Fire at St Andrews Lutheran College, Tallebudgera Qld

LEA is saddened by the news from Tim Kotzur, Principal, St Andrews Lutheran College, Tallebudgera Qld, of a fire last Monday evening which has destroyed a significant part of the senior school.

Tim is working with his community as well as the policy and fire brigade to ensure St Andrews continues to operate as best as possible given the difficult circumstances for senior school staff and students.

The support of the local St Andrews community, LEQ regionally and all Lutheran schools and principals across Australia at such a time, is deeply appreciated, as Tim and his team lead in the days and weeks ahead.

May God give Tim and all at St Andrews strength, courage and patience in such challenging circumstances.

LEA key funding messages

1. provide a basic funding entitlement for all Lutheran schools that keeps pace with costs in government schools and ensures each Australian student receives a world class education
2. provide additional needs-based funding for schools, families and students who are disadvantaged because of factors such as indigeneity, location, disability and socioeconomic / cultural disadvantage
3. provide families affordability and accessibility in their choice of schools in a way that encourages diversity, yet does not penalise private funding contributions to education
4. ensure that all systems and school authorities have equal access to recurrent, targeted, capital and other funds through transparent and nationally recognised funding protocols
5. allow systems and school authorities to effectively and confidently operate schools in a stable and transparent environment with predictable and annual funding indexation

Affirming core principles for a funding model

The present school SRS funding system, undergirded by the Gonski principles, has seen a substantial change to school funding in Australia. The SRS funding system is in its third year of operation (2014-2017) and has tried to establish a stable and predictable approach to federal funding.

However, the unfortunate vagaries of the political cycle, Commonwealth and State/Territory relationships, national financial constraints and implementation difficulties have resulted in uncertainty about a long term model and an incomplete inconsistent transitional roll out.

LEA supports a means-tested, sector-blind and needs-based approach to school funding. LEA supports an improved funding approach for the future where the core
principles of equity and sustainability are the key drivers and system funding predictability is provided.

In conclusion, LEA encourages candidates to strive for and provide a long term national funding model that is equitable, predictable and sustainable and allows systems to effectively and confidently operate schools in a stable and transparent environment with predictable and annual funding indexation.

LEA’s view of current funding proposals:

Coalition: LEA is concerned that the Coalition’s existing funding policy would see school funding increase at the rate of the consumer price index (CPI) from 2018. LEA does not support this policy as funding increases need to keep pace with real education costs and with indexation linked to AGSRC increases. LEA requests from the Coalition clarity of its 2018+ funding for Lutheran systems and until this is confirmed, cannot support the Coalition’s policy. (LEA awaits the 2016 Federal Budget to ascertain any change to the Coalition’s current policy)

Labor: LEA acknowledges the Labor Party’s ‘Your child. Our future’ policy which will assist all Australian schools with an additional $4.5 billion in funding expected in 2018 and 2019. Subject to the Federal Labor Party being able to align all states and territories to the SRS model, LEA is pleased to support this policy.

Commonwealth funding growing faster than states
Commonwealth funding for schools has increased at 36.7% in real terms over the past ten years while recurrent funding from state and territory governments has only increased by 4.6% in the same period, according to the new secretary of the Australian Department of Education and Training, Dr Michele Bruniges, who presented at the Senate inquiry into school funding recently.

Dr Bruniges, in pointing out the disparity in funding increases over the past decade, reminded senators that school funding is seen as a partnership between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. ‘The (Commonwealth) government has been clear that it will work with states and territories to deliver stable and sustainable funding into the future for all schools’ Dr Bruniges said. She also noted that while the Senate inquiry is considering school funding, there is some consensus that funding is not the key factor in improving student outcomes. ‘Teacher quality, school autonomy, parental engagement and rigorous curriculum are just as important as money to make a real difference to student outcomes, and the Commonwealth is working with the states and territories to focus on those four key areas, she said.

When asked about the prospect of school funding cuts, Dr Bruniges said there would be no cuts. ‘Funding … will continue to increase year on year post 2018. We are not looking at any form of cut, funding will continue to increase.’

Despite the prospect of increasing school funding in 2018 and subsequent years, Lutheran Education Australia, together with the National Catholic Education Commission and ISCA, have consistently stated that the Coalition government’s current policy of increasing school funding beyond 2017 at the rate of the consumer price index is inadequate and is not supported.

LEA has expressed concerns over this policy to Senator Birmingham as it may very well impact on:
- Lutheran school fee levels increasing
- Limiting parental right to choose their school of choice
- Possible program and staffing cuts in Lutheran schools
- Limiting a Lutheran school’s ability to adequately address student needs
- Possible force parents to make extremely difficult choices
This policy also ignores the fact that over the past decade, school costs have risen at twice the rate of CPI.

**Government announcement on financial reporting**

LEA is pleased to advise that the extension of transitional arrangements for non-government school financial reporting to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission will avoid an escalation of red tape and duplication in reporting for at least another year.

Last week Assistant Treasurer, Kelly O'Dwyer, announced that the transitional arrangements which allow non-government schools existing reporting mechanisms to fulfill the requirements under the ACNC legislation, have been extended to include the 2016 and 2017 school years.

LEA acknowledges the efforts of the National Catholic Education Commission’s Executive Director, Ross Fox, in playing a key role to see this extension delivered.

**ALEA Conference**

[16-17 September 2016]

Hanoi Vietnam

Principals are encouraged to consider attending the ALEA Conference being held in Hanoi during September 2016.

Further information is available on the [ALEA 2016 Conference](#) web page where you will find:

- Details regarding conference programming and networking opportunities.
- Information about workshops and training that will be offered during three sessions, with a wide variety of topics.
- Registration is open with online payment available.
- Conference rates are available at the Sofitel Plaza by using the preferential code CISH16
- Networking tables are available by sending an email to conference@asialutheraneducation.org

**Statement on school worship**

In an earlier LEA news, principals were reminded of the LCA Statement on school worship as it relates to baptisms. In this edition the paragraph on Holy Communion is outlined as follows:

*Communion may be celebrated regularly in Lutheran schools within a congregational setting. It is worthwhile restating that the congregation is a community of baptised believers who together share a common confession of faith, hear the word of God, celebrate baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and are led by a called and ordained pastor. This definition is distinct from the common understanding of congregation as a legally constituted organisation within the LCA or another denomination.*

*Attendance at such services must be voluntary. Participation in Holy Communion is available to those who share our Lutheran understanding of it. The pastors who preside at such services are responsible for the instruction and ongoing pastoral care of communicants in these services.*


Principals are positively encouraged to table this statement appropriately (eg, with your school leadership and ministry teams, school pastor, school council and/or staff) as you consider your school’s ministry in its unique context.