Parker (SA) in preparing the ground to establish a national system of Anglican schools was based on a prudent strategy to support both the formation of new schools and to maximise

the opportunities for existing schools to access optimal government funding levels. Under the policies of the Hawke/Keating Governments, school funding was based on the Educational Resources Index (ERI), which sought to measure the resources of each school and set funding levels accordingly. The ERI could also be applied to an entire system of schools, which could 'smooth out' the peaks and troughs across the member schools and restrain the upward pressure on fees that the loss of government funding required. It was a bold strategy because it required individual schools to restrict their income in order to protect the interests of other system schools as much as their own. Capital projects in schools were to be funded by the System, which applied to the Commonwealth Government on behalf of the System. There had been an unsuccessful attempt to form such a system in NSW in 1994.

It should be added that the formal agenda of the NASCC was not solely preoccupied with an orchestrated attempt to court greater funding for new Anglican schools as any review of conference papers and proceedings from the early years of the NASCC will attest. For example, the 1997 Conference in Melbourne considered 'Chaplaincy in Anglican Schools' and 'Exploring Values Education in Anglican Schools', with papers *inter alia* by the Rt Rev Dr John Wilson, Dr Peter Coman, Mr Tony Horsley, Mrs Barbara Godwin, the Rev Jean Penman, Professor David Aspin, the Rt Rev Dr Keith Rayner, the Rev Dr Tom Wallace, Mr Richard Prideaux, Mrs Vivienne Mountain, Dr Bruce Kaye and Dr Tim McNaught. Reports from States and Territories were usually included in the Conference proceedings.

3 CONTEXT OF ANGLICAN CHURCH POLICY

In his paper to the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia entitled *Patterns of National Connection in Anglicanism in Australia, August 2002*, the General Secretary, Dr Bruce Kaye, argued that the time was right to engage with various ‘institutional expressions’ that began to challenge the ‘strong regionalism’ that had hitherto been the culture of the Anglican Church in Australia.

He drew a parallel between Anglican schools and *Anglicare*, with the new impetus to gather annually to consider issues of mutual interest with the same sentiment evident. He further remarked, ‘The General Synod in 1998 recognised part of this development in the life of the Church by providing for the Standing Committee to recognize Networks of people who are engaged in the same kind of ministry across the church.’

The Church itself was on the move, at least in the work of some of its institutions, and the presence at NASCC conferences of the General Secretary of the General Synod of the Anglican Church together with leading Diocesans of the day demonstrated this new spirit. Nevertheless, it is hardly surprising that Anglican Schools should find unity a difficult matter given the narrative of the Anglican Church itself.

4 DIFFERENCES AMONG ANGLICAN SCHOOLS – CREATING UNITY A DIFFICULT TASK

As these elements drew to a point, the differences between Anglican schools around the country emerged. There are profound differences in historical experience, in liturgical orientation, in cultural expression, in demographic orientation and in mission and purpose. Even engagement with the Anglican Church itself could present difficulties for some Anglican schools whose communities eschewed sectarianism and distrusted the notion of interference by Church hierarchies. Whilst many new schools embraced the brand name ‘Anglican’ as a positive thing for their communities, there was a minority of schools in some parts of the country that did not regard the name in this way. These differences reflected the very profound differences that exist within the Anglican Communion around the country.

There are also manifest theological and liturgical differences between Dioceses around the country and Anglican Schools reflect these differences. There are significant variations in liturgical style and theological emphases in Australian Anglicanism. Whilst the Prayer Book and the Thirty Nine Articles remain the lingua franca throughout the land, some schools emphasise the sacraments and the formation of Christian values through experience whilst others set personal evangelism at the core of their life and ministry. In the early history of the NASCC and its successor, conference organisers needed to give considerable attention to the range of presenters and to the nature of worship events.

A crisis occurred at the Business Session of the NASCC Conference conducted at Woodlands Anglican School for Girls in Glenelg, South Australia in 1998. A draft constitution, tabled for approval, was designed to set in place a more formal arrangement for the NASCC to act on behalf of Anglican Schools in Australia. The differences referred to above burst forth in an unhappy way, and the schools present at the conference split roughly between low fee new schools and established schools, with the latter rejecting the notion that a central body could make representations to government and make public statements to the media on behalf of all Anglican schools in the land. It was a leap too far for some. Those who felt passionately on either side found the arguments painful and even personal. In truth, some left the gathering and never returned to future conferences.

From the debris of this sad debate, an informal panel that represented the contrasting viewpoints was formed to see whether something could be salvaged from the 1998 conference. At least two meetings were conducted in Sydney at St Andrew's Cathedral School in 1998/1999 to consider ways forward. Among those present at these informal meetings were Mr Laurie Davies, Mr Christopher Ellis, Dr Peter Coman, Mr Michael Bromilow, Dr Ruth Shatford and Mr Phillip Heath. They were conducted in Phillip's office within St Andrew's House, Sydney. Phillip Heath took the opportunity to inform the General Secretary of General Synod, whose office was also in St Andrew's House, Sydney.

There were two impediments to be overcome:

- i An association of Anglican schools in Australia had to recognise the broad diversity of Anglican schools together with their communities and Diocesan contexts. A central management authority could not subsume all Anglican schools in the land under its control nor could it articulate the nature of Anglican expression in a manner that was binding on schools. As mentioned above, the diversity of Anglicanism that has evolved around the country and that was fully expressed in Anglican schools had to be acknowledged. This was a considerable test for those drafting the aims of a national network.
- ii An association of Anglican schools should not be involved with deliberations over federal government funding policy nor speak on behalf of Anglican schools. There were considerable divisions between schools over funding levels. If a network of Anglican schools was to prosper, these divisions had to be acknowledged as real but avoided. The authors of the original constitution regarded this as particularly disappointing for it undermined the potential of Anglicans to influence public policy.

In the final analysis, a *via media* compromise was set in place during the following year. A draft constitution was tabled at the 1999 Conference held at All Saints Anglican School, Merrimac in Queensland on 28th May 1999 and the AASN was born. Inevitably, the compromise was too great for some to bear and they ended their connections with the Schools Network at this point.

5 FROM NASCC TO AASN

In order to secure the existence of the Network, it was necessary to abandon the proposed constitution (1998) and set in its place a “Statement of Agreed Principles” for the newly formed Australian Anglican Schools Network.

Adopted unanimously at the 1999 Conference, the AASN set four objectives:

- i To provide a means of collegial dialogue at the national level.
- ii To provide a forum for discussion of issues of significance to Anglican educators.
- iii To organise national conferences.
- iv To encourage Christian mission and outreach through schools of the Anglican Church in Australia.

It is interesting to note that the Statement of Agreed Principles explicitly added that ‘It is not a function of the Network to make representations to Government, nor to speak on behalf of Anglican schools.’

The notion of ‘Membership’ of the Network was described in similarly imprecise language: ‘Membership is open to any person involved in Anglican School education who is a communicant member of the Anglican Church of Australia or a member of a Church in communion with the Anglican Church of Australia’.

The AASN sought to embrace all who shared fellowship with the Anglican Church of Australia and/or who worked in Anglican schools. Voting procedures were later clarified to represent one vote at Business Sessions for each Anglican school.

In these early months of cautious development the Management Committee of the AASN was elected by those present at the Merrimac Conference.

The first committee of the AASN was as follows:

- President:** Mr Andrew Luckhurst-Smith, Chairman of the SA Schools' Commission
- President Elect:** Mr Phillip Heath, Headmaster, St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney

STATE REPRESENTATIVES:

- Queensland:** Dr Peter Coman (later replaced by Ms Stephanie Munday-Lake, Anglican Schools Office)
- NSW:** Mr Colin May, Principal, Arden Anglican School, Beecroft.
- Victoria:** Mr Tony Horsley, Principal, Gippsland Grammar School.
- Tasmania:** Mr Malcolm Powys, Acting Principal, Launceston Church Grammar School.
- SA:** Mr Christopher Ellis, Director SA Anglican Schools Commission.
- WA:** Mr Matthew Hughes, Principal, John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School, Mirrabooka (later replaced by Mrs Barbara Godwin).

The Management Committee dedicated itself to pursuing the objectives of the AASN as established in the Statement of Agreed Principles. Only Mr Christopher Ellis of the original members of the NASCC participated in the AASN. The administrative office of the Network was established within the (now defunct) SA Anglican Schools Commission in Adelaide and Mr Christopher Ellis was appointed as the inaugural Executive Officer of the Network. He played a key role by linking the memory of the NASCC with the spirit of the AASN. The Inaugural President, Mr Andrew Luckhurst-Smith, put his legal training at the disposal of the Network as we sought to fulfil the application process to be granted the status as a formal Network of the General Synod.

The AASN was officially recognised by the General Synod in October 1999. In his letter to the AASN advising of this recognition, Dr Kaye remarked:

The formation of this Network is a very significant and important step both for the Standing Committee and for the schools involved. I hope very much that the

Network will be able to develop in an effective way in order that schools may be able to consult amongst each other in the formulation of the Anglican vocation that they have as schools in our Australian environment. We are, I believe, at a critical stage in the development of education in Australia, with the balance of influence laying with the government, and particularly with the Federal Government, and the way in which Anglican Schools are able to formulate and persist with an Anglican vision of their role will be an increasing challenge.

The mix of people on the Management Committee was critical. There was a diversity of schools and school experience at the table, embracing the entire range of Anglican Schools in Australia. The difficult experiences of 1998 made the Committee sensitive to the issues that divided our fellowship and so an earnest attempt was made to direct energy towards those things that united us. Early recognition as a Network of the General Synod provided a radiant impetus to the work of the AASN and validated its work in a most significant manner. The Network should ever be thankful for the support it received from the General Secretary and the Standing Committee at that time.

6 KEY STATEMENTS OF INTENT – THE VISION STATEMENT

In addition to securing the status as a Network of the General Synod, the first Management Committee drafted a Vision Statement for discussion at the Conferences in Canberra (2000) and Melbourne (2001). Following several drafts, the Vision Statement was finally settled at the Perth Conference in 2002 and distributed to all Anglican Schools in Australia as well as to the General Synod and all Diocesans.

The AASN Vision Statement is as follows:

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

- *Provide a forum at the national level for Anglican schools to facilitate discussion on spiritual, moral and values related issues as they have 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.*
- *Be a forward-looking, dynamic organisation aiming to develop a strong unity of purpose among Anglican Schools*

The Vision Statement focuses on the role of the AASN as a unifying force amongst Anglican Schools in order to better assist the mission of the Anglican Church in Australia, and to secure greater recognition of the contribution that the Schools make to that mission. These are the things that bind Anglican Schools around the country. Focussing on ministry, mission and strengthening the life of the nation under God through education in Anglican Schools surpasses those obstacles that have hampered our communion in the past. Engagement with this Vision by Anglican Schools around Australia is suggested by the steady growth of Conference attendances in the recent past.

The first Management Committee also established a website for the AASN and designed our logo, for which credit must be given to Mr Colin May from NSW.

With the passage of time, the changing nature of Commonwealth politics during the Howard government removed some of the initial cause of tension within the Network. The shift in funding formula from the ERI to the Socioeconomic Status (SES) Score transferred the emphasis from school resources to parental SES score. Consequently, some of the higher fee schools received greater levels of funding whilst the lower fee schools had their historic levels of funding guaranteed. The AASN progressed to a formal constitution, which was settled fittingly at St Peter's Woodlands in 2004, the site of the tempestuous conference in 1998.

The affairs of the AASN were administered initially by Mr Christopher Ellis from the South Australian Anglican Schools Commission office in Adelaide until its closure in 2001. Mr Gilbert Case from Queensland took up the position of Executive Officer of the Network and the administrative burden was taken up by the Brisbane Anglican Schools Office. Gilbert Case established the first newsletter of the Network, which has subsequently become an important means of communication around the country.

7 THE ROLE OF THE ANNUAL AASN CONFERENCE

The AASN, like its predecessor, relies on the annual conference both to create cohesion amongst Anglican Schools and to provide sufficient financial resources to sustain the work of the Network. Progress towards formal membership took place after the initial start up phase of the AASN and is now well in place.

The Management Committee delegates to the host state the task of organising the annual conference, which includes selection of conference themes, speakers and workshop sessions. Nevertheless, the AASN always maintains a measure of oversight in these matters in the interests of unity.

8. AASN PROJECTS

In recent years, AASN has underwritten two major projects. These projects have been funded in part or whole through the surpluses from the Annual Conferences.

8.1 Chaplaincy Shadowing Program

In 2005, the Western Australian representative on the Management Committee, the Reverend Peter Laurence (Chief Executive Officer of the Anglican Schools Commission in WA) was charged with the responsibility of overseeing a program of support for Chaplains in Anglican schools.

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'.

Each Chaplain gives a three-year commitment to the shadowing process. Two Chaplains are 'paired' through the Chaplaincy Shadowing program. They can nominate their 'shadow' or if they prefer, the program co-ordinator can suggest a partnership. Each Chaplain spends one week each year in the other Chaplain's school. They may choose a partner from anywhere in Australia.

Generally there are three different pairings over the three years. In this way, a Chaplain visits three schools, spending time with three different Chaplains. However, participants sometimes remain with their shadow partner for more than one year, if beneficial.

Each school funds the costs of airfare, accommodation and expenses for their own Chaplain whilst he/she is visiting another school. The AASN Management Committee distributes grants to schools towards covering partial costs involved in the Chaplaincy Shadowing, as requested.

Over the past four years, over forty pairings have occurred across AASN schools.

8.2 Travelling Scholar Program

In 2008, the first AASN Travelling Scholar toured Australia, speaking to school leaders, governors, chaplains and teachers. Dr Trevor Cooling, Director of the *Transforming Lives* Project in the United Kingdom, spent a month after the August National Conference in Perth as the Inaugural Travelling Scholar. The *Transforming Lives* Project is an interdenominational initiative that promotes teaching as a Christian vocation amongst churches and Christian organisations in Britain.

Many of Dr Cooling's visits as the Travelling Scholar focused on the area of religious education, providing professional development and support in this important area of a school's curriculum.

The Travelling Scholar program was a great success and the Management Committee are looking at future opportunities for travelling scholars to tour the country.

8.3 Indigenous Research Project

At the 2008 Conference, it was agreed to use some of AASN's surplus funds to underwrite research into school initiatives relating to indigenous students and their education.

The impetus for this research project arose from discussions at Management Committee meetings about indigenous students and Anglican schools. With an unprecedented focus on the area of indigenous education by national and state

governments, particularly following the 'Sorry' address by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in February 2008, 2009 seemed the right time for a research project to be commissioned.

Over recent years, there has been a significant amount of activity among Australian private schools in the area of indigenous scholarship schemes to help narrow the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous educational attainment. The 2008 AASN Conference heard about the work carried out at a local level in this area by St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney and Trinity Grammar School in Melbourne. As member schools expressed a keen interest in making a contribution to improving educational outcomes for indigenous children, research was commissioned into what is currently happening across schools, along with recommendations for some possible ways forward as a Network.

Dr Jennifer Barr was appointed as Research Consultant. Her report will be presented to the 2009 AASN Conference in Adelaide.

9**CONFERENCE LOCATIONS**

1992	XXXX
1993	XXXX
1994	XXXX
1995	XXXX
1996	Shore (Sydney Church of England Grammar) School, Sydney, NSW
1997	Melbourne Girls' Grammar School, Melbourne, Vic
1998	Woodlands Anglican Girls School, Adelaide, SA
1999	All Saints Anglican School, Gold Coast, Qld
2000	Canberra Grammar School, Canberra, ACT
2001	Brighton Grammar School, Melbourne, Victoria
2002	St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, Perth, WA
2003	St Margaret's Anglican Girls School, Brisbane, Qld
2004	St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School, Adelaide, SA
2005	Launceston Church Grammar School, Launceston, Tas
2006	Shore (Sydney Church of England Grammar) School, Sydney, NSW
2007	Trinity Grammar School, Melbourne, Vic
2008	Duxton Hotel, Perth, WA
2009	St Peter's College, Adelaide, SA

10 PRESIDENTS OF THE NETWORK

1999 to 2001	Mr Andrew Luckhurst-Smith
2001 to 2003	Mr Phillip Heath
2003 to 2005	Mr Tony Horsley
2005 to 2007	Mrs Lynne Thomson
2007 to 2008	Mrs Peta Smith
2008 to	The Reverend Peter Laurence

11 CONCLUSION:

The formation of the AASN in 1999 came at a time of profound change both in the Anglican Church of Australia and in 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 NASCC have been honoured by the vibrancy of the present Network. Whilst there is still no formal capacity for the AASN to make representations to governments on behalf of Anglican Schools, the Network 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.

Thanks be to God.

Mr PJ Heath

Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School 1995-2009

Inaugural President Elect AASN 1999-2001

President AASN 2001-2003

Immediate Past President AASN 2003-2005

January 2009