

AASN CONFERENCE 2009

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

14 AUGUST 2009

OPENING COMMENTS

Welcome to the 2009 Conference of the Australian Anglican Schools Network. I'd like to commence by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today. As you take your next step, remember the Aboriginal people who first walked this land. Thank you to Auntie Josie for the warm welcome to land.

- Comment re conference program - outstanding national and international speakers
 - Especially The Revd Dr Roger Furlo from the USA and Bishop Stephen Platten from the UK
 - Also the delegates from Singapore – The Reverends Jeremiah Deng and Steven Seah
- Comment re Conference Organising Committee under Philip Grutzner – thank you in advance for what looks like a most engaging conference.
- It's great to have delegates from every state and our national capital.
- THEME – Beauty for Brokenness: The Appeal of Anglicanism – will challenge our thinking in these challenging social and economic times. The world has changed in so many ways since we gathered just 12 months ago in Perth
 - Then we hadn't heard of the Global Financial Crisis or the Swine Flu.
 - The devastating Victorian bushfires touched every Australian home and school.
 - Much brokenness has occurred over the past 12 months – the beauty that can arise out of the brokenness is very much the mission of our schools.
- As we sing the Conference Hymn let the words become your prayer:
 - Beauty for brokenness*
 - Hope for despair*
 - Lord, in your suffering*
 - This is our prayer*
 - Bread for the children*
 - Justice, joy, peace*
 - Sunrise to sunset*
 - Your kingdom increase!*
- I look forward to the conference as together we explore this theme through the diverse program over the next two days.
- Let me make some brief comments about a few matters which have occupied the Network's mind over the past year:
- Firstly, the Short HISTORY OF AASN – thank Phillip Heath

- Significant piece of writing – recording our history (written over last Christmas vacation)
- Our brief written history gives us a sense of where we are today and why we're here, against all odds in one sense. As you read Phil's historical account, you'll see how the Holy Spirit has been very much at work in the formation and ongoing life of our network. We can Praise God for that!
- At the AGM Phil will have a chance to say a few words about the History.
- Speaking of the AGM later today: the Management Committee will be bringing before you a proposal to amend the Constitution.
- I urge you to pray carefully about this matter. We would be remiss if we didn't 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.
- Groups like AHISA have already recognised this need, and established their office in Canberra. All other significant schooling groups have the means to engage with government, industry and the like.
- The list includes Adventist Schools Australia, Australian Association of Christian Schools, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, the Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools, Christian Schools Australia, Greek Orthodox Schools, Lutheran Education Australia, Montessori Association of Australia, Rudolf Steiner Schools and Uniting Church Schools.
- All of these groups are smaller than the 'Anglican collective'.
- Whilst AASN doesn't need to establish an office in Canberra (we've just finished relocating the office to Perth after almost a decade in Brisbane!), we'd be wise to address the issue of effective representation and engagement with government, the Church, educational bodies and industry at the national level and put in place appropriate means to allow this to occur.
- At last year's conference, I asked the question: Is there a means by which we can influence policy as Anglican schools, yet retain our valued independence and local governance? The Management Committee has given this issue much consideration and we've received feedback from members around Australia since the 2008 AASN Conference which has helped frame our thinking.
- There seems to be a general consensus to keep whatever changes to a minimum, as we value the Network which has grown from humble (if tumultuous) beginnings in the 90's. Accordingly, it's the Management Committee's intention to propose one amendment to our Constitution which would achieve this goal within the current structure and purposes of AASN. The proposed amendment would be to our 'Purpose' by adding a new subclause 3.4 - 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.
- We'll revisit this matter this afternoon.

Other ACTIVITIES OF AASN THIS YEAR

- The Chaplaincy Shadowing Program has continued to operate, co-ordinated by The Reverend John Jenner. This year saw the 6th group of Chaplains participate in the program. Whilst there was only a small group of pairings, reports are that these were valuable experiences. John is standing down as Co-ordinator of the program and I do thank him for his efforts – he's not here today but yesterday I presented him with a gift in appreciation.
- Secondly – The Travelling Scholar Program. Our inaugural Travelling Scholar was Dr Trevor Cooling. Trevor completed a whirlwind trip around Australia last year, starting on 22 August in Perth and concluding on 23 September in Sydney.
- The statistics are impressive! During this time, Trevor delivered:
 - 3 keynote lectures
 - 28 seminars/workshops
 - 5 presentations for a whole school staff or at conferences
 - 5 informal dinners with principals and chaplains
 - 16 individual consultations with principals and heads of departments
 - 2 sermons
 - 2 group consultations
 - 12 school visits
 - 6 lessons with pupils
 - 3 meetings with pupil groups

Trevor's ministry amongst us over that month covered the topics:

- The vocation of the Christian teacher
- The Anglican school as a key expression of the church's mission to the nation
- The distinctive contribution of a Christian/Anglican education to the general curriculum
- The inclusive school and tackling religious diversity and controversial issues in the Anglican school
- The teaching of the Bible in Religious and Values Education and Christian Studies
- The nature of Christian belief and the role of evidence and interpretation (with pupils)

Trevor has written to me of QUOTE "*schools which are clearly making great efforts to put their Christian distinctiveness at the heart of everything they do. They have invested time, resources and staffing in a way that demonstrates the value that they put on this*

dimension of school life. I judged at least one of the schools I saw to be world-class in this respect." END QUOTE

The Management Committee plans to continue the Travelling Scholar program so well begun through Trevor's visit. It's not planned to occur on an annual basis, but rather as-and-when the appropriate specialist in a field relevant to AASN's purposes is available to work with us. I do invite you to share with members of the Management Committee possible names for future Travelling Scholars.

- The third area has been the Indigenous Research Project, headed by Dr Jenny Barr our Research Officer and overseen by Dr Tim Wright. At last year's AGM it was agreed to appoint a research officer to provide a report to the network on current indigenous education initiatives in Anglican schools.
- This report has been distributed to delegates in the pre-conference papers and Jenny will be speaking to it tomorrow afternoon. The report helps the Network and member schools to celebrate what we're doing in the area of indigenous education initiatives and to consider how we might undertake further initiatives in the future.
- Finally, The Revd Dr David Cole, a member of the Management Committee is working on an online Daily Prayer Diary, which will be available for the 2010 school year. Schools will be advised of these details later in the year through the AASN Newsletter.

- **CLOSING COMMENT**