

Special Religious Education Handbook

**Inter-Church Commission on
Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc**

**ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc
January 2011**

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Document History

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*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
(Matt 19:14)*

1 Introduction to ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Acronym ICCOREIS

The acronym ICCOREIS stands for the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc that became an incorporated association in 2000. It was established in 1972 by its member churches to represent them in negotiations with government and the then Department of School Education in respect of religious education in government schools.

1.1.2 Commitment by Churches

The provision of high quality Special Religious Education (SRE) is a major responsibility. On behalf of its member churches, ICCOREIS has demonstrated to Departmental educational authorities and/or successive governments since 1972 that the churches are willing to take the provision of SRE seriously and to provide it as efficiently as possible within the reasonable limits set by their capacity to do so.

With funds mainly provided by its member churches, ICCOREIS has developed a range of measures to assist churches in developing their SRE programs. This *SRE Handbook* is a key source of information about the assistance that is available.

1.2 Purposes

The purposes of ICCOREIS in summary form are:

- a) to provide a fully representative context for inter-church discussion on religious education in government schools;
- b) to formulate policy for endorsement by member churches and help facilitate the implementation of agreed policy;
- c) to represent member churches in negotiations with the NSW Government and the Department of Education and Training;
- d) to negotiate and maintain liaison with relevant groups and other organisations.

For a more detailed account of ICCOREIS refer to its constitution, included as Appendix A in this handbook.

1.3 Membership

The member churches of ICCOREIS are:

- Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia from the Province of NSW
- Australian Christian Churches
- Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT
- Christian Brethren Assemblies
- Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
- Churches of Christ in NSW Conference
- Fellowship of Congregational Churches
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- Lutheran Church in Australia, NSW District
- Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW

- Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church Province of Sydney and Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (NSW and ACT)
- The Salvation Army (Eastern Australia Territory)
- Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand - NSW and ACT Deaneries
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and ACT.

1.4 Affiliated Groups

1.4.1 Initial Structure of Affiliated Groups

In response to the restructuring of the NSW Department of Education and Training during 1995 and 1996, ICCOREIS set up two levels of affiliates in the school districts of NSW:

- 1) Inter-Church SRE Support Groups were formed when representatives of at least two member churches wished to work cooperatively at the local level to provide training and support for SRE teachers. These groups were bound by the ICCOREIS *Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice*.
- 2) Inter-Church Committees on Religious Education in Schools were formed when representatives of all local member churches of ICCOREIS joined to provide training and support for SRE teachers. These committees were bound by the doctrinal commitment of the ICCOREIS constitution (namely, the Apostles' Creed) and by the ICCOREIS *Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice*.

1.4.2 New Structure of Affiliated Groups

In the process of becoming an incorporated association in 2000, ICCOREIS amended its constitution. Section 14 of the amended constitution contains detailed information about affiliated groups. (The constitution has been included as Appendix A of this handbook).

ICCOREIS has established links with a number of affiliated groups. Because ICCOREIS is an incorporated association, an affiliated group cannot legally use the acronym ICCOREIS in its name. It can, however, use one of the following statements in juxtaposition with the name:

- a) affiliated with ICCOREIS Inc in NSW, or the expanded version,
- b) affiliated with the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) Inc in NSW.

ICCOREIS hopes that a large number of organisations across NSW will read Section 14 of the constitution and apply to be affiliated groups. Affiliated groups may be categorised as:

- a) local SRE boards or associations,
- b) regional boards or associations,
- c) SRE professional associations,
- d) organisations assisting churches in the provision of SRE at the local, regional or state level.

Affiliated groups are covered by ICCOREIS' public liability insurance when they conduct a meeting or training workshop if prior notice of the event is given to the Executive Officer or Honorary Secretary. Given the current concerns in the wider community about the mounting cost of insurance premiums to cover public liability, ICCOREIS may not be able to maintain the insurance cover in future years. It is therefore important for any affiliated group to receive confirmation from ICCOREIS that it is covered for a particular meeting or workshop when it gives this notice.

1.5 Contacting ICCOREIS

ICCOREIS Executive Officer
Mrs Sue Sneddon
PO Box 756
Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone: 02 4979 1328
Email: execofficer@iccoreis.asn.au

1.6 Publications and Website

See Chapter 8 in this handbook for a list of ICCOREIS publications or consult the ICCOREIS website at www.iccoreis.asn.au.

1.7 Purposes of SRE Handbook

The *SRE Handbook* has been prepared to provide an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of all concerned with SRE in government schools. It should assist church leaders, clergy, SRE employment boards, SRE groups affiliated to ICCOREIS, church SRE coordinators and SRE teachers.

The *SRE Handbook* is not concerned with doctrinal issues, for they are the prerogative of the member churches. The ICCOREIS constitution simply requires that the beliefs of member churches are consonant with the tenets of the Apostles' Creed. The general guidance which the *SRE Handbook* provides is not binding on member churches that may choose to provide SRE in a different manner.

In a spirit of cooperation, member churches have provided information about their resources for teaching SRE that may be of interest to other churches.

1.8 Updating the SRE Handbook

From time to time it will be necessary to update the information contained in this *SRE Handbook*, particularly if there is a change in legal responsibilities relating to the authorisation of SRE teachers, child protection or the requirements of the Department of Education and Training.

The latest version of the *SRE Handbook* can be read and downloaded from the ICCOREIS website: www.iccoreis.asn.au.

For a summary of the changes made in each version of the handbook, see the document history page at the start of the contents section of the document.

1.9 Key Terms: SRE and GRE

ICCOREIS is primarily concerned with Special Religious Education (SRE), but it has a general interest in General Religious Education (GRE). It is important that these two terms be clearly understood.

Special Religious Education (SRE) is provided by the Christian churches and many other religious persuasions. As defined in *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*, “Special religious education (SRE) is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion”.

It has been common practice among Christian churches to refer to Special Religious Education as ‘Scripture’ or ‘Religious Instruction’. It would be preferable if these terms were replaced by ‘Special Religious Education’, the term that is used in the legislation and in publications by the Department of Education and Training.

General Religious Education (GRE) is defined in *Implementation of Religious Education Policy* as “education about the world’s major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. It is taught mainly through the school curriculum”.

End of Chapter

2 SRE Framework

2.1 Place of SRE in Government Schools

2.1.1 Legal Basis for SRE

The place of Special Religious Education (SRE) in government schools is governed and/or influenced by the following in NSW:

- a) *Education Act 1990*,
- b) *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)*,
- c) Memoranda issued by the Director-General of Education and Training,
- d) *Religious Education Policy*, NSW Department of Education and Training
- e) *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*, NSW Department of Education and Training.

This *SRE Handbook* seeks to bring together the relevant sections of these documents to explain how the partners in SRE can most effectively fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities. The focus is on Christian SRE provided by churches. (The legislation refers to religious persuasions and not churches because it covers both Christian and other faiths.)

SRE has had an integral place in public education in NSW since the *Public Instruction Act 1880*. Its place is presently governed by the *Education Act 1990*.

2.1.2 Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools

During the period 1970-1980, every Australian state undertook a major review of the place of religion in government schools. In 1975, the NSW Minister for Education established a committee of enquiry to consider religious education in NSW government schools. ICCOREIS was invited to appoint three members to represent all the churches. Representatives were also drawn from the Jewish Board of Deputies, parent and teacher organisations, school principals, universities, colleges of advanced education and the Department of School Education. ICCOREIS provided significant submissions to this committee of enquiry, chaired by Ralph Rawlinson. Draft documentation was referred to denominational and diocesan authorities before each decision was finalised. As these submissions were received by the committee of enquiry, ideas from them were incorporated into its report.

The report of the committee of enquiry, *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)*, made recommendations in the areas of General Religious Education (GRE) and Special Religious Education (SRE). In February 1986, the SRE recommendations were endorsed by the NSW government. The *Education Act 1990* was framed taking into account the recommendations of the report. The procedures contained in *Implementation of Religious Education Policy* are also based on these recommendations.

2.1.3 Education Act 1990

The *Education Act 1990* makes the following provisions for religious education of children in NSW government schools:

“Secular instruction

30 In government schools, the education is to consist of strictly non-sectarian and secular instruction. The words secular instruction are to be taken to include general religious education as distinct from dogmatic or polemical theology.

Special religious education

- 32 (1) In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion, but the total number of hours so allowed in a year is not to exceed, for each child, the number of school weeks in the year.
- (2) The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.
- (3) The religious education to be given is in every case to be the religious education authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs.
- (4) The times at which religious education is to be given to children of a particular religious persuasion are to be fixed by agreement between the Principal of the school and the local member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion.
- (5) Children attending a religious education class are to be separated from other children at the school while the class is held.
- (6) If the relevant member of the clergy or religious teacher fails to attend the school at the appointed time, the children are to be appropriately cared for at the school during the period set aside for religious education.

Objection to religious education

33 No child at a government school is to be required to receive any general religious education or special religious education if the parent of the child objects to the child’s receiving that education.

33A Special education in ethics as secular alternative to special religious education

- (1) Special education in ethics is allowed as a secular alternative to special religious education at government schools.
- (2) If the parent of a child objects to the child receiving special religious education, the child is entitled to receive special education in ethics, but only if:
- (a) it is reasonably practicable for special education in ethics to be made available to the child at the government school, and
- (b) the parent requests that the child receive special education in ethics.
- (3) A government school cannot be directed (by the Minister or otherwise) not to make special education in ethics available at the school.”

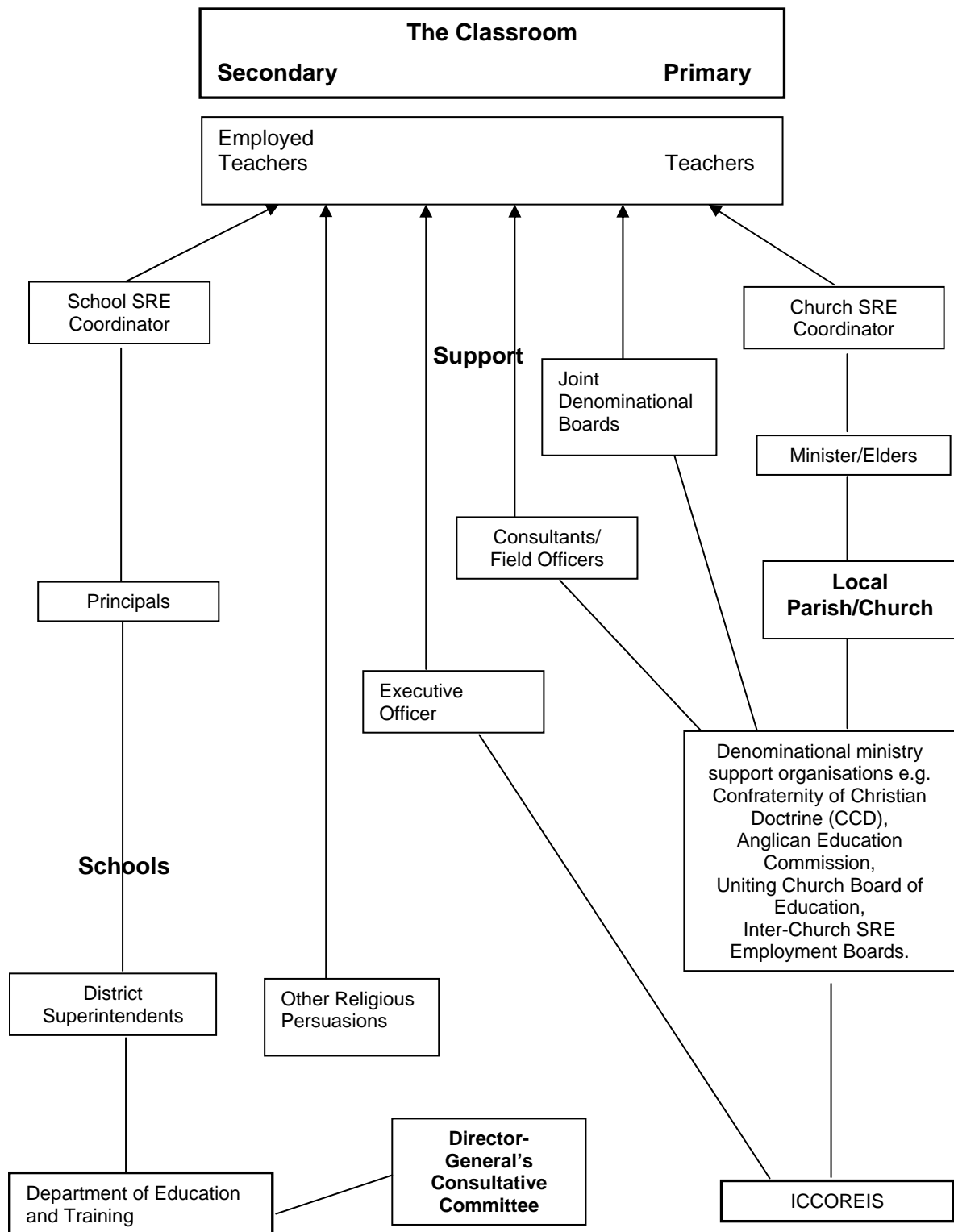
2.2 Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education

In 1983, the Hon R Mulock, the then Minister for Education, implemented Recommendation 70 of the Report, *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)*, and established what has now become the Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education. This committee represents the major religious groups in the community and includes nominees from teacher and parent organisations, as well as the Department of Education and Training.

At present the Committee comprises two Departmental officers, seven representatives of the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools, one from each of the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Islamic Council, Parents & Citizens, Federation of School and Community Organisations, and the NSW Teachers Federation.

The Consultative Committee's task is to provide the Director-General with information and advice on the implementation and operation of SRE, and to act as a clearing house for new ideas and innovations.

2.3 How Does SRE Work?



2.4 Approved Religious Persuasions for SRE

2.4.1 Who Grants Approval to a Religious Persuasion to Teach SRE?

The question is often asked, “Which religious persuasions are given permission to teach SRE in government schools and who gives the permission?”. Approval is given by the Minister for Education and Training under the NSW *Education Act 1990*. The Minister has the right to exercise discretionary authority with regard to the eligibility of a religious persuasion to teach SRE.

Within the Department of Education and Training, responsibility for recommending approval of religious groups lies with the Chief Education Officer, Human Society and Its Environment, the Key Learning Area that includes religious education.

2.4.2 Criteria for Approving a Religious Persuasion to Teach SRE

In order to provide a basis for making recommendations to the Minister for Education and Training about the approval of religious persuasions to teach SRE, the Legal Services Branch of the Department of Education and Training developed the following checklist of information, based on the *Education Act 1990*, to be provided by, for example, a church:

- a) a copy of your constitution or organisational documentation if any exists,
- b) a statement of your church’s doctrine or beliefs,
- c) details of the general organisation and conduct of your church’s business,
- d) details regarding the appointment of clergy and the role they perform,
- e) details of the number of members and adherents your church has,
- f) details of the places at which your church conducts its business and services,
- g) confirmation that your church is independent and not a member of a wider ‘umbrella’ organisation. (If the latter, please provide details of such organisation and your status within it),
- h) confirmation that your church is not subject to the direction or control of any other organisation or body,
- i) details of who would provide the religious instruction in schools, if approval was granted,
- j) an assurance that your church has implemented the requirements of the *Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998*, including the use of *Prohibited Employment Declaration* forms, and has established a procedure so that no teacher is authorised who has a criminal conviction for:
 - violence,
 - sexual assault,
 - providing prohibited drugs, or
 - a crime against a minor.

2.4.3 Contact Officer for Applications from Religious Persuasions

All member churches of ICCOREIS are currently approved providers. Applications from religious persuasions not yet approved to teach SRE in government schools should be addressed to:

The Executive Officer
Director-General’s Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education
Private Bag 3
Ryde NSW 2112
Telephone: 02 9808 9603
Facsimile: 02 9808 9655

The application should include the information noted in the previous section (2.4.2).

2.5 Coordinators

2.5.1 School SRE Coordinator

It is common practice for each school to designate a member of staff as the School SRE Coordinator. This is the person who deals with the churches and other religious persuasions.

2.5.2 Church SRE Coordinator

It is also common practice in a particular local church to designate someone as the Church SRE Coordinator, or to use a local title with similar meaning. The Church SRE Coordinator might be responsible for coordinating SRE in one or more local government schools. Where a particular church provides SRE at more than one government school, it is possible for a church to have separate Church SRE Coordinators for each of the schools.

Because a number of Christian denominations might be providing SRE at a school, there could therefore be more than one Church SRE Coordinator representing the churches that are involved. These people should get to know each other and establish effective liaison.

Chapter 5 in this handbook deals in detail with the role of the Church SRE Coordinator.

2.6 Essentials for Successful Christian SRE in Schools

The following items are essential for successful Christian SRE:

- Prayer.
- Consultation, cooperation and flexibility between local churches and schools in providing training.
- The expression of parental wishes on the school enrolment form.
- The availability of curriculum resources relevant to the needs and developmental stages of the students in years K-12 in government schools.
- Knowledge of relevant current NSW legislation related to SRE delivery in government schools, for example, the Education Act, Child Protection Acts.
- The leadership of denominational personnel in encouraging and assisting parishes and churches to participate in SRE programs in their local schools.
- The provision of an adequate number of suitably gifted and trained SRE personnel by the churches.
- The ongoing authorisation of SRE teachers by the appropriate church authorities.

End of Chapter

3 Role of the Church: Setting up SRE

3.1 Negotiating SRE

3.1.1 Working with the School

As far as government schools are concerned, the official position on the need to negotiate is set out in Section 3 *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*.

3.1.1.1 General Arrangements

The following should be considered when making general arrangements with a government school to conduct SRE:

- a) Approaches to the school to vary the times for SRE or to introduce SRE where there has been none in the past are best made early in Term 4 of the year preceding that in which changes are to be made. This is absolutely essential for secondary SRE where limited flexibility exists once the timetable has been constructed.
- b) The final arrangement is to be by agreement between the school Principal and all providers. The school cannot provide a particular time as a *fait accompli* if that time is unsuitable to the providers.
- c) Students not attending SRE are to be appropriately cared for by the school. They are not the responsibility of SRE providers.
- d) If a negotiated agreement cannot be reached, the matter should be referred to the District Superintendent of Schools. Denominational consultants or the ICCOREIS Executive Officer should be involved in the negotiation process before referral to the District Superintendent. A key contact for each denomination is listed in Chapter 8 of this handbook.
- e) The church authorising SRE teachers is also responsible for authorising the SRE curriculum to be taught. However, the Principal of the school is to be advised when SRE programs plan to deal with controversial topics.
- f) Chapter 7 of this handbook, dealing with models for SRE, sets out a variety of ways to organise a program.

3.1.1.2 Timetabling Arrangements

The following points are to be considered when making timetabling arrangements with a government school to conduct SRE:

- a) SRE is not to be in competition with scheduled lessons.
- b) Timetabling is to be organised so that attendance at SRE is not inhibited.
- c) Placing SRE at the beginning and end of the day and allowing non-participating students to arrive late or to leave early is not consistent with the Director-General's memorandum.
- d) The *Education Act 1990* states that: "In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion, but the total number of hours so allowed in a year is not to exceed, for each child, the number of school weeks in the year". Notwithstanding this provision, which could take the form of one hour per week, in many primary schools SRE periods are 30 minutes in duration per week.

3.1.2 Working with Other Churches and/or Religious Persuasions

Situations in schools and churches vary greatly across NSW. SRE programs for primary schools are often markedly different from those for secondary schools. Whatever the situation in a particular area, it is extremely important that churches cooperate among themselves and with other religious persuasions.

- a) Clergy or other official authorising agents have an obligation to consult with one another on the most suitable SRE arrangements for the number of students and the number of authorised teachers.
- b) Joint-denominational systems of SRE must have the agreement of all participants, and must take into account the needs of non-participating SRE providers. (See Chapter 7 of this handbook.)
- c) The establishment of local SRE Employment Boards should be done in consultation with all other religious persuasions in the area, even if only a limited number decide to participate in the board. Any teacher or teachers employed by a board must be authorised by each participating church. Likewise, the agreed curriculum needs to be authorised by each participating church.
- d) The *Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice* developed by ICCOREIS should be consulted when churches engage in joint programs. (See Appendix C of this handbook.)

3.1.3 Working with Parents

In the school situation, SRE teachers may have little or no contact with the parents of the children they are teaching. They nevertheless must appreciate the primary importance of parents under the law. Note the following:

- a) The school must inform parents of the organisation of SRE. The Department Education and Training has prepared a sample letter to help schools meet their obligations. Churches need to cooperate with the school by providing information early enough to enable parents to be informed.
- b) Parents are to be advised of their right of withdrawal from joint-denominational classes. The *Education Act 1990* in Section 33 states: “No child at a government school is to be required to receive any general religious education or special religious education if the parent of the child objects to the child’s receiving that education”.
- c) It is desirable to notify parents when SRE programs plan to deal with controversial topics.
- d) SRE teachers from a particular church may sometimes wish to send home information about the SRE program or events taking place in that particular church. This is only permissible with the approval of the school Principal. Difficulties can arise in joint-denominational classes if a teacher from one church promotes activities in that church to children from other churches without the permission of those other churches. This permission from other churches should be obtained first before approaching the school principal for approval.

3.2 Ensuring Child Protection

3.2.1 Child Protection Legislation

The full range of activities for children and young people in a church is subject to the requirements of child protection legislation. Particular care needs to be taken with SRE because it involves going into government schools.

Each church is required to obtain from prospective volunteer SRE teachers a completed *Prohibited Employment Declaration* form indicating that they are not a prohibited person. These must be kept on file by the church. Even if the prospective SRE teacher has already signed a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* form for another organisation, that person must make an additional declaration to cover their work in the SRE program and other church activities involving work with children and young people.

Employed (paid) SRE teachers must also be screened. This involves the completion of an employment screening consent form and the church submitting these details to an approved screening agency. For information concerning such agencies contact the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People (Phone: 02 9286 7219).

3.2.2 Department of Education and Training Requirements

In addition to the requirements of child protection legislation, SRE teachers must meet the requirements of the Department of Education and Training. *Implementation of Religious Education Policy* sets out the following responsibility for providers of SRE in government schools: “The authorisation of personnel to teach SRE is the sole responsibility of each individual religious persuasion. The persuasions are not to authorise any person as a SRE teacher who has not signed a prohibitive employment declaration or who has a criminal conviction for:

- a crime against a minor, or
- violence, or
- sexual assault, or
- provision of prohibited drugs”.

The above requirements are usually incorporated into the authorisation (or engagement) form used by the churches. (See also Section 3.4.)

3.3 Selecting SRE Teachers

3.3.1 Number of Teachers Required

The selection, appointment and authorisation of SRE teachers are the responsibility of the individual church. It is self-evident that, for SRE to be competently taught, a sufficient number of teachers is essential. These SRE teachers should have the level of training, personal qualities and skills to teach in a manner appropriate to the needs of the age group of students they are authorised to teach. Furthermore, there should be enough relief SRE teachers who can fill in when a regular SRE teacher is absent.

If a church cannot guarantee staffing of SRE classes that are organised on a weekly basis, it should consider negotiating a different model for its SRE. One solution may be to change to a joint-denominational model. (See Chapter 7 of this handbook for other models that may be used.)

3.3.2 Selection Criteria for SRE Teachers

There are two aspects to consider in the selection of SRE teachers. Firstly, the church will need to consider the appropriateness of the person from a Christian perspective and secondly, any person selected must meet the current Child Protection and Department of Education and Training requirements.

When considering a person from a Christian perspective, a church might use the following criteria:

- a) Volunteers should have a strong personal faith, knowledge of that faith and behaviour consistent with that faith.
- b) Volunteers should have a demonstrated affinity with children, an understanding of their needs and capacities, and a commitment to them as people.
- c) Volunteers, ideally, should have some prior experience of teaching children in church-based children's programs.
- d) Volunteers should be willing to undergo training for accreditation as SRE teachers.

Clergy and other authorising agents may wish to add other criteria to meet the requirements of the local situation, for example, for teaching in special schools or at senior secondary levels.

3.4 Authorising SRE Teachers

3.4.1 What is Authorisation?

Authorisation refers to the permission given to a person by a local minister or leader of a church or religious persuasion to teach SRE on their behalf at the school(s) within the church/parish boundaries.

The *Education Act 1990* states that: “The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs”.

No person may teach SRE in a NSW Department of Education and Training school without formal authorisation by a local minister or leader of a denomination or religious persuasion approved by the Department of Education and Training. The Department’s website lists the religious persuasions that are currently approved (www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/index.htm).

3.4.2 Why SRE Teachers need Authorisation

Every SRE teacher, and anyone who accompanies the SRE teacher into the school precincts, must be authorised. Even though a helper may not do any teaching, the person is still regarded as an SRE teacher. Although it can be a major undertaking to ensure that every SRE teacher is authorised, this approach has a number of benefits:

- a) It encourages churches to support, by prayer and resources, those they authorise to teach on their behalf. Churches have responsibility for the content of curriculum for SRE teaching. They approve the materials and syllabus used by their teachers. Authorisation encourages ministers to be sure to authorise only those persons whom they judge to have the ability to take SRE classes.
- b) It helps the school to know whether SRE teachers are representing recognised churches. With increasing numbers of religious groups approved to give SRE, authorisation will assist principals and/or coordinators to ensure that all SRE classes are taught by people authorised in accordance with legislative requirements.
- c) Authorisation helps to ensure that the school, the churches, the clergy and SRE teachers are aware of their respective responsibilities in relation to the teaching of SRE.
- d) Authorisation attempts to ensure that parental wishes are met with regard to the type of SRE desired for their child.
- e) Authorisation also protects the interests of the churches with regard to insurance matters. In the event of personal injury to an SRE teacher in the performance of duties on behalf of the church, the appointment of the person is clearly established. In the event of litigation proving liability of a church for action on the part of an SRE teacher resulting either in injury to persons or damage to property, or again deemed to be in breach of professional duties, then proper authorisation could be essential to insurance coverage.
- f) The duration of authorisation is normally stated on the card issued to SRE teachers. (See Section 3.4.4.) Authorisation is renewable subject to review by the representative of the religious persuasion. The church can revoke authorisation.

Schools can ask for verification of authorisation. The carrying of an authorisation card is a simple way for the SRE teacher to provide evidence that this process has been completed according to the current requirements.

3.4.3 Authorisation Form

Most churches have developed their own authorisation form which SRE teachers are expected to sign. It may also be called an engagement form.

A copy of the form used by the Uniting Church can be found in Appendix B of this handbook. It may be adapted for use by other member churches of ICCOREIS.

3.4.4 Authorisation Card

The form of authorisation recommended by member churches of ICCOREIS is a standard card, usually green in colour, which carries the denomination's identification on the front.

The card must specify:

- a) the name of the teacher,
- b) the name of the church,
- c) the church's acknowledgement of authorisation, for example, an official seal or signature of the authorising person,
- d) the duration of the authorisation,
- e) the signature of the authorised person (cardholder).

A card must be issued to every person authorised by a church to be an SRE teacher, a helper for an SRE teacher or a relief SRE teacher. The signed authorisation card is carried when teaching SRE.

3.4.5 Notifying the School about Authorised SRE Teachers

At the start of each school year, the minister or other official authorising agent should supply the school with a written list of the teachers authorised by that denomination for SRE teaching in that school. Where teachers are authorised for more than one school, each school Principal should be provided with a list of authorised teachers. Where additional or alternate SRE teachers or helpers are authorised during the year, an updated list should be provided for each school affected by the changes.

Some sample letters are included in Appendix B of this handbook.

3.4.6 Authorisation of SRE Teachers in Joint-Denominational Programs

Sections 32(2) and 32(3) of the *Education Act 1990* state: “(2) The religious education to be given to children of any religious persuasion is to be given by a member of the clergy or other religious teacher of that persuasion authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs. (3) The religious education to be given is in every case to be the religious education authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs”.

The nature and operation of joint-denominational programs can vary considerably, particularly when comparing primary schools and secondary schools. Whatever the model, every participating church needs to authorise every SRE teacher who participates in the program, and inform the school. This should occur annually and as the need arises during the year. Each participating church should keep written records of the joint authorisations. An example of a form that has been designed to do this can be found in Appendix B of this handbook.

Churches participating in joint-denominational programs should consider the following questions:

- a) Do all the SRE teachers authorised by participating churches have the desired level of understanding, training, skills and other personal qualities to meet the expectations of the parents enrolling their children for SRE conducted by those churches?
- b) Are all the SRE teachers capable of teaching a curriculum, agreed upon by the participating churches, in a suitable way to meet the range of needs of the students and to respect the doctrine and traditions of the churches in a sensitive manner?
- c) Because joint-denominational programs, particularly at secondary level, can be large and set the pattern for SRE in a school, have the needs of other churches and religious persuasions been met adequately? In this regard, has the timetabling of SRE taken into account the different needs?
- d) Have the churches in the joint-denominational program appointed a Joint-Denominational Program Coordinator who can work with the Church SRE Coordinator in each participating church?

3.5 Authorising the SRE Curriculum

3.5.1 Legal and Departmental Requirements

Section 32(3) of the *Education Act 1990* states: “The religious education to be given is in every case to be the religious education authorised by the religious body to which the member of the clergy or other religious teacher belongs”.

Section 3B point 3 of *Implementation of Religious Education Policy* states: “It is the responsibility of the approved religious persuasion to:

- a) authorise representatives to teach SRE,
- b) authorise materials and pedagogy used by SRE teachers,
- c) ensure that the school is informed of the names and contact details of authorised SRE teachers,
- d) provide information about the content of lessons when requested by parents/caregivers”.

3.5.2 Denominational SRE Curricula

Most denominations have responded to the above requirements by developing or endorsing a curriculum appropriate to the needs of the students and the frequency of contact afforded by the SRE provisions. Details of specific curricula may be obtained from the appropriate denominational education office. (See Chapter 8 of this handbook for details.)

The local clergy or authorising agents generally have discretion in the adoption of a suitable curriculum for SRE. Care should be taken to ensure that, before authorising a particular curriculum, not only is it doctrinally acceptable but also educationally sound and suited to the developmental needs and age of the children.

3.5.3 Joint-Denominational SRE Curricula

The decision to join with others in a joint-denominational SRE program means that careful consideration should be given to agreeing on a suitable SRE curriculum. It is advisable to have a written agreement on the authorised curriculum between all participating denominations. Within any one school, joint-denominational programs may run parallel with programs operated by other religious persuasions.

Once an agreed curriculum is in place, it should not be changed more frequently than every three to four years. When a change is contemplated, consideration should be given to the sequencing of the new to the old curriculum so that children are not exposed to undue repetition.

Authorisation of curriculum should also be accompanied by authorisation of pedagogy (teaching practice). It is important to ensure that the teaching practice is suited to the authorised curriculum’s approach and content and to the range of preferred learning styles among the children in the class. Failure to take this into account will often lead to classroom management problems.

The following checklist can be used when choosing a curriculum and associated instructional materials for a joint-denominational program:

- a) Have the participants reviewed the ICCOREIS *Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice*? (See Appendix C of this handbook.)
- b) Have all the denominations involved been consulted?
- c) Have all participants explored and discussed material from several publishers?
- d) Have the participants agreed on when the choice of material will be reviewed?

- e) How long is the cycle of material?
- f) What will be the outcomes if one teacher wants to use other material?
- g) Can the teachers at one school use different material to that being used in other schools in a joint program?
- h) Has an agreement been drawn up between participating churches so that new clergy and teachers will be aware of previous decisions?
- i) Have the decision and reasons for the choice been communicated to the SRE team?
- j) Will all teachers abide by the agreement?
- k) Is the team keeping in touch with those responsible for training teachers for their denomination? (Often advertising for courses is sent with curriculum material published by a particular denomination.)

End of Chapter

4 Role of the Church: Supporting SRE Teachers

4.1 Support and Recognition

4.1.1 Appointing a Church SRE Coordinator

It is important that a capable person coordinate the work of SRE in order that proper liaison, consultation, communication, coordination and support for SRE occur. (See Chapter 5 of this handbook for more detail on the role of the Church SRE Coordinator.) The diagram in Section 2.3 of this handbook highlights the importance of the coordinator's role in the SRE framework. A Church SRE Coordinator is usually the key person to liaise with a teacher in the school who is designated the School SRE Coordinator.

The Church SRE Coordinator is responsible for the supervision of voluntary SRE teachers, and liaison with the local schools, clergy and other churches.

The support and pastoral care of SRE teachers is an important function of the Church SRE Coordinator. This can be very limited when conducted by the clergy due to the pressures of other pastoral needs within their congregations. The appointment of a layperson as the Church SRE Coordinator for one or a group of schools is an effective method of responding to the need of providing pastoral care for teachers.

In the appointment of a Church SRE Coordinator the following factors should be considered:

- a) the number of schools for which the church is responsible,
- b) the number of SRE teachers requiring supervision,
- c) local considerations such as access to schools and distance between schools being serviced.

4.1.2 Providing Training for SRE Teachers

To ensure that SRE is a genuinely educational activity which is adequately staffed and competently taught, it is essential that all SRE teachers be required to train for their basic accreditation. Once they have completed the basic level, teachers should be encouraged to continue their training by completing courses for the advanced or extended accreditation certificate and by attending local training days in specific aspects of SRE teaching. (See Section 4.2 for details on training and accreditation.)

Information on training can be obtained from denominational SRE consultants/field officers, the ICCOREIS Executive Officer or the ICCOREIS website (www.iccoreis.asn.au).

4.1.3 Resolving Problems in SRE

Experience has shown that many of the problems arising in SRE could have been overcome by more careful attention to consultation and communication between churches and schools.

Problems usually take one or more of the following forms:

- a) Inadequate consultation over the timetabling of SRE or the provision of accommodation.
Remedy: Negotiations with the school must commence no later than the start of Term 4 of the year prior to that in which changes are to be made. Flexibility is essential.
- b) Inadequate staffing of SRE classes.
Remedy: Close liaison between the Church SRE Coordinator and the school will alert the churches to potential problems. Inability to staff weekly classes should be addressed in advance so that a different pattern of SRE can be developed.
- c) Poor relations between denominations in joint SRE programs.
Remedy: Competent coordination, clear communication and proper authorisation of teachers and curriculum will help to avoid this.
- d) Poor classroom management by SRE teachers.
Remedy: Careful selection of SRE teachers, proper pre-service training, confidence building by assigning a mentor, ability to observe classroom teachers in action and ongoing in-service training are all important factors in ensuring sound educational practice.
- e) Lack of strategic planning for the coming year or for new school development.
Remedy: Attention to community development, consultation with the Department of Education and Training staff, and developing a church's vision for SRE ministry are important. Cooperative approaches with other denominations or with other churches within a denomination can produce a stronger SRE presence in schools.
- f) Loss of commitment for SRE and other children's and youth work in a church.
Remedy: A strategy is needed to develop a new vision among the church's leaders. If assistance is needed from outside denominational structures, the ICCOREIS Executive Officer might be able to assist by informing leaders of what is happening elsewhere.

Assistance in addressing these problems can be obtained by contacting the denomination's education office/consultants/field workers. (See Chapter 8 of this handbook.)

4.1.4 Recognising the Importance of SRE

Weekly SRE classes taken year after year are very demanding on a person's energy, time and spiritual resources. It is important that the work of SRE teachers is:

- a) central to the mission/vision of the church,
- b) well organised,
- c) given a high level of recognition by the church,
- d) supported by providing sufficient resources,
- e) linked to the church-based children's and youth ministries.

4.1.5 Affirming the Work of SRE Teachers

In churches where the provision of SRE is effective, the work of the SRE teachers is usually affirmed on a regular basis. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- a) An annual commissioning service for SRE teachers can be held at the start of the new school year. Additional commissioning services can be held for new teachers who start during the year.
- b) The names of the SRE teachers should be published with others involved in church ministry.
- c) Short articles about the SRE teachers or their school activities can be included in the church bulletin.
- d) Posters made at school can be used for Sunday services.
- e) SRE teachers could give a brief informal report to the congregation from time to time.

4.1.6 Providing Support to SRE Teachers

- a) Church members can be recruited to pray specifically and regularly for SRE teachers and their children.
- b) SRE teachers may need assistance with transport, or baby-sitting for those with young children.
- c) Gifted people in the church could help SRE teachers with specific skills in fields such as drama and music. Note that anyone who accompanies an SRE teacher into a school is regarded as an SRE teacher and must be appropriately authorised.
- d) Assistance can be given in preparing material for lessons.
- e) Church facilities can be made available for training days and meetings of the SRE team that are essential for providing assistance and encouragement.
- f) The church could finance teachers' curriculum materials: children's workbooks, course fees for teacher development and the like.
- g) Resources for children's ministry and other church equipment could be made available for use in an SRE class.
- h) The church bulletin should regularly include prayer points for SRE.
- i) In addition to the SRE teachers who staff classes on a regular basis, it is important to have a number of relief SRE teachers available to substitute for them when necessary.

4.1.7 Building SRE Bridges between the School and the Local Church

A visit from the clergy to each SRE class during the year will help to connect the classes with the local church.

Out of school activities may be conducted for children from individual religious persuasions. These activities come under the auspices of the particular church and are not classified as Special Religious Education. Invitations to participate in these church activities can be given during SRE classes. It is advisable, however, to inform the school. (See Chapter 7 of this handbook for the policy of the Department of Education and Training.) This can also include family activities.

Care needs to be taken if out of school activities are organised for children from joint-denominational classes. The agreement of all participating churches is needed before an activity is organised and invitations are extended to children, especially if the activity is based in a particular church. The legal implications of out of school activities need to be carefully addressed. When these activities are organised by a church, appropriate insurance cover should be held by that church.

Education Week provides another opportunity. Many churches have a special service.

4.1.8 Building Bridges between SRE and Christian Organisations

In some schools there are Christian organisations or clubs that have the support of local churches. For example, a particular local church might encourage children from its SRE classes to attend an ISCF group in a secondary school. If this occurs, it is important to note that ISCF is not SRE. Legally, they are different activities.

Where joint-denominational SRE classes are held, it is important to ensure that all participating churches agree on any encouragement that is given to students to participate in another Christian organisation.

Where joint-denominational SRE is conducted, approval for the above bridge-building exercises would need to be sought from the participating churches.

4.2 Training and Accreditation

4.2.1 Importance of Training

Religious Education in NSW Government Schools (1980) included the following statements:

- “6.65 Each religious group, at all levels of its administration, should give SRE in government schools its official support and commitment, making every effort to ensure that, as SRE takes place within the school buildings and in school hours, it is conducted as a genuinely educational activity which is adequately staffed and competently taught. The authorising authority of each religious faith should therefore ensure that its teachers possess knowledge of the relevant doctrine and possess adequate levels of teaching competence.
- 6.66 Each religious group should aim to establish a reserve of appropriately trained teachers and support personnel.
- 6.80 At the denominational, state, regional or diocesan level, churches and other religious bodies have responsibility for:
- (a) ensuring that adequate training opportunities and appropriate resources are available for their teachers;
 - (e) developing for the SRE representatives accreditation procedures suited to their particular religious tradition.
- 6.95 **Teacher Preparation**
The Committee is of the firm view that the churches and other religious groups must accept responsibility for ensuring that SRE teachers entering government schools are appropriately prepared.”

SRE teachers, therefore, should be encouraged to avail themselves of relevant training opportunities, including in-service and tertiary courses.

These statements formed the basis of recommendations which were accepted and endorsed by the then Minister for Education in February 1986. Since that time, each of the Christian churches has developed training programs to fulfil these requirements and set up minimum standards of training and accomplishment to qualify for basic accreditation. In addition, joint-denominational programs have been developed by local ICCOREIS affiliates.

4.2.2 Basic Accreditation

Accreditation relates to training courses completed by the SRE teacher. There are two levels of accreditation: basic accreditation and advanced accreditation. (**Accreditation** is not to be confused with **authorisation**. See Section 3.4 of this handbook for information concerning authorisation.)

Basic accreditation refers to an introductory course of training to achieve a basic standard of competence in classroom method, teaching skills, child protection issues and doctrinal understanding. This is usually determined by the educational agency of a denomination. On completion of course requirements, an accreditation certificate is usually issued by the educational agency.

In NSW, the Department of Education and Training requests that each denomination be responsible for training its authorised SRE teachers.

Each denomination is free to develop its own training courses to suit the needs of its teachers, and to set its own standards. The denomination's education agency will have details of its accreditation program.

4.2.3 Advanced Accreditation

Teachers are encouraged to develop their skills through further training. This usually leads to a certificate of advanced accreditation.

4.2.4 Support from Department of Education and Training

For many years there were complaints from schools about the standard of SRE teaching and from SRE teachers about the level of support by local school staff. In 1986, the NSW Department of Education and Training issued guidelines to principals on how to offer positive support to SRE teachers in their schools. At the same time, the Department forwarded recommendations to the Heads of Churches encouraging them to improve the standard of SRE teaching through training programs.

There is no legal requirement that mandates training, however every SRE teacher can benefit from training and should take advantage of opportunities to become a competent teacher.

The Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education meets quarterly to discuss issues, share ideas and provide the Department with a regular update of training courses being conducted. The Department assumes that SRE teachers are involved in training towards accreditation.

4.2.5 Responsibilities of Clergy and Church SRE Coordinators

Clergy and Church SRE Coordinators should themselves complete the training requirements associated with accreditation certificates whilst encouraging all SRE teachers to do the same.

Accreditation courses offered for SRE teachers by ICCOREIS (and various denominations) are practical and deal with relevant issues to support and equip teachers. No particular level of prior education is necessary to enrol. Accreditation courses benefit both the SRE teacher and the children taught. Benefits include improved class behaviour, enhanced teaching skills and developed teacher-student relationships.

4.2.6 In-service Courses by Groups Affiliated with ICCOREIS

These courses are usually arranged by local committees and support groups affiliated with ICCOREIS. They are advertised through the local school and/or churches. These courses are recognised by most denominations and can contribute toward accreditation requirements.

The ICCOREIS Executive Officer has details of the ICCOREIS contacts for specific areas. The local affiliated ICCOREIS committee or support group will have details of local training events or will be interested in meeting local training needs.

End of Chapter

5 Church SRE Coordinator

5.1 Overview of Church SRE Coordinator's Role

Church SRE Coordinators can operate at a school, church, inter-school and inter-church level. When operating at an inter-church level, the participating churches and congregations must support the appointment so that the function of coordinating is being carried out in the name of the body as a whole. The Church SRE Coordinator's role consists of:

1. Liaising
 - School Executive
 - Principal
 - School SRE Coordinator
 - Staff
 - Parents
 - Participating denominations
2. Consulting
 - Ministers' colleges/associations
 - Church SRE representatives
3. Communicating
 - SRE Teachers
 - Local church community
 - Other churches represented in SRE
 - School SRE Coordinator
4. Coordinating
 - SRE teachers
 - Recruiting of SRE personnel
 - Other churches represented in SRE
 - SRE in the school community
5. Supporting
 - SRE teachers.

These tasks will be covered separately in this chapter but in practice some of the processes may occur simultaneously, hence there will be some overlap in the presentation of material.

5.2 Liaising

Liaising is taken to mean the initial and perhaps informal contact that needs to be made with key stakeholders. It provides a basis for the other processes of consulting, communicating, coordinating and supporting.

5.2.1 Liaising to Set Up a New SRE Program

In most regions of NSW there has been a long tradition of SRE in government primary schools. In some schools SRE has been discontinued or, in fact, never established. This situation is more evident in government secondary schools, where in many cases there is little SRE activity. If a church or a group of churches is planning to start a new program, the following advice is provided:

- 1) The local church or group of churches needs to appoint a Church SRE Coordinator to lead and coordinate all the planning.
- 2) It is advisable for the newly appointed Church SRE Coordinator and others to benefit from experience gained elsewhere. The following could be contacted:
 - a) the ICCOREIS Executive Officer,
 - b) a key person(s) responsible for SRE in NSW (or in a region of NSW) within one of the churches that constitute ICCOREIS. (See Chapter 8 of this handbook for resource information.)
- 3) The people mentioned above will be able to identify all the essential resources required, including the following:
 - a) ICCOREIS: *Special Religious Education Handbook*;
 - b) ICCOREIS: *Directory*;
 - c) Department of Education and Training: *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*;
 - d) Commission for Children and Young People: *Working with Children Check*;
 - e) A set of the curriculum materials that the church or religious denomination normally uses in NSW.
- 4) If the aim is to establish a board and employ SRE teachers to work in secondary schools, it is advisable to visit a few boards that are operating successful programs. The NSW High Schools SRE Association should also be contacted.

5.2.2 Liaising to Maintain an Existing SRE Program

In the ongoing maintenance of an established SRE program the Church SRE Coordinator should consider the following:

- a) Keeping in touch with the person(s) in their own denomination who is responsible for SRE in NSW or a region of NSW.
- b) Keeping in touch with the ICCOREIS Executive Officer.
- c) Attending a meeting of ICCOREIS if living in or near Sydney.
- d) Putting forward recommendations to ICCOREIS, in consultation with their own church representatives, for changes to arrangements for SRE. (ICCOREIS is well represented on the Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education where changes can be recommended.)
- e) Trying to keep in touch with other Church SRE Coordinators to share experiences.

5.3 Consulting

Consulting involves going beyond initial and ongoing liaison to negotiate outcomes, arrangements and agreements.

5.3.1 Consulting with Other Church SRE Coordinators or Representatives of Other Religious Persuasions

Although a particular church may be providing its own SRE program in one or more schools, other Church SRE Coordinators or representatives of other religious persuasions may need to be consulted when:

- a) organising classes and teaching programs,
- b) organising special events,
- c) dealing with other issues that affect the organisation of SRE in schools.

Each approved church or religious persuasion has equal entitlement (under the *Education Act 1990*) in the provision of SRE in government schools. This right should be respected in all consultations between churches, religious persuasions and government schools.

5.3.2 Consulting with Ministers' Associations

In joint-denominational programs, the agreement of all the participating clergy or their representatives is essential. Agreement definitely needs to be reached on each of the following matters by:

- a) agreeing on arrangements for authorising teachers and letting the schools know the names of authorised teachers;
- b) consulting with clergy or approved authorising persons of all participating denominations to select an agreed curriculum;
- c) ensuring that sufficient quantities of teachers' manuals, student workbooks and teaching aids have been ordered for each term/semester/year;
- d) negotiating, where necessary, any changes in the curriculum, bearing in mind the educational impact the changes will have;
- e) accepting a code of practice for operating in a joint program. Consider using the *ICCOREIS Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice*. (See Appendix C of this handbook.)

If there is a breakdown in relationships among the clergy, the Church SRE Coordinators or the SRE teachers in such a program, it may be necessary to contact the ICCOREIS Executive Officer for assistance.

5.3.3 Consulting with the School SRE Coordinator and Principal

The Church SRE Coordinator needs to:

- 1) Determine arrangements for SRE and general school procedures for each school year:
 - a) Note the day, time, rooms and numbers of students in classes;
 - b) Obtain class lists of student names (where it is school policy to provide the lists), and details of students with special needs;
 - c) Investigate the school discipline/rewards system, which SRE teachers can use;
 - d) Be aware of school safety procedures and procedures for student supervision.
- 2) Deal with problems:
 - a) Listen to the SRE teacher(s) involved and ensure the facts are clearly understood;
 - b) Report to either the authorising clergy or to the School SRE Coordinator as appropriate;
 - c) Seek assistance from denominational SRE consultants/field officers or the ICCOREIS Executive Officer when necessary.
- 3) Handle issues related to support for SRE by the school. Attempt to address these issues through negotiation with the Principal and School SRE Coordinator. If this does not achieve the required outcome, it may be necessary to:
 - a) Contact the denominational SRE consultant/field officer (if coordinating for a single denomination) or the local Ministers' Association (if coordinating for a number of denominations); or
 - b) Contact the School Superintendent for the district in which the school is located. This should only be used as a last resort when relationships with the school have broken down.

5.4 Communicating

Communicating involves letting all stakeholders know about the outcomes of consultation, and keeping them informed on a regular basis. It is all too easy to assume that people know what is happening or should be happening. The Church SRE Coordinator may need to establish networks of communication with partners in SRE.

5.4.1 Communicating with the SRE Teachers

- 1) SRE teachers must be kept well informed of relevant information provided by the school, particularly:
 - a) the school's Student Welfare Policy and advice on how to implement it,
 - b) Child Protection procedures,
 - c) temporary and permanent timetable and class changes,
 - d) new developments,
 - e) meetings,
 - f) training courses.
- 2) Regular briefings for SRE teachers should emphasise routine procedures such as:
 - a) being prompt for lessons,
 - b) giving sufficient notice to the Church SRE Coordinator if unable to attend,
 - c) signing the attendance book on arrival at the school,
 - d) marking the roll each lesson (where this is a school requirement) and reporting absences to the class teacher,
 - e) never leaving a class unsupervised, including at the end of a lesson,
 - f) what to do if a child has to be sent from class (follow school procedures),
 - g) what to do if a child has an accident.
- 3) SRE newsletters from ICCOREIS and participating denominations should be distributed to SRE teachers.

5.4.2 Communicating with the Local Church Community

Awareness of SRE and its importance to local churches can be emphasised by providing:

- a) a constant update of SRE happenings,
- b) information on curricula taught in SRE,
- c) information on location of SRE classes,
- d) appropriate forms of recognition to SRE teachers within the church community,
- e) updated prayer points to churches on a regular basis.

5.4.3 Communicating with Other Churches involved in SRE

Information that should be provided to participating churches includes:

- a) professional development opportunities,
- b) finance - appropriate contributions are to be determined for each member in joint programs/activities,
- c) invitations to special events,
- d) special event planning.

5.4.4 Communicating with the School SRE Coordinator and Principal

The School SRE Coordinator must be informed promptly of:

- a) any significant behavioural problems experienced by a teacher,
- b) any accident or injury involving a student,
- c) any accident or injury to an SRE teacher.

The Principal must be informed of:

- a) any suspected cases of child physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or child neglect. (Great discretion needs to be adopted in such instances. Voluntary SRE teachers are not mandatory reporters, but there exists a moral responsibility to respond to cases of suspected abuse or neglect in the interests of the child. Employed SRE teachers, including members of the clergy who teach SRE classes, are mandatory reporters. They are required to follow child protection reporting procedures);
- b) any matters of significance in SRE where commonsense suggests that the Principal should be informed.

5.4.5 Communicating with Parents

The Church SRE Coordinator may have little direct contact with parents, except at church and in other church activities. However, there are at least two ways in which the Church SRE Coordinator can liaise with parents:

- 1) Arranging to attend meetings of the Parents and Citizens Association and/or the School Council to inform parents about what is happening in SRE.
- 2) Provision of information to parents, with school approval, on matters such as the content of the SRE program, special teaching arrangements, joint-denominational classes, and any special events, activities and celebrations. This may take the form of a regular newsletter (annually, once a semester or once a term) and/or attending parent curriculum information sessions.

5.5 Coordinating

Coordinating involves actions that are needed to maintain SRE after agreements have been determined and put in place. Throughout the year, decisions have to be made, and key stakeholders need to be involved in the decision-making processes. The Church SRE Coordinator may need to facilitate interaction between partners in SRE.

5.5.1 Coordinating Activities with the School Community

SRE can be made more effective in the school community if the different stakeholders are brought together and some activities are coordinated. For example:

- a) Bringing school staff and SRE teachers together to encourage harmonious relationships and foster school support for the SRE program (for example, providing a morning tea, attending a joint professional development activity).
- b) Arranging for opportunities to display student work as part of Education Week.
- c) Arranging for SRE teacher participation in special Easter, Education Week and Christmas assemblies.
- d) Arranging, where appropriate, for the participation of SRE teachers in professional development activities in the school.
- e) Suggesting to the SRE teachers that, if they choose, they may take a more active role in the school community as volunteers outside their SRE duties (for example, assisting with reading, computer studies and the school canteen).

5.5.2 Coordinating Activities with SRE Teachers

At the start of each year, SRE teachers would benefit from a briefing session covering relevant aspects of the school organisation and policies. This could be run by the Principal/Deputy or School SRE Coordinator.

It may also be helpful for an SRE teacher to observe lessons conducted by a class teacher.

Each SRE teacher is to be provided with details of:

- a) the dates on which SRE will commence and finish for each term,
- b) the day and time of classes the teacher will take,
- c) the room or teaching area allocated to that teacher,
- d) student names (when these are provided by the school),
- e) students with special needs and the support available for them,
- f) school discipline/awards system which SRE teachers can utilise,
- g) SRE assemblies,
- h) days on which school activities will prevent SRE,
- i) procedures to be followed in cases of accident sustained on school premises by students and/or SRE teachers,
- j) procedures to be followed in the case of suspected child abuse or neglect. Refer to Child Protection Procedures.

5.5.3 Coordinating Work with the Local Church Community

The Church SRE Coordinator needs to ensure that ongoing recruiting programs operate in the church community. Suggested recruitment activities and general advice on recruitment are available from ICCOREIS through the Executive Officer. A variety of resources is listed in Chapter 8 of this handbook.

5.5.4 Coordinating Work with Other Churches Represented in SRE

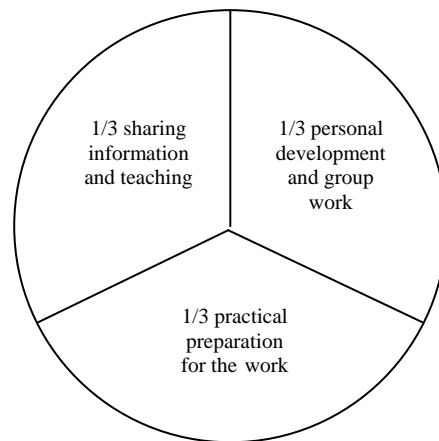
Facilitating meetings of SRE teachers from different denominational backgrounds may involve:

- a) a morning tea prior to/after SRE,
- b) a combined prayer meeting at regular intervals,
- c) a luncheon once a term, each time in the home of a different SRE teacher,
- d) convening meetings as required on issues of relevance to all religious persuasions and churches that impact on the provision of SRE in a local school (for example, classroom management).

5.6 Supporting

Supporting deals with the practical help that needs to be given to SRE teachers, the need for prayer, and the need to affirm the work of SRE teachers in the life of the local church.

One formula for sustaining volunteer support requires that time be put aside for the purpose, and that time is structured in thirds, as illustrated below. The SRE teacher is usually a volunteer and thus a similar approach is encouraged.



5.6.1 Supporting a Team Approach to SRE

It is important to organise regular meetings of SRE teachers to provide time for:

- a) personal sharing with the group, prayer and worship;
- b) swapping ideas and resources such as audio and visual aids;
- c) preparing ahead by working on programs for lessons, themes, or topics for the following term. (In a limited time this would, of course, be a preliminary overview and not a detailed preparation);
- d) the Church SRE Coordinator to get to know the SRE teachers;
- e) developing new curriculum materials as a team and discussing objectives for the semester.

5.6.2 Supporting the Development of Educational Skills

Educational skills among the SRE teachers can be developed by:

- a) providing information about training courses and encouraging SRE teachers to attend;
- b) developing and facilitating training courses catering for the specific needs of the SRE teachers;
- c) establishing a mentoring relationship by encouraging experienced teachers to work with new recruits.

5.6.3 Supporting Pastoral Work

SRE teachers can be supported through:

- 1) Developing a back-up team of relief teachers;
- 2) Developing a back-up team of babysitters, visual aid makers, helpers and prayer supporters;
- 3) Ensuring that all the SRE teachers have the Church SRE Coordinator's contact details and that they are encouraged to contact the coordinator as required;
- 4) Including SRE teachers in decision-making so that they feel part of the team;
- 5) Complimenting an SRE teacher personally and, where appropriate, publicly;
- 6) Advising teachers when they have consistent difficulty with a child by:
 - a) sharing a method that would assist the teacher analysing and dealing with the child's behaviour;
 - b) following the matter up with the School SRE Coordinator if the problem behaviour persists.
- 7) Correcting an SRE teacher if need be. Any correction should be constructive and offered privately. If correction is not accepted, the teacher's problems should be discussed with the authorising person. The authorisation of that teacher may need to be revoked. Conflict situations should be dealt with privately and constructively.

It is important not to confuse the need to support an SRE teacher with the need to discipline an SRE teacher if there is a serious breach of an acceptable code of conduct. Child abuse incidents call for immediate suspension by the authorising agent of the local church and adoption of the correct reporting procedures.

5.6.4 Supporting Prayer for SRE

Prayer support from the local church community encourages SRE teachers. The Church SRE Coordinator is responsible for organising this support. This can be provided in a variety of forms, for example:

- a) A specific prayer supporter, who is a volunteer from the church community, can be asked to pray for the SRE teacher and the children in the class by name.
- b) A prayer support partner, who accompanies the SRE teacher to class, can pray silently in the class. (The prayer support partner will require full authorisation before entering the school.)
- c) SRE teachers can be added to the prayer diary of the church.

End of Chapter

6 The SRE Teacher

6.1 Working in a Government School

6.1.1 Authority to be in the School

All voluntary SRE teachers, and anyone who accompanies them into a school for SRE, must:

- a) complete an SRE teacher's engagement form (or equivalent), that is issued by the local church. This must be signed by the head of the local church;
- b) sign a *Prohibited Employment Declaration* form to indicate that they are not a prohibited person under the child protection legislation;
- c) obtain an identification card (commonly green), to show that they are an authorised SRE teacher. This card must be carried when visiting the school.

All employed SRE teachers, in addition to the above, should have been screened as part of the authorisation process by the local church.

The local head of each participating church must authorise every SRE teacher.

For a more detailed account of the above requirements, refer to Chapter 3 of this handbook.

6.1.2 Following School Procedures

As a visiting teacher to the local government school, the SRE teacher should:

- a) ensure that the children are safe and happy and that the procedures of the school are maintained as harmoniously as possible;
- b) teach with sensitivity, being aware of the child and the family's religious background, and adopt normal practices and courtesies expected of all teaching staff in the local schools;
- c) be familiar with the Department of Education and Training directions on classroom management and discipline as this helps to improve lesson quality;
- d) become familiar with the school welfare, discipline and other policies relevant to the SRE teacher;
- e) refer to class teachers to find out what is to be expected of children's conduct;
- f) enquire if any children have special learning difficulties, endeavouring to understand their special problems by consulting their normal class teacher and, where appropriate, with special resource personnel attached to the school;
- g) be available for consultation with parents concerning SRE;
- h) avoid counselling children for emotional problems. This should be left to school staff who are specially trained for the task and will have access to wider information and resources.

Attention needs to be given to routine matters including:

- a) being prompt for lessons;
- b) giving sufficient notice to the Church SRE Coordinator and/or School SRE Coordinator if unable to attend;
- c) marking the roll each lesson (where this is a school requirement) and reporting absences to the class teacher;
- d) never leaving a class unsupervised, including at the end of a lesson;
- e) the procedures to be followed if a child has to be sent from class;
- f) the procedures to be followed if a child has an accident.

6.1.3 Child Protection

Under NSW legislation voluntary SRE teachers are not mandatory reporters of child sexual, physical and emotional abuse, neglect or injury. However, if an SRE teacher has concerns about a child, the SRE teacher should discuss the matter confidentially with the school Principal and refrain from discussing it with anyone else.

SRE teachers need to be particularly careful to ensure that their own behaviour at all times is moral and exemplary. To minimise the chance of any allegations being made against an SRE teacher for sexual impropriety or another form of unacceptable behaviour, the teacher should:

- a) Avoid physical contact with children.
- b) Always make sure that they are in the view of others when talking with only one or two children and avoid relatively secluded places.
- c) Distinguish between the normal boundaries of teacher/pupil relationships and those that move beyond those boundaries. Ensure that levels of affection remain within normal boundaries.

6.2 Being an Effective Teacher

6.2.1 Becoming an Accredited SRE Teacher

Chapter 4 of this handbook deals with the accreditation of SRE teachers. All SRE teachers are encouraged to:

- a) be familiar with their denomination's requirements for basic accreditation and what recognition is given for prior learning and experience;
- b) commit themselves to participate in training to at least basic accreditation level;
- c) participate in advanced courses and in-service training as opportunities arise.

6.2.2 Strategies for Becoming an Effective SRE Teacher

- a) Students must never be left unsupervised.
- b) Dangerous activities are to be avoided.
- c) Physical contact or anything that might offend the students or their families is to be avoided.
- d) The teacher must be sensitive to the rights of parents in determining the nature of their child's education.
- e) Any plans for a lesson which may disrupt the school routine must be discussed with the School SRE Coordinator, and then, if necessary, with the Principal.
- f) The teacher must be punctual and attend regularly, arriving ten minutes before the lesson begins and signing the attendance book.
- g) If unable to attend, the teacher should arrange a substitute; if a substitute cannot be found, the school is to be informed as early as possible.
- h) The School SRE Coordinator is to be informed if the teacher intends to bring a visitor to the next class, remembering that all visitors need to be authorised as SRE teachers.
- i) Furniture must be replaced as found.
- j) Difficulties should be discussed with the classroom teacher before complaining about them (for example, providing chalkboard space).
- k) The teacher should be familiar with the school policy on discipline and ensure that their actions are, where possible, consistent with the school policy.
- l) When SRE programs plan to deal with controversial topics, the parents, school Principal and authorising person must be notified; similarly, if any matters arise during an SRE lesson that might affect other school lessons, the School SRE Coordinator or Principal must be informed.
- m) Direct communication with parents is to be restricted to matters related to the content of SRE lessons and information related to the religious persuasion as approved by the authorising person.
- n) The SRE teacher should participate, wherever invited, in the school program (for example, the use of a system of merit awards).

6.3 Managing a Classroom

6.3.1 Helpful Suggestions

In order to more effectively manage the classroom, the teacher should:

- a) direct the entrance, seating and exit of students as appropriate;
- b) gain the attention of the whole class before giving general instructions and give them from the front of the room;
- c) establish the procedures for the beginning and conclusion of the lesson;
- d) follow up instructions to make sure they are carried out;
- e) make sure students are aware of the consequences of misbehaviour and that any discipline measures are appropriate and consistently carried out, not penalising the whole class for the misbehaviour of a few students;
- f) affirm positive behaviour and work;
- g) speak to students with respect, especially when correcting or disciplining them;
- h) expect good behaviour and the students' best work. Calmly insist that reasonable standards be met, and do not tolerate deliberate misbehaviour;
- i) give positive attention to all students and especially those who need encouragement to improve;
- j) have a set of related activities that can be used with students or classes who finish work quickly.

6.3.2 Reference Material

For other helpful suggestions, refer to the book *Teacher's Pet: Encouragement for Religious Education Teachers*, edited by Mark Hillis and published by The Joint Board of Christian Education, 65 Oxford St, Collingwood, Victoria.

6.4 Knowing the School

6.4.1 Basic Information

At the meeting of SRE teachers at the start of the school year, teachers should be informed of:

- a) the name of the school,
- b) the location of the school,
- c) contact details for the school,
- d) office hours,
- e) SRE arrangements,
- f) the names of key people - school Principal,
 - School SRE Coordinator,
 - office secretary,
 - classroom teacher,
 - librarian.

6.4.2 School Procedures

SRE teachers should become familiar with the school policies, rules and class procedures, including procedures to book and use items such as audio visual equipment, overhead projectors, the library and the chalk/white board.

6.4.3 Classroom Management and Expectations

The SRE teacher can discuss expectations of children's conduct (noise level, changing seats, personal property) with the classroom teacher and also seek information about children with special needs. It may also be helpful for the SRE teacher to observe a normal lesson conducted by the classroom teacher to gain an understanding of:

- a) teaching style,
- b) classroom management,
- c) preferred learning styles of the students,
- d) inter-personal dynamics of particular children.

Composite SRE classes might present certain behavioural problems that are not evident in the normal classroom. Assistance should be sought from the School SRE Coordinator if difficulties arise.

End of Chapter

7 Models for SRE

This chapter is based on *Implementation of Religious Education Policy* Section 3D point 2. This approach is designed to ensure that what is proposed is sanctioned by the Department of Education and Training. Supplementary material is provided as each model is considered from a Christian SRE perspective.

7.1 Patterns Based on Class Groups

7.1.1 Weekly Class Groups

Departmental position:

In many schools, especially at the infants, primary and junior secondary levels, class-based organisation will support SRE because it features regular contact, planned and systematic teaching, and the opportunity for close interpersonal relationships.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) This is the most frequently used model in primary schools.
- b) Students get to know their teacher and relationships can be built up over the year.
- c) Systematic teaching takes place if an approved denominational or joint denominational curriculum is followed. Some excellent curricula are available. (See Chapter 8 of this handbook for resources produced by the member churches of ICCOREIS.)
- d) Students like the stability and respond well to their teacher.
- e) Children can be connected to church-based children's and youth activities.
- f) Problems can arise with an inexperienced SRE teacher who has sole responsibility for a class and who finds it difficult to control the class. When this occurs, the Church SRE Coordinator may need to attend the class occasionally with the teacher, or get someone else to assist the teacher.
- g) One SRE teacher for a class for a year does not expose the children to a number of different Christian role models.
- h) In denominational based classes, in order to get sufficient students in the classes, composite groups of different ages sometimes have to be formed. This can present a major problem, particularly in a small school, for the SRE teacher who may be using curriculum materials designed for a particular age range.

7.1.2 Block Teaching

Departmental position:

Instead of a weekly period, SRE lessons can be timetabled to occupy blocks of time approximately equivalent to a year of weekly lessons. Lessons might occur on consecutive days, for one week twice a term, or for two weeks in succession. Other variations include half-day blocks taught three times during a term.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) This is a variation on the model described above in Section 7.1.1. It tends to be used when there are insufficient SRE teachers to staff classes on a weekly basis or where it is the preferred model to suit school timetabling.
- b) The educational literature does not offer conclusive research evidence about the benefits of class sessions distributed on a regular basis (for example, weekly classes) versus intensive block periods. Each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. If an SRE program has to be based on

block periods because there are insufficient SRE teachers, it should still be regarded in a positive light. A great deal can be achieved in intensive block teaching.

- c) Possible problems occur when timetabling causes students to miss one subject more frequently or when room changes occur, of which SRE teachers are unaware.

7.1.3 One Term a Year

Departmental position:

When there are a limited number of SRE teachers, students in one year group could have SRE once a week for one term. SRE could be provided for a different term for each year group.

Christian SRE perspective:

This is another variation on the first model described in Section 7.1.1. It is not an ideal model because it limits the amount of SRE that is given.

7.1.4 Rotation of Classes

Departmental position:

The SRE lessons for a class or year could be timetabled to alternate with some other features of the curriculum, such as tutorial groups, special assemblies or year meetings on a fortnightly, month by month, or full term basis.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) This model depends heavily on the organisation of the local school. The organisation of many schools will not permit the introduction of the model.
- b) On a rotational basis, students could encounter a number of different SRE teachers. While there are advantages in having different role models, there are disadvantages if the teaching does not follow a systematic pattern.
- c) The model does not lend itself to relationship building.

7.1.5 Seminars, Conferences and One-day Programs

Departmental position:

This approach may be incorporated in a regular program of seminars, conferences and other learning experiences organised for Years 11 and 12. These arrangements are most suited to the senior secondary years but could be used with Years 9-10 and, in special circumstances, with junior secondary or primary years. This pattern provides an opportunity for specialised personnel, equipment and resources to be used. Only approved religious persuasions with students enrolled for their SRE may organise such programs. When time is allocated for these programs, then the school must ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all persuasions to organise similar programs.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) In secondary schools it is often difficult to find a pattern for SRE that suits the timetable. Special intensive programs, such as advocated in this model, offer one solution to the problem.
- b) Secondary students are often familiar with seminars and conferences at which issues can be examined in some depth.
- c) The model lends itself well to the examination of issues that are of concern to secondary students. For example, a series of seminars could be organised with a common theme: A Christian Response to Genetics, A Christian Approach to the Environment, etc.
- d) This model provides opportunities for music, drama and video input.

7.1.6 Small Group Dialogue

Departmental position:

Students may be organised into small groups for lessons with a member of the clergy or other religious teacher. This approach is often used as an adjunct to other systems, such as seminars and conferences.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) In any SRE program, there are likely to be benefits if students are introduced to the clergy. Students who do not attend church on a regular basis do not meet the clergy.
- b) SRE teachers may need some guidance on how to conduct a small group dialogue. It needs to be a dialogue and not a lecture.
- c) There are other issues to consider. If a small group is examining an issue, is it necessary to reach consensus on the issue? Should the leader affirm the Christian perspective on the issue as advocated by the leader's denomination?
- d) In a small group discussion, participants may simply share their ignorance. Questions need to be asked about the necessary preparation for a small group discussion, the input of information, and the like. Preparation is crucial.
- e) Small group dialogue is ideal for examining issues of concern to young people.
- f) It is most important that leaders are respectful of the views of other participating denominations.

7.1.7 Assemblies

Departmental position:

While not normally a desirable method for regular SRE, special denominational assemblies provide an opportunity for religious participation, especially in relation to major festivals. They also facilitate the use of specialised personnel, resource materials and equipment.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) Care needs to be taken to select an SRE teacher who has the ability to conduct an effective assembly. Not everyone has this gift.
- b) If a liturgy is followed, children should be invited to participate by reading prayers, reading the scriptures and the like.
- c) Drama can sometimes be effectively incorporated into an event for a large group. It is better avoided if it is not done well.
- d) Leadership of assemblies can be shared amongst denominations so that no one group carries the whole burden of preparation. This allows students to experience a diversity of religious styles and approaches.

7.2 Patterns Based on Grouping Persuasions

Departmental position:

When a number of religious persuasions agree to combine to provide SRE, these religious persuasions have to authorise the persons who teach and authorise the content of the religious teaching. No religious persuasion can be compelled to participate in these patterns of organisation. These patterns should be periodically reviewed and evaluated jointly by the school and the religious persuasions. No religious persuasion should feel compelled to continue to be included in any particular pattern.

7.2.1 Combined Groups

Departmental position:

SRE teachers are assigned to classes with students from participating denominations. This format is generally used when there are insufficient SRE teachers to staff denominational class groups. This form of organisation may include:

- weekly class meetings
- block teaching
- one term per year arrangements and
- a teacher appointed by one or more religious persuasions who operates across the timetable.

Where these formats are implemented, the following criteria must be met:

- i) Local members of the clergy or other religious teachers of approved religious persuasions are to agree on the format, approve the content of the religious teaching and authorise the SRE teachers.
- ii) The organisation for persuasions that are not part of these arrangements should be separately negotiated.
- iii) No religious persuasion may be compelled to participate in such arrangements and care should be taken to overcome any disadvantage to non-participating persuasions as a result of this organisation.
- iv) Parents/caregivers are to be informed of both the nature of the particular format to be adopted and the religious persuasions which have agreed to participate. The persuasions should, if requested by parents/caregivers, make available an outline of the content of the religious teaching to assist parents/caregivers to make a decision regarding their child's attendance.
- v) Students who are registered as belonging to a persuasion other than those that have authorised the teacher(s) may attend such classes only with the specific approval of their parents/caregivers.
- vi) Schools are to provide appropriate care for students not attending SRE classes under these arrangements.
- vii) These arrangements may be supplemented with opportunities for specific denominational religious teaching.
- viii) SRE teachers are not to interfere with the operation of the school.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) Joint arrangements are common in many schools.
- b) The *ICCOREIS Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice* should be consulted. (See Appendix C of this handbook.)
- c) Appendix B of this handbook contains a sample letter for obtaining the authorisation of SRE teachers in a joint program by each of the participating churches.

7.2.2 Seminars, Conferences and One-day Programs

Departmental position:

Only approved religious persuasions with students enrolled for their SRE may organise such programs. When organised jointly, the relevant religious persuasions have to agree to the format, authorise the teacher(s) and approve the religious teaching.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) The ICCOREIS *Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice* should be consulted. (See Appendix C of this handbook.)
- b) It is extremely important that curricula for seminars, conferences and one-day programs be approved by each participating church. In seminars that explore controversial issues, there could be difficulties if the participating churches hold different views. This is particularly true if a panel question time is held.

7.2.3 Assemblies

Departmental position:

SRE assemblies, organised by one or more of the religious persuasions for a particular religious festival, provide an opportunity for religious persuasions to make use of the time allowed for SRE.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) During Education Week many church services are held, and in some schools there is an ecumenical celebration. Some denominations prepare an order of service that might be acceptable to all participating denominations.
- b) If different religious persuasions, including Christian and other faiths, are involved in celebrating Education Week, it is obvious that agreement must be reached by the school and all participating faiths on the nature of the celebration.
- c) Easter and Christmas lend themselves well to special assemblies. When only the SRE students from Christian churches are involved, there should be relatively few problems if care is taken to ensure that all participating churches agree on the content and format.

7.3 Other Patterns

Where SRE is provided by other means, these arrangements need to be negotiated with the school Principal.

7.3.1 Individual or Group Research and Assignment

Departmental position:

This method has been employed by some SRE teachers in association with contract-type teaching or in open class situations in primary schools. It may be suitable for use on a private study basis, especially for students for whom face-to-face teaching is not available. It may be useful for interested post-compulsory students who do not attend their school at the times when SRE is offered.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) Contract-type teaching involves a great deal of preparation if it is to be effective. SRE materials need to be available in a published package, or they need to be prepared specifically for a group.
- b) It is important for participants to know clearly what is expected of them in the contract.
- c) If more than one denomination is involved when group research is undertaken, the resources to be used by the children need to be considered carefully. It is likely that children will bring along resources from home that represent a particular point of view.
- d) Returning students' work with appropriate feedback is most important.

7.3.2 Distance Education

Departmental position:

SRE is now available to some isolated students receiving distance education. Enquiries regarding the availability of material should state the religious persuasion and be directed to the Executive Officer of the Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education, Private Bag 3 Ryde NSW 2112.

Christian SRE perspective:

Because this model is rarely, if ever, used, ICCOREIS is not in a position to provide any advice.

7.4 Supporting Patterns

Departmental position:

In agreeing to any supporting arrangements the Principal is to take into account the overall provision of SRE for the nominating persuasion and the capacity of the persuasion to carry out that activity within the principal's duty of care.

7.4.1 Excursions and Visits

Departmental position:

Visits to certain places or events can be planned to provide some specific learning experience, often associated with a particular religious festival. Such excursions on a school day are the responsibility of the religious persuasion, which will negotiate the time with the Principal, organise the excursion, seek parental approval and provide supervision. The nature of the excursion must be explained by the participating persuasions to parents/caregivers, a permission note for the parents/caregivers is to be approved by the Principal and the completed permission notes returned to the school.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) It is extremely important to establish where the legal responsibility lies when excursions and visits are planned. The school and the local church need to do this. SRE teachers should always check to see whether the public liability cover held by the local church covers the activities they plan to undertake.
- b) Transportation to and from the venue is an issue to be negotiated with the school, especially if there is a cost involved.
- c) A possible disadvantage is that children who do not return their permission notes will miss out on the event or visit.
- d) Child protection issues should be addressed.
- e) Insurance issues should be examined and finalised before embarking. It would be advisable to get them in writing.
- f) Moral responsibilities and their legal implications should be considered. Staff should not be negligent in their duty of care.

7.4.2 Camps and Out of School Contact

Departmental position:

These are extra-curricular in nature and additional to SRE programs operating within schools. Where possible, principals should make sure that parents/caregivers are clear that these activities are not school activities. Schools should have no involvement in such activities. It should be made quite clear that these are organised by the relevant religious persuasions and are not school activities as such.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) It is obvious that camps and out of school activities are not officially school activities. Public liability cover is therefore a key issue and needs to be clarified before these activities are undertaken.
- b) The organisers of camps and out of school activities must provide adequate supervision at all times, and ensure that any equipment that is used is in good condition. If specialised equipment is being used, (for example, for an activity such as abseiling) the equipment must be in good condition and there must be a qualified supervisor or instructor. The churches that participate in camps and out of school activities must not be guilty of negligence.
- c) Organisers of these sorts of events should be well aware of their responsibilities under child protection legislation.

- d) If the legal requirements for camps and out of school activities are handled appropriately, these activities can be very effective. Children and young people can gain insights into the Christian gospel that are difficult to achieve in traditional SRE arrangements.

7.4.3 Support Personnel

Departmental position:

By arrangement between the Principal and the approved provider, SRE teachers may be provided with accommodation to conduct interviews of a religious nature with students of their own persuasion, in the lunch hour or other agreed-upon times. These contacts, including any of an informal nature, should have due regard to school organisation and requirements and parental wishes.

Where an SRE teacher assists the school in a voluntary capacity for school activities other than SRE, then that person is classified as a volunteer and has the same responsibilities and rights as all other volunteers. Principals and these volunteers should ensure that, in all interactions with students, they respect the religious or non-religious beliefs of students.

Christian SRE perspective:

- a) Notwithstanding the scope afforded to SRE teachers to conduct interviews of a religious nature with students of their own persuasion, ICCOREIS cautions SRE teachers about using the technique. If it is used, the SRE teacher and the children involved should not be in a secluded place. Furthermore, the SRE teacher needs to be conscious of what parents would want to happen.
- b) A support person who accompanies an SRE teacher into a school to assist with SRE must be regarded as an SRE teacher and be appropriately authorised by the local church. (This is different from the notion of volunteer as mentioned above.)

7.5 Employed SRE Teachers in Secondary Schools

7.5.1 Popularity of the Model

This model is being introduced in more and more secondary schools. The model is popular in secondary schools for a number of reasons. It fits in well with school organisation because 'Christian Studies' (or SRE) is timetabled throughout the week as a subject in the curriculum. With parental approval, most students in the school usually participate in the program which is seen to make a major contribution to the tone of the school. The SRE teachers are regarded as teachers by both other teachers and students. With the Principal's approval, they may participate as volunteers in other school activities.

Despite its strengths and popularity, the model creates almost insurmountable problems for Christian churches and other religious persuasions that do not want to participate in the program. If they wish to provide SRE, often to relatively small numbers of students, they find it almost impossible to find a time in the week. They cannot provide voluntary SRE teachers to match the timetabling of the dominant SRE program.

In accordance with legislation and the policy of the Department of Education and Training, employed SRE teachers need to work with the school to ensure that churches and other religious persuasions that do not participate in the dominant SRE program still have adequate access to provide SRE.

7.5.2 Employment Boards

Any group of churches that is planning to employ SRE teachers and deploy them in local secondary schools will need to set up an employment board with all the legal requirements. The best advice that can be offered is to contact a well established board and obtain assistance. It may be possible to modify a constitution rather than trying to develop one from scratch.

The NSW High Schools SRE Association is also another source of advice. (See Chapter 8 of this handbook for contact details.)

Fund raising is a key responsibility for employment boards. Some of the programs can cost well over \$100,000 annually to maintain. The money is largely obtained by donations from local churches and individuals, but other fund raising strategies are also used. Donations by individuals can be made tax deductible.

7.5.3 Employed SRE Teachers

Employed SRE teachers are regarded as SRE teachers when they are teaching SRE. They are not SRE teachers when they participate in other school activities as volunteers. These lines of demarcation need to be clearly established in the school.

Likewise, SRE teachers may participate in other Christian activities in the school, such as an ISCF group. When so doing, they are not SRE teachers.

All employed SRE teachers need to be screened before they are authorised. They must then be authorised by every participating church in the joint arrangement.

Employed SRE teachers are mandatory reporters under Child Protection legislation.

End of Chapter

8 Resources for SRE

This chapter provides a list of resources for those involved in SRE. ICCOREIS would welcome further information about resources, but it should be clearly understood that the listing of resources from Christian churches and organisations that are not part of ICCOREIS does not constitute an endorsement of those resources by ICCOREIS. Furthermore, ICCOREIS reserves the right not to include material in this chapter.

8.1 ICCOREIS

Contact Details

Mrs Sue Sneddon
ICCOREIS Executive Officer
PO Box 756
Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone: 02 4979 1328
Email: execofficer@iccoreis.asn.au

Website: www.iccoreis.asn.au

Printed Material

Special Religious Education (SRE) Handbook.
ICCOREIS Directory. Published annually. Contains useful contact addresses in NSW.
SRE and Your Child. A brochure explaining SRE to parents.

DVDs and Videos

ICCOREIS Special Needs 2000 Training Kits

Kit 1 *Everyone Counts; Everyone Belongs: Educating Students with Special Needs.*
Kit 2 *Implications of Learning Difficulties for Classroom Management.*
Kit 3 *Effective Classroom Management: What Works, What Doesn't and Who Can Help.*
Kit 4 *Teaching in a Multicultural Class: Language/Cultural Differences.*
Kit 5 *Special Needs of Aboriginal Students.*

Recruiting Special Religious Education Personnel

A Gift of Time. A video encouraging volunteers to catch the vision of SRE teaching and assisting, including a booklet and suggested leaflet.

Periodical

SRE Update. Distributed through member churches and on the ICCOREIS website.

Conferences and Workshops

Organised on a needs basis. Contact the Executive Officer or check the ICCOREIS website.

Groups Affiliated with ICCOREIS

Names and addresses are listed in the *ICCOREIS Directory*.

8.2 Member Churches of ICCOREIS

8.2.1 Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia from the Province of NSW

Contact

Secretary to the Provincial Commission on Christian Education
Anglican Youthworks
PO Box A287 Sydney South NSW 1235
Phone: 02 8268 3302
Fax: 02 8268 3357
Email: bryan.cowling@aec.edu.au

SRE Curriculum for Primary Schools

Beginning with God

A one-year curriculum for the first year in school, consisting of a teacher's manual, visual aids and student activity books. 40 lessons.

Connect

A Bible-based curriculum designed for children in years 1 to 6. It is a three-year syllabus (Years A, B & C) at three levels: infants, lower, and upper primary. The teacher's pack for each semester consists of a teacher's manual with visual aids for each lesson and a CD of songs, dramas and plays. Full colour student activity books are available at each level. Optional coloured visual aids for general classes and for children with special learning needs are also available.

Big Questions

This one-year alternative curriculum is for use with students in the last year of primary school. It explores some of the big issues in life for 12 year olds and is heavily discussion based and student response-centred. It consists of a teacher's manual and a student activity book. The enclosed CD contains music by popular Australian Christian band, *Garage Hymnal*.

SRE Curriculum for Secondary Schools

Mistaken Identity

Eight chapters on Mark's gospel for years 7 and 8. *Mistaken Identity* examines the life of Jesus and explores the questions 'Who is this man?' and 'What has he come to do?' Contains a teacher's manual and student handbook.

Lessons on Tap

35 photocopiable lessons specifically written for the year 7 and 8 high school SRE class. Includes 'Tough questions and topics', 'Movies with a meaning' and 'Christian foundations and fenceposts'.

Another Dimension

Eight chapters on Jesus' teaching on relationships from the Sermon on the Mount for years 7 to 9. Teacher's manual includes a CD of PowerPoint presentations for each chapter, plus black line masters. Student handbook also available.

Your Sneaking Suspicions

16 chapters based on John Dickson's *A Sneaking Suspicion* for years 8 to 10 that looks at the big challenges to the Christian faith as well as examining the claims of Christ and the impact it should have on our lives. Includes a teacher's manual and student workbook in addition to John's book.

The Good, the Bad and the Ethical

14 chapters that examine various ethical frameworks as they apply to real life situations, for years 9 to 11. A great resource for getting students to think carefully about the complexities of the modern world and what kind of person they hope to become. Contains teacher's manual and student handbook.

No Turning Back

Seven chapters on the themes from Ephesians - grace, forgiveness, light and darkness, a place to belong, our heavenly inheritance and new life, for years 9 and 10. A perfect resource for portraying the Christian life. Teacher's manual also contains a DVD of 'vox-pop' street interviews that examine the subjects of each chapter. Also contains a student handbook.

If I Were God, I'd End All the Pain

Six chapters based on John Dickson's title of the same name, for years 9 and 10. Examines the problem of pain, various philosophical responses, and includes biblical perspectives from Genesis, Job and the gospels. There is no teacher's manual, just John Dickson's short book and a student handbook.

A Spectator's Guide to World Religions

Examines the five 'Big Faiths' - Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam - what they teach, who founded them, what their adherents believe and do, and their influence on the world. Also, critically, examines the modern Western philosophy of pluralism, which seeks to find commonality between all the faiths in a way the faiths themselves have never done. Contains the book of the same name and an accompanying student handbook.

Hope for a Shattered World

Eight chapters on the foundational biblical framework as laid out in Genesis Chapters 1-11, for years 10 to 12. This resource provides a fundamental background to the claims of Christ. The teacher's manual contains a CD of PowerPoint Presentations for each chapter, plus black line masters plus a pdf file of Tim Winton's *The Turning*. Student handbook also available.

A Spectator's Guide to Worldviews

Ten chapters that examine key, influential systems of thought - Modernism, Post-Modernism, Utilitarianism, Liberalism etc, for years 10 to 12. Chapters examine the central beliefs of each worldview, look at 'points of contact' and 'points of departure' from Christianity and provide numerous real world examples of their influence. There is no student workbook for this product, only the book.

Further information in the form of downloadable samples of both the teachers' manuals and student handbooks, is available on the CEP website: <http://cep.youthworks.net>.

Catalogues and order forms are available from CEP

PO Box A287, Sydney South NSW 1235

Phone: 02 8268 3344

Fax: 02 9283 3987

Email: sales@youthworks.net

8.2.2 Australian Christian Churches

Contact

Pastor Alice McInnes

Director, Kids R Us

PO Box 439 Hoxton Park NSW 2171

Phone: 02 9826 0300

Web: www.kidsrus.org.au

8.2.3 Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT

Contact

Baptist Church ICCOREIS Representative
Private Bag 8 Glebe NSW 2037
Phone: 02 4943 4083
Fax: 02 8572 3201
Email: sre@godspace.org.au

SRE Curriculum for Schools*GodSpace*

Catering for 4 to 12+ year olds, *GodSpace* links the Bible to the contemporary world in a way that makes sense to children. It is organised around a three year curriculum, publishing a new book each semester. Materials include coloured visual aids, lessons for various ages, songs and kids' magazines. Each year, Book One will include Easter and Book Two will include Christmas. The lesson manual contains 20 lessons for each of four different age groups. Additional assembly outlines are also included.

To order phone 1800 644 138.

For more information see www.godspace.org.au.

8.2.4 Christian Brethren Assemblies

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
38 Parkside Dr Kogarah Bay NSW 2217
Phone: 02 9546 4111
Email: fayeloud@bigpond.net.au

8.2.5 Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

Contact

State Clerk
Lot 14 Willowdene Ave Luddenham NSW 2745
Phone: 02 4773 4286

8.2.6 Churches of Christ in NSW Conference

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
PO Box 3561 Rhodes NSW 2138
Phone: 02 8719 2600
Fax: 02 9649 2330
Email: office@freshhope.org.au

8.2.7 Fellowship of Congregational Churches

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
173 Elswick St Leichhardt NSW 2040
Mobile: 0425 206 459
Email: rick@cefaus.org.au

8.2.8 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Contact

Fr Constantine Varipatis
14 Lachal Ave Kogarah NSW 2217
Phone: 02 9587 5083
Mobile: 0418 511 212

SRE Curriculum

Two general curricula, covering kindergarten to year 7:

Thematic Curriculum focuses on one major theme for each year, such as The Life of Christ or The Old Testament.

Mixed Themes Curriculum allows for greater variety in lessons by addressing a number of themes during each year.

Materials are produced by the Pantanassa Monastery, and are available on CD or via download from the website: www.pantanassamonastery.org.au.

8.2.9 Lutheran Church in Australia, NSW District

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
Concord House 15 Blaxland Rd Rhodes NSW 2138
Phone: 02 9736 2366

Resources

Come and See Jesus - Curriculum for primary years.

MAP - Ministry to Adolescents. Programme for 12-14 year olds.

8.2.10 Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
PO Box 8233 Glenmore Park NSW 2745
Phone: 02 4733 0132
Email: dlferrington@bigpond.com.au

Resources

Breaking the Silence

Presbyterian Church in Australia in New South Wales.
(Presbyterian Religious Education Publication) PREP

Christian Education Convenor
12 Bruchhauser Cres Elderslie NSW 2570
Phone: 02 4658 1723
Email: hicksey@wolf.net.au

8.2.11 Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church Province of Sydney and Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (NSW and ACT)

Contact

CCRESS (State Association of CCD Offices)
Liaison Officer - ICCOREIS Representative
Mr Robert Haddad
PO Box A286 Sydney South NSW 1235
Phone: 02 9390 5127
Email: rhaddad@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au

Curriculum Resources

CCD Sydney - Director
PO Box A286 Sydney South NSW 1235
Email: rhaddad@ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au
Website: www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au

Primary: *Christ Our Light and Life* (Kindergarten - Year 6) - student activity books, teachers' manuals, parent supplements.

CCD Broken Bay - Senior CCD Coordinator
PO Box 340 Pennant Hills NSW 1715
Email: john.donneolly@dbb.org.au

Walking with Jesus: Pathways of Discipleship (Kindergarten - Year 12) - student activity books, teachers' manuals, parent supplements.

CCD Wagga Wagga - Director
PO Box 473 Wagga Wagga NSW 2650
SRE Catholic Program (based on *We Belong to the Lord*)

8.2.12 The Salvation Army (Eastern Australia Territory)

Contact

ICCOREIS Representative
The Salvation Army
Territorial Youth and Children's Ministry Team
PO Box A435 Sydney South NSW 1232
Phone: 02 9266 9573
Fax: 02 9264 5835

8.2.13 Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand - NSW and ACT Deaneries

Contact

Ms Angela Jankovic
Phone: 02 9987 3900
Fax: 02 9987 3928
Email: angela.jankovic@det.nsw.edu.au

8.2.14 Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and ACT

Contact

Coordinator - Special Religious Education and Child Protection

Phone: 02 8267 4290

Email: emmap@nsw.uca.org.au

Website: www.nsw.uca.org.au/boe/children

Resources

The SRE Guide - is a general introduction for SRE teachers. It can be downloaded from the website or mailed upon request.

A Safe Place for Children - is the Uniting Church's Policy on safety and children's ministry.

Christian Religious Education Curriculum for Schools: Religion-in-Life

Based on the Bible, the curriculum teaches Christian beliefs and practices, helping children to make connections with their lives. It challenges them to apply the values they learn in the context of biblical teaching to the decisions and choices they make on a day-to-day basis.

Launch is for children aged 4-6 years, introducing children to God and Jesus, and examining our part in God's creation.

Trek is for children aged 6-8 years.

Search is for children aged 8-10.

Quest is for children aged 10-12 years.

Student workbooks contain a full colour double page spread for each lesson. Teacher books provide detailed lesson plans for each lesson as well as additional photocopiable worksheets to cater for the individual needs of students.

Something Else is for students aged 12-14 years. It is published as four complementary modules with worksheets and resources.

CRE curriculum resources (Religion in Life) are available from ACCESS ministries, (formerly the Council for Christian Education in Schools (CCES)) Melbourne, Victoria.

Freecall: 1800 063 341

Website: www.accessministries.org.au

Email: information@accessministries.org.au

8.3 Parliament of NSW

Legislation

Education Act 1990 (See Sections 32 and 33 for Special Religious Education)

Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998

Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998

Website

www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ (for the above Acts)

8.4 Department of Education and Training

Contact

Chief Education Officer/ HSIE

Curriculum K-12 Directorate

Private Bag 3 Ryde NSW 2112

Phone: 02 9886 7603

Fax: 02 9886 7305

Email: hsie@det.nsw.edu.au

Website

www.det.nsw.edu.au

8.5 Commission for Children and Young People

Contact

Commission for Children and Young People

Level 2, 407 Elizabeth St Surry Hills NSW 2010

General enquiries:

Phone: 02 9286 7276

Fax: 02 9286 7267

Working with Children Check:

Phone: 02 9286 7219

Fax: 02 9286 7201

Website

www.kids.nsw.gov.au

8.6 NSW High Schools SRE Association (Genr8)

Contact

PO Box A287 Sydney South NSW 1235

Phone: 02 8268 3328

Fax: 02 9267 2959

Email: info@genr8.org.au

Secretary: Andrew Stevenson

Phone: 0438 614 286

Email: andrew.stevenson@youthworks.net

Website

www.genr8ministries.org

End of Chapter

9 Appendix A ICCOREIS Constitution

INTER-CHURCH COMMISSION ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (NSW)
INC

CONSTITUTION

Adopted April 1986
Amended March 1992, October 2000 and March 2010

PREAMBLE

The Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) came into existence in 1972 when the Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Lutheran churches joined with member churches of the NSW Council for Christian Education in Schools (formed in 1947) to create a new consultative body. The Constitution of ICCOREIS recognises that successive Education Acts have vested in the individual religious persuasions the authority for authorising and appointing Special Religious Education (SRE) teachers, and for authorising curriculum.

ICCOREIS was represented on the 1975 Ministerial Committee of Inquiry into Religious Education in Government Schools which reported in November 1980. The NSW Government endorsed the Special Religious Education recommendations (numbers 36 to 70) on 18 February 1986.

In 1983, ICCOREIS was invited to appoint representatives to the Director General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education.

This Constitution came into effect on 22 April 1986 following the endorsement of all member churches. Revisions were made in 1992, 2000 and 2010. ICCOREIS became an incorporated association on 17 October 2000.

1. NAME

The registered name of the body shall be the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc hereafter referred to as “the Commission” or “ICCOREIS”.

2. DEFINITIONS

- Commission* means: The Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc.
- Member Organisation* means: A Christian religious persuasion approved by the Department of Education and Training under the Education Act 1990 for the provision of Special Religious Education in schools and which meets the Commission's criteria for membership.
- Representative Member* means: The person authorised to attend meetings of the Commission as the representative of one or more member organisations, as provided for in the Constitution.
- GRE* means: General Religious Education (GRE) is education about the world's major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. It is taught mainly through the school curriculum.
(www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/implementation/definitions/index.htm)

SRE means: Special Religious Education (SRE) is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion.
(www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/implementation/definitions/index.htm)

3. OBJECTIVES

The Commission exists to facilitate consultation and cooperation between Member Organisations aimed at the support, promotion, and ongoing development of quality Religious Education (General and Special) in Government schools in New South Wales whilst respecting the integrity of each Member Organisation and other approved providers.

This will be achieved by:

- a) the provision of a representative context for inter-church discussions and negotiations between Member Organisations;
- b) the representation of the Member Organisations in negotiations with Government, the Department of Education and Training, the Board of Studies New South Wales, relevant parent organisations and other approved providers primarily through but not limited to the appointment of representatives to the Director General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education;
- c) the formulation of policy and procedural recommendations on religious education for submission to, endorsement of and implementation by Member Organisations;
- d) the facilitation of research, conferences, support materials, training, networking and communication.

4. CRITERIA FOR MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Membership shall be according to the following criteria:

- a) Membership shall be open to any Christian religious persuasion;
- b) The Christian religious persuasion shall provide evidence that its beliefs are consonant with the tenets of the Apostles Creed;
- c) The Christian religious persuasion must be approved by the NSW Department of Education and Training as a provider and be actively involved in providing Special Religious Education in the New South Wales public school system in reasonable proportion to its size when compared with existing member organisations;
- d) The Christian religious persuasion shall accept and abide by the Department of Education and Training's *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*;
- e) The Christian religious persuasion shall undertake to accept and abide by the Constitution of the Commission;
- f) Membership shall be valid under the terms of 11(a) with regard to annual contributions.

4.2 Application for Membership

- a) Applications for membership are to be in writing and address in detail the criteria listed in Section 4.1 (above).
- b) Upon receipt of an application for membership, the Commission shall allow it to be tabled for general discussion and comment.

- c) Any Member Organisation or applicant Christian religious persuasion has the right of withdrawal and subsequent reapplication for membership.
- d) Approval of an application for membership requires a two thirds majority vote of the Representative Members of the existing Member Organisations.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 Membership of the Commission shall consist of the following:

5.1.1 Representative Members

Representative Members shall be appointed by member organisations in the following manner:

- a) Four representatives of the dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia from the Province of New South Wales appointed by the diocesan representatives on the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Provincial Anglican Commission on Christian Education;
- b) Four representatives of the Catholic Church, appointed by the NSW Catholic Bishops' Conference on the recommendation of the Catholic Conference of Religious Educators in State Schools, at least one of whom being appointed to represent the "country" dioceses;
- c) Three representatives of the Uniting Church in Australia New South Wales Synod, appointed by the Board of Education;
- d) Two representatives of the Baptist Union of New South Wales appointed by the Ministry Support and Development Council;
- e) Two representatives of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales appointed by Presbyterian Youth;
- f) One representative of the Greek Orthodox Church appointed by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Australia who is elected by the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople;
- g) One representative of the Churches of Christ Conference in New South Wales appointed by the Conference Executive;
- h) One representative of the Fellowship of Congregational Churches appointed by the Annual Assembly;
- i) One representative of the Lutheran Church appointed by the President of the Lutheran Church of Australia, New South Wales District in consultation with the New South Wales District Church Council;
- j) One representative of the Salvation Army appointed by the Chief Secretary Eastern Australia;
- k) One representative of the Australian Christian Churches appointed by the New South Wales State Executive of the Assemblies of God of Australia;
- l) One representative of the Serbian Orthodox Church appointed by the Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church of Australia and New Zealand;
- m) One representative of the Christian Brethren Assemblies appointed by the NSW Coordinating Conference;
- n) One representative of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia appointed by the NSW Classis of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia;
- o) Representatives of other Christian religious persuasions approved for membership of the Commission as provided for in this Constitution, to be appointed by the appropriate authority of that persuasion.

5.1.2 Revision of Representative Membership:

Proportional representation of member churches shall be reconsidered each ten years on the basis of Australian Bureau of Statistics information so as to reflect the relative composition of Christian children in the government school population. This clause will come into operation in 2020.

5.1.3 Tenure of Representative Membership:

All Representative Members shall hold office at the pleasure of their appointing bodies.

The Secretary of the Commission shall notify the Member Organisations of their present representation by 30 June in each year, together with the attendance of their representatives at meetings during the previous twelve months, seeking to be informed of any changes which shall take effect from the following year. Such notification of representation shall be communicated to the Commission prior to its Annual General Meeting.

5.1.4 Cessation of Membership:

A Representative Member ceases to be a member of the Commission if the person:

- a) dies, or
- b) resigns membership, or
- c) the person's Member Organisation advises the Secretary that the person no longer represents the Member Organisation.

5.1.5 Members and Alternates

A right, privilege or obligation that a person has by reason of being a Representative Member of the Commission terminates on cessation of the person's membership.

Member organisations may appoint an alternate representative to act on their behalf should the appointed representative be unable to attend meetings of the Commission.

5.1.6 Resignation of Membership

A Representative Member of the Commission is not entitled to resign that membership without first notifying the appropriate authority of the Member Organisation they represent.

A Representative Member of the Commission may resign by first giving the Secretary written notice of at least one month (or such other period as the Executive Committee may determine) of the member's intention to resign and, on the expiration of the period of notice, the member ceases to be a member.

If a Representative Member of the Commission ceases to be a member under this clause, and in every other case where a member ceases to be a member, the Secretary must make an appropriate entry in the register of members recording the date on which the member ceased to be a member and must notify the member church of the vacancy in its representative membership.

5.1.7 Register of Members

The Secretary must establish and maintain a register of members of the Commission specifying the name, address and contact details of each person who is a member of the Commission together with the date on which that person became a member.

Each year the Secretary must publish a directory of members.

5.1.8 Suspension or Termination of a Member

If a member:

- a) becomes an insolvent under administration within the meaning of the Corporations Law, or
- b) becomes a mentally incapacitated person, or
- c) is convicted of a serious criminal offence, or
- d) is a prohibited person within the meaning of the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998, or
- e) is under investigation by the Commission for Children and Young People or the NSW Ombudsman or the Department of Education and Training, or
- f) publishes any statements that are in conflict with the basis of membership of the Commission, or
- g) engages in practices that are judged to be antithetical to Christian ethical codes,

the Commission may treat the situation as though a complaint had been made against the member in respect of which the provisions of Clause 10 are to take effect.

5.2 Chairperson

5.2.1 Appointment

The Commission shall appoint a Chairperson either from among the representatives of its Member Organisations or from an external source. A Chairperson appointed from an external source shall have a commitment to the objectives of the Commission and shall be a person of good standing in his/her own church. An appointment on the unanimous vote of all Representative Members at an Annual Meeting or Special Meeting convened for that purpose shall be for a term of three years which may be renewed for one further term of three years. Where unanimity cannot be achieved, a Chairperson shall be elected by majority vote from among the Commission's Representative Members to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

5.2.2 Removal from office

The Chairperson may be removed from office if a no confidence motion at an ordinary meeting of the Commission is upheld by a two thirds majority provided that no less than three quarters of the Representative Members are present and the Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches are represented. In such motions the Chairperson shall abstain from voting.

5.3 Life Membership

The Commission shall have the right to appoint representative members or advisers who have served for ten years or more as Life Members of the Commission. A Life Member may attend and participate fully in meetings but does not have the right to vote.

5.4 Advisers

From time to time the Commission may co-opt persons for designated periods as Advisers. Advisers have the right to participate fully in meetings but do not have the right to vote. They may include people who are directly involved in churches and other organisations that help churches in the planning and delivery of Religious Education in government schools.

5.5 Board

The Commission shall annually appoint a Board. The function of the Board will be to manage and direct the business of the Commission by implementing and executing matters of policy decided by the Commission. The Board will report back to the Commission through the Executive. Membership of the Board must include at least one Anglican and one Catholic representative.

5.5.1 *Composition of the Board*

a) Appointed Representative Members

The Board will comprise the Chairperson plus nine Representative Members elected annually by the Commission.

b) Members of the Executive Committee

Members of the Executive Committee shall be elected by the Board.

5.5.2 *Composition of the Executive Committee*

The Commission shall elect annually from among its Representative Members a Deputy Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer. These with the Chairperson shall form the Executive Committee.

i) *Deputy Chairperson*

Will assume the functions of the Chairperson when he/she is absent from a meeting.

ii) *Secretary*

It is the duty of the Secretary of the Commission to keep minutes of:

- a) all appointments of office-bearers, members of the Commission and members of affiliated bodies;
- b) the names of all members of the Commission present at meetings of the Commission; and
- c) all proceedings at Executive Committee meetings and general meetings of the Commission, such minutes of proceedings at general meetings must be signed by the Chairperson of the next succeeding meeting of the Commission.

iii) *Treasurer*

It is the duty of the Treasurer of the Commission to ensure that:

- a) all money due to the Commission is collected and received and that all payments authorised by the Commission are made;
- b) correct books and accounts are kept showing the financial affairs of the Commission, including full details of all receipts and expenditure connected with the activities of the Commission; and
- c) these books and accounts are furnished to the auditor in time for an annual audited statement of accounts to be presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Commission.

iv) *Public Officer*

The Public Officer of the Commission shall be the Secretary, Treasurer or such other member as determined by the Commission.

5.5.3 *Powers of the Board*

The Board, subject to these rules and any resolution passed by the Commission in a general meeting:

- a) has authority to operate bank accounts held in the name of the Commission;
- b) may exercise all such functions as may be exercised by the Commission, other than those functions that are required by these rules to be exercised by a general meeting of the Representative Members of the Commission; and
- c) has power to perform all such acts and do all such things as appear to be necessary or desirable for the proper management of the affairs of the Commission.

6. MEETINGS

There will be eight meetings held annually:

- four meetings of the Commission comprising all the Representative Members including the Board, and
- four meetings of the Board.

6.1 Meetings of the Commission

- a) Notice of meetings of the Commission must be given by the Secretary to each member of the Commission at least 48 hours (or such other period as may be unanimously agreed on by members of the Commission) before the time appointed for the holding of the meeting.
- b) For a Commission meeting, a quorum shall be ten representative members representing at least four Member Organisations.
- c) No business is to be transacted by the Commission unless a quorum is present and if, within half an hour of the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting is to stand adjourned to the next scheduled meeting of the Commission or Board.
- d) At a meeting of the Commission:
 - i) the Chairperson, or in the Chairperson's absence, the Deputy Chairperson, shall preside, or
 - ii) if the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson are absent or unwilling to act, such one of the remaining Representative Members of the Commission as may be chosen by the members present at the meeting is to preside.
- e) The Annual General Meeting must be held in March every year. The business of that meeting shall include the adoption of the Annual Report of the Commission's activities; the annual audited financial statement; the election of nine Board members; the election of the Honorary Auditor; the election of the Public Officer of the Commission; and any other business of which due notice has been given.
- f) At all meetings the Chairperson shall have a deliberative and a casting vote.
- g) Any casual vacancy among office bearers occurring during the year may be filled at any meeting of the Commission except that nominations for Chairperson shall be given at least one month prior to any vote being taken for that position. Such nominations should include a brief resume of the person's public and professional achievements.

6.2 Meetings of the Board

- a) Notice of meetings of the Board must be given by the Secretary to each member of the Board at least 48 hours (or such other period as may be unanimously agreed on by members of the Commission) before the time appointed for the holding of the meeting.
- b) For a Board meeting, a quorum shall be six representative members representing at least four Member Organisations.
- c) No business is to be transacted by the Board unless a quorum is present and if, within half an hour of the time appointed for the meeting, a quorum is not present, the meeting is to stand adjourned to the next scheduled meeting of the Board or Commission.
- d) At a meeting of the Board:
 - i) the Chairperson, or in the Chairperson's absence, the Deputy Chairperson, shall preside, or
 - ii) if the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson are absent or unwilling to act, such one of the remaining Representative Members of the Commission as may be chosen by the members present at the meeting is to preside.
- e) At all meetings the Chairperson shall have a deliberative and a casting vote.
- f) Any casual vacancy among office bearers occurring during the year may be filled at any meeting of the Commission except that nominations for Chairperson shall be given at least one month prior to any vote being taken for that position. Such nominations should include a brief resume of the person's public and professional achievements.

7. DELEGATION BY THE COMMISSION TO SUB-COMMITTEES

- a) The Commission has the power to establish sub-committees made up of its Representative Members and Advisers (but the majority of each sub-committee needs to be Representative Members) to undertake delegated tasks on behalf of the Commission other than
 - i) this power of delegation; or
 - ii) a function which is a duty imposed on the Commission by the Associations Incorporation Act 1984 or any other law.
- b) Sub-committees must report to each general meeting of the Commission.

8. APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- a) The Commission has the power to appoint representatives to other organisations that are involved in the provision of religious education or policies relating to religious education.
- b) Such appointments must reflect the membership composition of the Commission.

9. RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

- a) Disputes between members of the Commission, and disputes between members and the Commission are to be resolved on the biblical principle of dispute resolution set out in 1 Corinthians 6.
- b) In the event of a failure to resolve the matter, an external arbitrator acceptable to all parties must be engaged.

10. COMPLAINTS AGAINST MEMBERS

- a) A complaint may be made to the Commission by any person that a member of the Commission
 - i) has persistently refused or neglected to comply with a provision or provisions of this Constitution, or
 - ii) is incapable of fulfilling his or her role as a member, or
 - iii) has persistently and wilfully acted in a manner prejudicial to the interests of the Commission.
- b) On receiving such a complaint, the Commission
 - i) must cause the notice of complaint to be served on the member concerned; and
 - ii) must, in the case of representative members, refer the matter to the appropriate authority in the appointing organisation for determination of whether the person remains a member of the Commission; or
 - iii) must, in the case of a Life Member or Adviser, give that member one month from the time the notice is served within which to make submission to the Commission in connection with the complaint.
- c) On receiving a response from the appointing organisation or the Life Member or Adviser, the Commission
 - i) may by resolution suspend the member for a period determined by the Commission, or
 - ii) may terminate the person's membership of the Commission.
- d) The member has the right of appeal against suspension or termination, such appeal being in writing setting out the grounds of the appeal.
- e) Appeals must be considered at the next general meeting of the Commission or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

11. FINANCE

- a) The Commission shall be competent to require an annual contribution from its member organisations in proportion to the number of representative members on the Commission and the number of children of that member organisation enrolled in government schools. The amount of that annual contribution will be so determined as to cover the operating expenses of the Commission.
- b) Any projects approved by the Commission requiring funding, including the employment of part or full-time personnel to such projects, will be funded by special appeal to member organisations on a basis proportionate to annual contributors and/or to the benefit of the project to participating member organisations.
- c) At least one bank account shall be opened in the name of the Commission, which shall be operated on the signatures of two of the four elected office bearers.
- d) The books of account shall be audited annually by an honorary auditor, who shall be appointed at the Annual Meeting.
- e) The Commission's income and property is to be applied solely towards the promotion of the Commission's objects as set out in this Constitution. No part of the Commission's income or property may be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of dividend, bonus or otherwise by way of profit to the members of the Commission. However, this clause does not prevent:
 - i) the payment in good faith of remuneration to any employee of the Commission or to any member or other person in return for any services actually rendered to the Commission;
 - ii) the payment to a member of the Commission of any out-of-pocket expenses incurred in carrying out the duties of a member of the Commission where the payments do not exceed an amount previously approved by the Commission;
 - iii) the payment to a member of the Commission for any service rendered to the Commission in a professional or technical capacity where the provision of that service has prior approval of the Commission and the amount payable is on reasonable commercial terms.
- f) In the event of the winding up of the Commission the funds in hand shall be distributed to the constituent bodies in proportion to representation on the Commission or transferred to a similar body having objectives in line with the Commission.
- g) The Commission shall not be liable for debts incurred by any affiliate organisation, committee or group.
- h) The liability of a member organisation of the Commission to contribute towards the payment of the debts and liabilities of the Commission or the costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the Commission is limited by the amount, if any, unpaid by the member organisation in respect of membership of the Commission.
- i) Individual members of the Commission are not liable for the debts and liabilities or the costs, charges and expenses of the winding up of the Commission.
- j) The Commission must effect and maintain insurance under Section 44 of the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1984. The Commission may effect and maintain such other insurance as it deems necessary.

12. COMMON SEAL

- a) The common seal of the Commission must be kept in the custody of the public officer.
- b) The common seal must not be affixed to any instrument except by the authority of the Commission and the affixing of the common seal must be attested by the signatures of any two members of the Executive Committee.

13. CUSTODY AND INSPECTION OF BOOKS

- a) Except as otherwise provided by this Constitution, the public officer must keep in his or her custody or under his or her control all records, books and other documents relating to the Commission including an asset register.
- b) The records, books and other documents of the Commission must be open to inspection, free of charge, by a member of the Commission at any reasonable hour.

14. AFFILIATED GROUPS

- a) The Commission may facilitate the setting up of independent regional or special purpose organisations that are affiliated with the Commission. It may also recognise existing organisations for affiliation with the Commission. Before any organisation can claim to have an affiliation with the Commission, it must formally seek affiliation and receive written confirmation from the Secretary that the Commission has approved affiliation at a general meeting.
- b) In order to be considered for affiliation with the Commission an organisation must:
 - i) be involved in the provision of Christian Special Religious Education (SRE) in New South Wales schools or in giving assistance to those who do so;
 - ii) accept the tenets of the Apostles' Creed and have membership that predominantly comes from members of the churches represented on the Commission; and
 - iii) be ethically sound in the way it conducts its business.
- c) An affiliated organisation will be independent of the Commission in terms of its operation, finances and liability. The acronym ICCOREIS, should not appear in the name of an affiliated organisation, but the acronym may appear in juxtaposition with the name of the organisation by using one of the following statements:
 - i) Affiliated with the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (ICCOREIS) Inc in NSW; or
 - ii) Affiliated with ICCOREIS Inc in NSW.
- d) Affiliated organisations may be categorised as follows:
 - i) local SRE boards or associations;
 - ii) regional SRE boards or associations;
 - iii) SRE professional associations;
 - iv) organisations assisting the churches in the provision of SRE.
- e) Affiliated organisations will be expected:
 - i) to liaise with the Commission; and
 - ii) to cooperate with the Commission and its affiliated organisations in the provision of SRE at the local, regional or state level.
- f) The Commission will seek to assist affiliated organisations by:
 - i) producing a newsletter at least twice a year;
 - ii) maintaining a SRE Handbook;
 - iii) maintaining a website;
 - iv) providing draft constitutions for new local and regional groups to consider;
 - v) seeking answers from government departments and agencies to questions about policy and practice that are referred to it; and
 - vi) welcoming representatives of affiliated organisations as observers and/or invited participants at meetings of the Commission.
- g) At a meeting of the Commission an affiliated organisation may be disaffiliated if the Commission is of the opinion that the organisation is not adequately fulfilling an appropriate role in SRE, or it is not fostering cooperation between providers of SRE, or its conduct is such that it brings ICCOREIS NSW Inc into disrepute. The affiliated organisation has the right of appeal within one month against disaffiliation, such appeal being in writing setting out the grounds of the appeal.

Appeals must be considered at the next general meeting of the Commission or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

15. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

- a) Proposals to amend this Constitution may be made at the Annual Meeting or a Special Meeting convened for that purpose, provided that notice of the proposed amendment(s) shall have been submitted in writing to the appropriate authority in all member organisations at least two months prior to such a meeting.
- b) A vote to amend the Constitution shall require a two thirds majority vote provided that no less than three quarters of the Representative Members are present.

End of Chapter

10 Appendix B Copies of Forms and Letters

Note: Sample letters and forms have been included in the handbook for information purposes. For the latest versions, check the relevant websites:

Commission for Children and Young People - www.kids.nsw.gov.au

NSW Department of Education and Training, Curriculum Support - www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion

10.1 Sample SRE Teacher’s Engagement Form

Records
 Original: To be held in the Congregation
 Copy: Forwarded to the ELM Centre
 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta 2151

**The Uniting Church in Australia
 Board of Education NSW Synod**

**ENGAGEMENT FORM for
 SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SCRIPTURE) TEACHERS**

NAME: _____ **CONGREGATION:** _____
 (Rev, Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss)
ADDRESS: _____ **PRESBYTERY:** _____
 _____ **Postcode:** _____ **TELEPHONE:** _____

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. I agree to carry out my tasks as an SRE teacher in accordance with the principles and policies of the Uniting Church and the guidelines of the NSW Department of School Education. I must exercise due care for the safety and behaviour of students when teaching or supervising them. The teaching given to students in the SRE classroom must at all times be of the highest quality possible.
2. I acknowledge that the Uniting Church has special responsibilities to the students, their parents, and carers and to the school authorities because of the opportunities given to the Uniting Church to instruct students in Special Religious Education.
3. I have read and accept the principles and policies as set out in the document entitled “Duty of Care of Ministers, Youth Workers and Deacons with Councils of Elders with regard to Special Religious Education in NSW Government Schools”.
4. I agree to carry out my tasks as an SRE teacher in accordance with the conditions on this form.
5. I provide my services on this basis to the Uniting Church and I acknowledge that I am responsible to my authorising agent (Minister or Church Council) and his/her successors.
6. I understand that my authorising agent can terminate my engagement if I fail to meet my commitments as set out on this form and I agree that upon termination I will promptly deliver my Authorisation Card to my authorising agent.
7. I agree that if any complaint of sexual misconduct is made against me, my authorising agent can terminate my engagement whether or not there has been any investigation of the complaint and whether or not there has been any fault on my part.

Signature:

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I hereby solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (a) I do not have any criminal conviction which involves
 - *a crime against a minor or
 - * violence or
 - * sexual assault or
 - * provision of prohibited drugs
- (b) I understand that I may be asked to agree to having a police check.
- (c) If I am charged with any crime referred to in (a), I will promptly notify my authorising agent.

And I make this declaration conscientiously believing it to be true and in accordance with provision of the OATHS Act of 1990.

Signature Date:/...../.....

WITNESS: (Justice of the Peace or Solicitor) Date:/...../.....

I have signed the PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT DECLARATION which is kept within my
 Congregation’s church files.

Signature:

10.2 Prohibited Employment Declaration Form

ATTACHMENT 4

PROHIBITED EMPLOYMENT DECLARATION



The *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* makes it an offence for a prohibited person (a person convicted of a serious sex offence, the murder of a child or a child-related personal violence offence, as well as a Registrable person under the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*) to apply for or otherwise attempt to obtain, undertake or remain in, child-related employment.

It does not apply if an order from the Industrial Relations Commission, Administrative Decisions Tribunal or Commission for Children and Young People, declares that the Act does not apply to a person in respect of a specific offence.

For further information on what is child-related employment see the *Working With Children Employer Guidelines*.

Section 33B of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* defines a serious sex offence as:

- an offence, involving sexual activity or acts of indecency, committed in New South Wales and that was punishable by penal servitude or imprisonment for 12 months or more; or
- an offence, involving sexual activity or acts of indecency, committed elsewhere and that would have been an offence punishable by penal servitude or imprisonment for 12 months or more, if it had been committed in New South Wales; or
- an offence under section 80D or 80E (sexual servitude) of the *Crimes Act 1900*, committed against a child; or
- an offence under Sections 91D-91G (child prostitution, other than if committed by a child prostitute) of the *Crimes Act 1900* or a similar offence under a law other than a law of New South Wales; or
- an offence under Section 91H, 578B or 578C (2A) (child pornography) of the *Crimes Act 1900* or a similar offence under a law other than a law of New South Wales; or
- an offence of attempting, or of conspiracy or incitement, to commit an offence referred to in the preceding paragraphs; or
- any other offence, whether under the law of New South Wales or elsewhere, prescribed by the regulations.

Note: A conviction for carnal knowledge is classified as a serious sex offence under this legislation.

Section 33B of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* defines a child-related personal violence offence as an offence committed by an adult:

- involving intentionally wounding or causing grievous bodily harm to a child; or
- of attempting, or of conspiracy or incitement, to commit such an offence.

Under *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*:

- it is an offence for a prohibited person to apply for or otherwise attempt to obtain, undertake or remain in child related employment;
- employers must ask existing employees, both paid and unpaid, and preferred applicants for child-related employment to declare if they are a prohibited person or not;
- all people in child-related employment must inform their employers if they are a prohibited person or remove themselves from child-related employment; and
- penalties are imposed for non compliance.

The Working With Children Employer Guidelines February 2008

ATTACHMENT 4 (CONTINUED)

I am aware that I am ineligible to apply for or otherwise attempt to obtain, undertake or remain in, child-related employment if I have been convicted of a serious sex offence or child-related personal violence offence as defined in the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, or if I am a Registrable Person under the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000*.



I have read and understood the above information in relation to the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*. I am aware that it is an offence to make a false statement on this form.

I consent to a check of my relevant criminal records, to verify the statements I have made here, being undertaken by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People for monitoring and auditing purposes in accordance with Section 36 (1)(f) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*.

I declare that I am not a person prohibited by the Act from seeking, obtaining, undertaking or remaining in child related employment.

I understand that this information may be referred to the Commission for Children and Young People and/or to NSW Police for law enforcement purposes and for monitoring and auditing compliance with the procedures and standards for the Working With Children Check in accordance with Section 36 (1)(f) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*.

All fields must be completed. Please use block letters.

Name: _____

Aliases (previous/other names): _____

Date of birth: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____ Contact telephone number: _____

Contact Email: _____

NOTE: Seek legal advice if you are unsure of your status as a prohibited person.

THIS FORM IS TO BE RETURNED TO YOUR EMPLOYER

The Working With Children Employer Guidelines February 2008

10.3 Sample Letter - Combined Arrangements and Cross Authorisation

To be completed by providers

200_ Combined Arrangements for Special Religious Education (SRE)

The providers listed below have agreed to deliver SRE by adopting a combined group arrangement as described on pages 6 & 7, *Implementation of the Religious Education Policy*.

The participating approved providers are:

Approved provider	Individual church/group	Town/suburb

The above participating providers have agreed to cross authorise the following teacher(s) to conduct SRE under these arrangements.

SRE Teacher	Authorising person	Authorising person's church/group	Authorising person's contact number

The authorisation of SRE teachers, involving the Department of Education and Training child protection requirements, has been conducted by the authorising person for the church or group that the teacher is associated with. Should the school need to contact a provider about any matter relating to a particular teacher the authorising person should be the point of contact.

Should there be any concerns about this arrangement for SRE, please contact INSERT NAME on telephone INSERT NUMBER.

Yours sincerely

Name, name of church or group, and signature of all participating providers.

10.4 Sample Letter - Combined Arrangements using Teachers Employed by a Board

To be completed by providers

200_ Combined Arrangements for Special Religious Education (SRE) involving a local board

The providers listed below have agreed to deliver SRE by adopting a combined group arrangement as described on pages 6 & 7, *Implementation of the Religious Education Policy*.

The nature of this arrangement is that a teacher(s) has been employed by the INSERT NAME Board to provide SRE for the providers listed.

Approved provider	Individual churches/groups	Suburb/town

The teacher(s) INSERT NAME(S) has/have been authorised by each of the participating persuasions and the Board has undertaken the required employment screening in terms of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 and the Department of Education and Training's requirements.

Should there be any questions now or in the future about this arrangement, they should be referred to INSERT NAME, Chairperson of the Board on telephone INSERT NUMBER.

Yours sincerely

Participating providers

Names of churches/groups (as listed above), names and signatures of authorising persons.

10.5 Sample Letter to Parents at Enrolment

ENROLMENT FORM AND SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SRE)

In the *Application to enrol in a NSW Government school* (Page 8) there is a question about “Religion” where you should record your child’s religion and, if Christian, you may write just the denomination. The question also allows for “No religion” to be recorded in this space.

This information may be used to plan for Special Religious Education classes (SRE) which are provided in public schools during school time by authorised representatives of approved religious groups. SRE is voluntary and schools organise SRE according to parent preferences at, or subsequent to, enrolment.

With many different providers of special religious education, schools often find it difficult to match the stated religion with the SRE classes available within the school. For this reason you are asked to make an explicit nomination of the group that you would like your child to attend or, if you do not want your child to receive SRE then please place a tick in the “Non SRE” box below.

NAME OF STUDENT _____

In this school the following SRE classes are currently provided.

Please indicate your preference by placing a tick in Column 3 or in the Non SRE box below

1. SRE class	2. Groups or denominations included	3. Tick selected class
(schools to complete)		

Indicate Non SRE here

If no provision of lessons is available currently in your stated religion, you may select an appropriate alternative or you might approach a representative of that religion regarding involvement in the school’s SRE program. This involvement should be discussed with the principal and is conditional on the religion having an approved provider.

Students not attending SRE will be supervised by the school and can work independently on homework, reading or private study depending on the availability of rooms and supervision.

SRE teachers will be provided with a class list of the names of students. At any time, you have the right to change your SRE nomination or to withdraw your child from SRE lessons. A note to the Principal will affect this change.

End of Chapter

11 Appendix C Copies of Documents

11.1 ICCOREIS: Policy for Cooperative Special Religious Education (SRE) in Schools (NSW) and Code of Practice

Policy Statement

We affirm the place of SRE in schools in all its approved forms.

We affirm our willingness to cooperate in SRE for each generation of students by our commitment to the following principles and code of practice.

Principles of SRE

1. We acknowledge that God is already at work in the school through the Holy Spirit.
2. We seek every opportunity to share the Christian message with those enrolled by parents according to denominational preference. We seek to enable students to make their own informed response as part of a genuinely educational activity.
3. We affirm our Christian responsibility to serve the school community.
4. We recognise the importance of a considered long-term ministry in the school community which is best supported by local churches.
5. We are united in purpose and affirm flexibility in the implementation of SRE.
6. We believe in the importance of cooperation with other Christians and other religious persuasions in the school community.
7. We affirm the importance of consultation among the local providers of SRE to achieve cooperation and a flexible basis of implementation.
8. We recognise the need for cultural relevance in our SRE ministry and respect the varied traditions of Christianity in which the Gospel is expressed across many churches.
9. We recognise that the needs, interests and aspirations of students are central to SRE.
10. We take into account the developing capacities of students and their individual differences.
11. We recognise the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc as the body established by the churches to provide a representative framework for SRE in government schools. The Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools, in formulating policy and coordinating action among its member churches, is fulfilling the agreed position of the churches expressed in the report *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)*.

Code of Practice

1. We recognise, respect and affirm the authority of the school in SRE as conferred by the *Education Act 1990*, in particular, its overall duty of care and its responsibility for negotiating the timetable and allocation of rooms.
2. We recognise the prime authority of parents and their right to enrol their children for the SRE of their choice, which we will at all times respect.
3. We agree to abide by the principles of consultation, cooperation and flexibility as defined in *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)* and that SRE is a genuinely educational activity which is to be adequately staffed and competently taught.

4. We seek to promote consultation among the representatives of the religious persuasions, which have been requested by parents to provide SRE in a school, so that a program for SRE can be agreed mutually as a commitment on an annual basis.
5. We affirm the principle that the content of SRE and the appointment of SRE teachers are solely the responsibility of the appropriately designated SRE authority in each church.
6. We agree to identify, contact and reach agreement with the religious persuasions already providing SRE in a school before beginning something new.
7. We seek to encourage cooperation among local churches, inter-church councils and associations of ministers in implementing SRE. We will pursue such implementation on a flexible basis by negotiating with schools within the provisions of the *Education Act 1990* and current memoranda issued by the NSW Director-General of Education and Training.
8. We seek, when operating in joint-denominational approaches, to prevent SRE from becoming a vehicle for the beliefs of any one denomination or group.
9. We avoid evangelistic appeals requiring a public response from students in SRE to maintain its genuinely educational nature.
10. We seek in language and action to affirm the worth of each individual.
11. We seek to encourage the use of educationally valid terminology and language. Such language takes into account the ages and stages of student development. Our language and terminology will not assume that students share our beliefs in an identical way or to the same extent.

Departmental Documents

Attention is drawn to the relevant sections of the NSW Department of Education and Training document *Implementation of Religious Education Policy*.

11.2 Extracts from Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980) Chapter 6

FLEXIBLE IMPLEMENTATION AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL

6.7 While legislative provisions are needed for religious education, they must be capable of flexible implementation by the appropriate authorities to meet the particular circumstances of each school. There will be need to take account of differences from school to school in respect of such matters as locality and degrees of religious, ethnic and cultural commonality or pluralism from community to community. There will also be differences between localities in the kind of contribution which the local churches or other religious bodies will be capable of making to the school programme.

CONSULTATION AND CO-OPERATION

6.8 The Committee believes that the efficient operation of religious education will be dependent, in large measure, upon the combined consultation and co-operation of four distinct groups; the parents, the religious bodies, the schools and the Department of Education. The forms which General Religious Education will take within a school will arise from the initiative of the school staff working within policy statements devised by the Department of Education and in consultation with the community. The forms which Special Religious Education will take will arise initially from consultation amongst the appropriate SRE personnel and then between them and the school. Parents have the right and should be given the opportunity to consult with the school and clergy, and participate in discussions on any of the forms of religious education which will take place within the local school.

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SRE)

6.55 The Committee considers that every child in government schools should have the opportunity to receive education in the distinctive religious tenets of the home and family. Although such education is provided by representatives of the various traditions coming into the school for that specific purpose, it should be acknowledged as an integral part of the school's activities, which takes place in school hours under the jurisdiction of the school.

6.56 Respect for the integrity of those traditions and sensitivity to their meanings and local expression would suggest that those best suited for devising curricula and accrediting teaching staff would be the appropriate representatives of the various religious groups.

6.57 Special Religious Education is therefore defined as: education in the distinctive religious tenets and beliefs of the home and family, provided by the churches and other religious groups for children of parents expressing the desire that they receive such teaching.

OBJECTIVES FOR SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.58 SRE should provide opportunities for learners:

- a) to develop an ability to interpret religious data within the traditions of their particular faith;
- b) to gain an appreciation of specific religious interpretations of issues and problems in which committed people apply their faith to life;
- c) to translate their learning about their faith into active expression in a worshipping community;
- d) to encounter, in a peer group learning context, religious teaching given from a position of faith and commitment by a person explicitly associated with the religious community;
- e) to be aware of the availability of personal and group counselling in the area of religious need, as occasion demands.

PRINCIPLES FOR SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 6.59 As part of the process of enrolment at a government school, parents should state whether SRE is desired for that particular child and, if so, which religious group they would want their child to attend, taking into account the range which is already being provided or could be made available in that particular school.
- 6.60 The Committee recognises that, for a variety of reasons, some parents may wish their children to participate in a SRE programme conducted by a religious group other than that of the family faith, or in a joint-denominational programme (see Paragraph 6.85), but may wish them to be identified as belonging to their particular tradition for the purpose of attending recognised religious observances during school hours, (see Paragraphs 5.58, 5.59). At the time of enrolment, therefore, provision should be made for parents to indicate, if they so wish, the religious affiliation (if any) of the child.
- 6.61 Throughout the child's schooling, parents should retain the existing right to have their child attend, or not attend, any form of SRE at any time, without being required to supply any reason. The school should be notified in writing of any change in the parents' wishes.
- 6.62 Pupils withdrawn from SRE should be provided with opportunities for purposeful secular learning which, however, should be of such a nature as to avoid conflict of choice either for the parents or for the pupils receiving SRE.
- 6.63 Several submissions put forward a view that secondary students, particularly at the senior level (Years 11 and 12), should have the right to decide themselves whether or not they want to participate in SRE. The Committee respects this view in so far as adult legal status is attained at the age of eighteen years. Nevertheless, as parents are the enrolling agents, their rights would be abrogated if such choices were the prerogative of the students alone. The decision about participation in SRE should therefore be a matter for each family, with the school respecting the parents' communication of that decision.
- 6.64 The entry of officially recognised religious groups into the school situation should be in accordance with the requirements of legislation and should be in response to parental request by enrolment and not by any 'right' of access as such. In coming into government schools, each religious group should therefore understand that it is to teach only the children of parents who have requested SRE in that particular faith. An exception could be made in a situation where the consent of any religious group and the parents is given, as for instance, in officially organised joint-denominational programmes. Under no circumstances should any religious group construe its function in the school as one of proselytism.
- 6.65 Each religious group, at all levels of its administration, should give SRE in government schools its official support and commitment, making every effort to ensure that, as SRE takes place within the school buildings and in school hours, it is conducted as a genuinely educational activity which is adequately staffed and competently taught. The authorising authority of each religious faith should therefore ensure that its teachers possess knowledge of the relevant doctrine and possess adequate levels of teaching competence.
- 6.66 Each religious group should aim to establish a reserve of appropriately trained teachers and supporting personnel, to overcome the teacher shortage problem which now exists in many areas and to restrict dependence on school staff for supervision of SRE classes to genuine emergencies.
- 6.67 The State should have no say in the doctrine of SRE teaching. Each religious group should be responsible for the formulation of its own curriculum, in conformity with the broad statement of objectives for SRE outlined above, suited to the pupils' needs, ages and stages of development, and to the capabilities of the teaching personnel.

- 6.68 While noting that over one fifth of the school teachers responding to the survey indicated a personal willingness to teach SRE, and that about two thirds endorsed this notion, the Committee considers that school teachers should not be so involved, for two reasons. First, such a move would in effect mean that teachers employed by the government would be promoting particular forms of religion in different schools. The Committee has argued strongly that the State, while catering for the religious plurality of the community, should maintain a neutral position; on principle this idea is therefore rejected. Second, the potential personal conflicts for teachers, as well as logistic, administrative and industrial difficulties would create such major problems that the system would not be practicable. Therefore, the Committee is of the view that SRE should be taught only by visiting personnel, that is, the clergy and/or lay teachers, and that the appointment of such teachers should be the sole responsibility of each individual religious group.
- 6.69 Each religious group should be responsible for the supervision of its own SRE teachers, who should recognise the requirement of operating within the framework of the school's administration.
- 6.70 The school must reserve the right to intervene in the event of unreasonable disruption to the school, alleged teaching and inefficiency or alleged distortion of religious doctrine. It is expected that matters of such major concern would be pursued by the principal in collaboration with the relevant SRE authorities and, if necessary, officers of the Department of Education.
- 6.71 The Committee wishes to emphasise that the guidelines of flexibility and consultation/co-operation mentioned above (Paragraphs 6.7 and 6.8) are crucial to the effective implementation of SRE.
- 6.72 The form(s) of SRE agreed upon by consultation should be relative to the SRE staff available and appropriate to the school's curriculum and timetabling patterns; be subject to review in the light of changing circumstances; and be acknowledged as a contract requiring the commitment of the SRE personnel and the school, and their mutual co-operation in its implementation.
- 6.73 At each school, adequate consultation procedures should therefore be established to ensure that, preferably by the end of second term each year, the form(s) that SRE will take in the ensuing year will be determined by mutual agreement between the participating churches and other religious groups in the first place, and then between them and the school authorities.
- 6.74 The school is responsible for achieving a balance between two sets of needs when incorporating into the timetable the patterns of SRE agreed upon by consultation. On the one hand, there is the need for timing and conditions best suited to the SRE personnel and the educational concerns of the child. On the other hand there is the need to avoid placing burdens on the school and staff which exceed their expected co-operation in the efficient implementation of the agreed SRE programme.
- 6.75 For varying reasons, the consultative process may generate a pattern of SRE which cannot elicit the full involvement of all the relevant churches and religious groups. In fact, those able to participate may cater for only a minority of the pupils. In order to take full account of the expressed wishes of the parents for SRE and the school's overall obligations in such circumstances, it is important that there be further opportunities for consultation involving the school, SRE personnel and parents.
- 6.76 As the SRE programme should accord with the intentions of parents in enrolling their children, parents should have the opportunity to consult with SRE personnel, if desired.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPECIAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

6.77 The practical implications of the general guidelines of flexibility and consultation/co-operation and of the above principles are set out in greater detail below in terms of: obligations of participants; allocation of time; organisational approaches; administrative suggestions; teacher preparation and a consultative committee on SRE.

OBLIGATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

6.78 In order to give effect to SRE as an integral part of the school's activities, each school will need to co-operate by:

- a) making the initial contacts with the relevant religious representatives, in response to parental requests for SRE in particular traditions, or supplying the appropriate religious authorities with information required for the effective organisation of SRE (see Paragraph 6.70(a));
- b) consulting with the local representatives on the form and operation of SRE (see Appendix H) and fitting it into the total timetable in as favourable a manner as the available SRE staff and the planned coverage of SRE within the school will permit (see Paragraph 6.79(c));
- c) initiating consultation with parents and SRE personnel with a view to making appropriate arrangements, wherever possible, for any child or children for whose religious group no SRE is currently provided in the school, on the basis of guidance from the education authorities of the churches and other religious groups (see Paragraph 6.80(c));
- d) seeking advice from the appropriate religious education authority, the regional office of the Education Department, and the parents wherever, despite all efforts, the SRE programme proposed for the ensuing year stands in jeopardy through the non-participation of a religious group with significant numbers of children whose parents desire them to receive SRE (see Paragraph 6.80(b) and (g));
- e) familiarising SRE personnel with school policies, practices and procedures;
- f) supporting the SRE programme, wherever feasible, with relevant resources from the school.

6.79 At the local level, the clergy or their appointed representatives have responsibility for:

- a) responding, as the official point of contact for their church or religious body on behalf of parents, to any enquiry from the school concerning SRE for enrolled adherents (see Paragraph 6.78(a));
- b) if not personally involved in, or responsible for, that school, co-operating to ensure that communication is established with the appropriate SRE authority;
- c) engaging in consultation with the representatives of other religious groups and with the school authorities (see Paragraph 6.78(b) and Appendix H);
- d) determining what SRE can be undertaken by the particular religious group in the local school(s), in the light of potential resources and the priorities, talents and gifts of the available clerical and lay personnel (including the extent of the clergy's own participation);
- e) enlisting the teaching and support staff required to fulfil the agreed commitment in terms of local capacity and encouraging loyalty in the fulfilment of that commitment;
- f) ensuring that all visiting staff work within the school's particular administrative and disciplinary procedures;
- g) arranging for replacement staff, wherever possible;
- h) ensuring that adequate notice is given on a known unavoidable absence, and an apology in the event of an unforeseen emergency, if at all possible.

6.80 At the denominational, State, regional or diocesan level, churches and other religious bodies have responsibility for:

- a) clarifying areas of responsibility and lines of communication applicable to the operation of SRE in their particular tradition;
- b) compiling annually a list of their appropriate educational authorities across the State, to be made available throughout the Education Department for the information of principals (see Paragraph 6.78(d));

- c) formulating a sample format letter for the guidance of principals when making arrangements for any child or children for whose religious group no SRE is currently provided in the school (see Paragraph 6.78(c));
 - d) ensuring that adequate training opportunities and appropriate resources are available for their teachers;
 - e) developing for the SRE representatives accreditation procedures suited to their particular religious tradition;
 - f) providing trained SRE consultants to facilitate the consultative process between local SRE personnel and the school, especially in conflict situations (see Appendix H);
 - g) responding to requests from principals or regional education authorities for advice in respect of any school in which the non-provision of SRE, for significant numbers of children whose parents have requested it, may jeopardise the school's total SRE programme (see Paragraph 6.78(d)).
- 6.81 Parents enrolling their children for SRE have the responsibility of co-operating by:
- a) availing themselves of opportunities for consultation on the form and operation of SRE proposed for the local school;
 - b) recognising and supporting SRE as an integral part of their children's education;
 - c) lending their support to the SRE programme and, if they are members of one of the congregations possessing geographical or pastoral links with a particular school, offering their services in the implementation of the SRE responsibilities of their church or religious group;
 - d) giving such practical assistance as is appropriate to their particular school.

ALLOCATION OF TIME

6.82 The Committee considers that there is need for continued official recognition, expressed in legislation, of a basic time allocation for SRE within the curriculum. It is of the view that, on average, not more than one hour per week of the time allocated for instruction in the school should be available for Special Religious Education. The Committee could see no objection to Special Religious Education being conducted on a flexible time schedule, provided that there was agreement among the parties concerned, and that, in total, the time allocated in any one year did not exceed an average of one hour per week. This would mean, for example that in a given school Special Religious Education could take the form of planned seminars in the senior years.

6.83 The Committee considers that the total amount of time allocated and its actual mode of incorporation within the timetable should be flexibly applied in a manner most appropriate to the form SRE takes in a particular school curriculum. As far as actual lesson or period length is concerned, it is expected that this would be consistent with the operation of normal periods and there would be due regard to the age and attention span of the children, together with the nature of the material being presented.

ORGANISATIONAL APPROACHES

6.84 While the form which SRE will take in any local situation will be relative to the priorities and commitments of the appropriate parishes, churches and other religious groups, the availability of sufficient numbers of suitably trained and qualified teaching and support staff remains the key factor in determining the nature and extent of the SRE programme.

6.85 The normal pattern of SRE may consist of denominational groupings, but in certain circumstances it might contain joint-denominational features. The Committee has selected this term in preference to 'inter-denominational', in order to emphasise that any joint activity, initiated by the co-operating churches is either for a specific purpose or for an agreed and stated period of time, subject to evaluation, amendment or change, without any offence being implied and without prejudicing any rights and responsibilities conferred by the 1880 Act, as amended.

- 6.86 In terms of the guidelines of flexibility and consultation/co-operation, the Committee considers that, in addition to traditional class-based weekly lessons, there is a wide range of organisational possibilities for SRE through which some or all of its stated objectives may be capable of achievement, especially in secondary schools.
- 6.87 Indeed, there are a variety of suggested approaches to SRE featured in submissions and/or in comments on survey forms. Most of these approaches have been given some trial use over the past decade with varying degrees of success. Those listed below do not represent a comprehensive coverage of all possible systems of SRE, nor are they mutually exclusive. They may be used in various combinations and may, from time to time, complement regular class-based teaching. While most of these systems relate to secondary schools, they may provide variety in the primary SRE programme, and some are particularly adaptable for use in primary schools operating on an open plan approach.
- 6.88 Varied Systems of Special Religious Education. The following are listed for special attention:
- a) Class-Based Systems
 - i) Weekly Class Group: In many schools, especially at infants, primary and junior secondary levels, class-based organisation will provide a conducive context for SRE, because of features such as regularity of contact; planned, graded and systematic teaching and the opportunity for closer inter-personal relationships.
 - ii) Block Teaching: Instead of a weekly period, SRE lessons are timetabled to occupy a block of time, roughly equivalent to a term's normal lessons, but on, say, consecutive days for one week twice a term, or for two weeks in succession. Other variations include half days, or even a full day programme.
 - iii) Rotation of Class Involvement: The SRE lessons for a class or year are timetabled to alternate with some other feature of the curriculum on a bi-weekly, month by month, or full term basis.
 - b) Combined Class Systems
 - i) Seminars/Conferences: Reports of experience with this method in New South Wales and elsewhere suggest that it is most suited to the senior secondary years. However, it is often used with mid-secondary and, in special circumstances, with junior secondary years. This approach may be incorporated in a regular programme of seminars, conferences, debates and other learning experiences organised by the school for Years 11 and 12. It enables the help of specialised personnel to be enlisted and special equipment and resources to be used. It may be conducted denominationally or joint-denominationally.
 - ii) Assemblies: While not normally a desirable method for regular SRE, special denominational or joint-denominational assemblies provide opportunity for acts of worship, especially related to major religious festivals and, from time to time, facilitate the use of specialised personnel, resource materials and equipment.
 - c) Small Group Systems
 - i) Small Group Dialogue: The enlisting of clerical and lay personnel, who may not be available or willing for regular teaching, supplies sufficient leaders to enable the division of an SRE class or year into small discussion groups. This approach is often used as an adjunct to other systems such as seminars/conferences. However, from time to time, or for a given number of weeks, it may be fitted into the programme for those classes not scheduled to receive regular SRE in a particular year.
 - ii) Group or Individual Research/Assignment: This method has been employed by some SRE teachers in association with primary schools. It may be suitable for use, on a private study basis, especially with individuals from minority religious groups, for whom face-to-face teaching is not available.

- d) **Supporting Systems**
- i) **Excursions:** With parental consent and by arrangement with the school authorities, visits to certain places or events are planned to provide some specific learning experience, often associated with a particular religious festival.
 - ii) **Camps and Out-of-School Contact:** Being normally extra curricular in nature, these activities are additional to the SRE programme operating within the school. However, they may, with parental approval and school co-operation, be so timetabled as to serve as an alternative method of providing SRE in special circumstances or on some appropriate occasion.
 - iii) **Pastoral Care (Chaplaincy):** By arrangement with the school, clergy or other SRE personnel are provided with accommodation for the conduct of interviews with individuals or small groups of students to discuss personal problems, especially of a religious nature, in the lunch hour or other suitable free time. When the need arises, a particular pupil may be referred to such a person at the request of the principal or school counsellor. These contacts, including those of an informal nature, should have due regard to school organisation and requirements, parental authority and student need.

Note: The Committee draws attention to a concept applicable to almost all the above approaches, namely, team teaching, whereby two or more people work together in sharing the teaching and support roles. This encourages the use of specialist skills such as artistic, musical and pastoral ability. In most cases this approach is also a help with discipline problems.

- 6.89 The Committee does not consider that its role is to provide any evaluation of these systems, with regard either to their effectiveness or to their applicability to the circumstances of the various religious groups. Such information should be obtainable from the educational authorities of each denomination or religious group and from the Inter-Church Consultative Commission on Religious Education in Schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUGGESTIONS

- 6.90 The Committee considers that, for each school, an experienced SRE teacher or other suitable person from the community might be kept free from regular teaching commitments to act on behalf of his/her religious group (or all groups represented at the school) in the following ways:
- a) as Co-ordinator of the SRE programme,
 - b) in liaison with school authorities,
 - c) as the person to whom behavioural problems arising in the SRE class situation can be referred, in the first instance, for guidance and pastoral care, and who, when disciplinary action seems necessary, can refer the pupil to the appropriate school authority.
- 6.91 The Committee suggests that there be no SRE teaching during the first week of the school year and that this time be used for SRE teacher orientation. The aim would be for the appropriate member(s) of the school staff to familiarise SRE personnel with the total operation of the school, including location of equipment and facilities, school philosophy, curriculum and timetable patterns, staff roles, methods of organisation and disciplinary procedures.
- 6.92 The Committee further suggests that religious bodies should give serious consideration to the appointment of regional SRE co-ordinators and/or professional teams, for each particular faith or on a joint-denominational basis or even on behalf of all faiths, to develop and undertake new organisational patterns of SRE, especially for the secondary level.
- 6.93 Significant among the practical issues affecting the implementation of SRE in secondary schools is the relationship between the overall provision made in school staff allocations and the number of SRE classes conducted by visiting personnel. The Committee is of the view that this could be an important consideration in terms of the degree of co-operation and harmony between school staff and visiting personnel, particularly in schools where there is a minimal

involvement in SRE. Accordingly, the Committee suggests that this matter be examined in detail by the Department of Education, having due regard to the needs of the individual schools.

- 6.94 A major problem in the implementation of SRE, especially at the secondary level, occurs where the SRE programme depends for its continued operation on the regular minding of classes by school teachers. Wherever this is the case, the Committee is of the opinion that the SRE programme should be subject to immediate review and re-determination by means of consultation within the school, in terms of the principles and procedures outlined in this Report.
- 6.95 The Committee is of the firm view that the churches and other religious groups must accept responsibility for ensuring that SRE teachers entering government schools are appropriately prepared. SRE teachers, therefore, should be encouraged to avail themselves of relevant training opportunities, including in-service and tertiary courses. In this context the Committee stresses the relevance of the principles enunciated in Paragraphs 6.65 – 6.67.

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11.3 SRE Recommendations from Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980)

Endorsed by the Minister for Education, February, 1986

36. That Special Religious Education, as defined in Recommendation 3(b), be recognised as an integral part of the school's activities, which takes place in school hours under the jurisdiction of the school. (6.55)
37. That the objectives of Special Religious Education as stated in this Report be endorsed by the Department of Education and be commended to the churches and religious groups for their implementation. (6.58, 6.67)
38. That Special Religious Education be implemented in a flexible way on the basis of consultation and co-operation, involving the school and other parties, and in terms of the principles stated in the Report. (6.7, 6.8, 6.71-6.76)
39. That as part of the process of enrolment at school, parents state whether Special Religious Education is desired for their child and, if so, which religious group they would want their child to attend. (6.59)
40. That, on the school enrolment form, provision be made for parents to indicate, if they so wish, the religious affiliation, if any, of the child to enable the school to cater for the child's attendance at recognised religious observances outside the school, where such attendance is requested by the parents. (6.60)
41. That throughout the child's schooling, parents retain the right to enrol their child in, or withdraw their child from, any form of Special Religious Education at any time, without being required to state any reason, and that notification of any changes in enrolment or intended withdrawal be given to the school in writing. (6.61)
42. That pupils withdrawn from Special Religious Education be provided with opportunities for purposeful secular learning which should, however, be of such a nature as to avoid conflict of choice, either for the parents or for the pupils receiving Special Religious Education. (6.62)
43. That the churches and other religious groups perceive their role in schools as a response to parental wishes as expressed by means of the enrolment of their children for participation in Special Religious Education. (6.59, 6.64)
44. That the participation of officially recognised religious groups in Special Religious Education be in accordance with legislative provisions and the normal operation of the school. (6.64, 6.69)
45. That any churches or religious groups providing Special Religious Education in schools be requested to give it their official support and commitment, and undertake it as a genuinely educational activity which is adequately staffed and competently taught. (6.65)
46. That the State have no say in the doctrine taught by Special Religious Education personnel and that the educational authorities of the churches and religious groups prepare curricula and develop or recommend materials consistent with the broad statement of objectives outlined in the Report, and suited to the pupils' needs, ages and stages of development and to the capabilities of the teaching personnel. (6.67, 6.80(d))
47. That Special Religious Education be taught by visiting personnel and that the appointment of such teachers be the sole responsibility of each individual church or religious group. (6.68)

48. That the churches and other religious groups develop procedures for accrediting Special Religious Education teachers, which are suited to their particular tradition and circumstances. (6.56, 6.65, 6.80(e))
49. That the training facilities of the churches and religious groups at local, regional and State levels be directed towards the supply of adequate numbers of teachers with knowledge of the relevant doctrine and with teaching competence; of supporting personnel to assist them; and of reserve staff to relieve and replace them as need arises. (6.65, 6.66, 6.79(g), 6.80(d))
50. That the religious authorities responsible for Special Religious Education at the local school level ensure that sufficient numbers of trained and competent personnel are available to fulfil their particular commitment in the school and that the Special Religious Education staff are appropriately supervised. (6.69, 6.79(e) & (f))
51. That Special Religious Education personnel teach with sensitivity to the child and his family's religious background and adopt the normal courtesies and practices expected of all teaching staff within the local school. (6.56, 6.69, 6.79(f) & (h))
52. That, on average, not more than one hour per week be available for Special Religious Education, it being understood that a flexible time schedule could be used, subject to the agreement of the parties concerned and provided that, in total, the time allocated in any one year does not exceed an average of one hour per week. (6.82)
53. That the total amount of time allocated and its actual mode of incorporation within the timetable be flexibly applied in a manner most appropriate to the form that Special Religious Education takes in a particular school curriculum. (6.83)
54. That actual lesson or period length for Special Religious Education be consistent with the operation of normal periods and be in accord with the age and attention span of the children, as well as the nature of the material being presented. (6.83)
55. That the form which Special Religious Education will take in a school be determined on the basis of consultation among participating Special Religious Education personnel and the school authorities and, to facilitate this, the procedures outlined in the Report be adopted. (6.72, 6.73, 6.78(b), 6.79(c) & (d), 6.80(f))
56. That in the consultative process, full account be taken of the expressed wishes of parents for Special Religious Education, the number of personnel available, and the school's obligation to provide as satisfactorily as possible for Special Religious Education within the context of its responsibilities to the total school community. (6.74, 6.75, 6.84)
57. That Special Religious Education personnel be available for consultation with parents concerning Special Religious Education, and that parents recognise their responsibility to support and co-operate in the programme wherever possible. (6.76, 6.81)
58. That, although subject to review in the light of changing circumstances, the form of Special Religious Education determined through consultation for the ensuing year be seen as a firm agreement and recognised as a commitment by the Special Religious Education personnel and the school, requiring their mutual co-operation in its implementation. (6.72, 6.73, 6.78 - 6.80)
59. That the varied systems of Special Religious Education, outlined in Paragraph 6.88, be acknowledged as valid forms for implementation in schools, together with the use of joint-denominational approaches agreed to by parents and the religious groups concerned. (6.85 - 6.89)

60. That the churches and other religious groups give consideration to the appointment of regional co-ordinators and/or professional teams to develop and undertake new organisational patterns of Special Religious Education, especially for the secondary level. (6.92)
61. That at each school an experienced Special Religious Education teacher or other suitable person from the community be kept free from regular SRE teaching commitments to act in a co-ordination, liaison, disciplinary and pastoral care role. (6.90)
62. That during the school year provision be made, preferably during the first week, for appropriate members of the school staff to familiarise Special Religious Education personnel with the total operation of the school. (6.91)
63. That the school reserve the right to intervene in the event of unreasonable disruption to the school, alleged teaching inefficiency or alleged distortion of religious doctrine, and that such matters be pursued by the principal in collaboration with the relevant Special Religious Education authorities and, if necessary, officers of the Department of Education. (6.70)
64. That in any school, especially at the secondary level, where the Special Religious Education programme depends for its current operation on the regular minding of classes by school teachers, it be subject to immediate review and re-determination by means of consultation within the school, in terms of the principles and procedures recommended in this Report. (6.93, 6.94)
65. That the churches and other religious groups accept responsibility for ensuring that Special Religious Education teachers entering schools are appropriately prepared. (6.65, 6.80(d), 6.84, 6.95)

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End of Chapter