



# SRE Update

## AGM Report

March 6th was a busy day for ICCOREIS members as we gathered for the Annual General Meeting followed by the quarterly Commission meeting.

When Ann Maree Whenman informed the Commission last year that she was unable to continue in the role of Chairperson, a selection committee was formed. The committee sought nominations and brought forth a name to the AGM. This person was duly voted into the role.

So let me introduce you to our new Chairperson:

Lynda Mulder comes from a strong foundation based on her long involvement with the Department of Education and Training as well as past and present involvement in SRE. This is a great asset for the Chair of the Commission.

As a teacher in the government school education system, Lynda participated in SRE from Kindergarten to senior years. She taught SRE in inner-city primary and secondary schools while

studying for a Bachelor of Education (Honours) at the University of Sydney. Her career with the Department of Education and Communities has included teaching and leading in metropolitan and regional schools.

A member of the Board of Studies English K-6 Syllabus writing team, Lynda had the privilege of working with educators across the state. This was followed by 11 years of Literacy and Quality Teaching consultancy where one of her roles included being a SRE liaison person. She has recently retired as a Deputy Principal to be part of academic staff at a regional university but continues to teach SRE each week along with a local businesswoman who volunteers her time. Lynda is committed to engaging with students in their learning about Jesus and the Christian worldview.

In her own words Lynda says, "I look forward to the future of SRE, both at a state level, and locally".



*Lynda Mulder speaking at the SRE Celebration*

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## PhD awarded to Ann Maree Whenman (Immediate past Chair of ICCOREIS)



*Ann Maree Whenman being congratulated at her last ICCOREIS Board meeting as Chair*

At her last official ICCOREIS meeting, it was announced that Ann Maree's PhD had been accepted. Entitled ***In good faith: a historical study of the provision of religious education for Catholic children not in Catholic schools in New South Wales: the CCD movement 1880-2000***, it is available for online reading from the Australian Catholic University's website: <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp314.06032012/index.html>

Both Ann Maree and Jean Ferrington, Presbyterian Church representative, were awarded Life Membership at the SRE Celebration on 29 March.



# Celebrating SRE

Just before Easter, on 29 March 2012, a momentous event occurred to mark the promise made by the Minister for Education, The Hon Adrian Piccoli, in his media statement in December last year:

"I have... committed to providing an annual *Celebration of Special Religious Education* to recognise the efforts of Special Religious Education teachers who have provided long years of service."

A celebratory event was held two years earlier where the providers of many faiths gathered to make a statement: that even though ethics classes had been piloted, and their introduction into the SRE timeslot seemed likely, the place of SRE in school life was assured and to be celebrated.

So what made this event so special?



The doors of Parliament House were thrown open to almost 300 people. The venue was impressive, and holding a function in Parliament House provided an air of dignity and a stamp of approval. Several Members of Parliament accepted the invitation to attend including the Treasurer, Mike Baird and his Chief of Staff, Bay Warburton, the Attorney General, The Hon. Greg Smith, Kevin Conolly, the State Member for Riverstone, and The Hon. Greg Donnelly MLC.

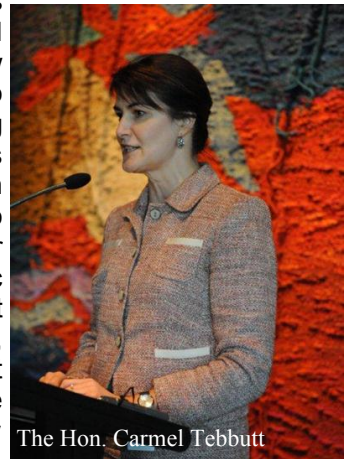


The Hon. Adrian Piccoli

It is important to ensure quality time for these classes," Mr Piccoli told the SRE teachers in the Strangers' Dining Room. He described himself as an "active advocate for SRE in public schools" and stated that "SRE continues to be assured of a place in the Education Act in NSW. Last year I announced

my intention to support and strengthen SRE".

This support was reiterated by Carmel Tebbutt, the Shadow Minister of Education who said Labor's "strong support of ethics classes" (held as an alternative to SRE), "in no way diminishes our support of SRE in public schools." Ms Tebbutt added "We know Catholic, Anglican or Buddhist parents will not choose public schools unless they can get the religious instruction of their choice." She also identified with SRE teachers, "As a mother of an 11-year-old who attends SRE, I know what you go through".



The Hon. Carmel Tebbutt

Another special feature was the fact that 16 awards

*Below: Awardees with The Hon Adrian Piccoli (l-r, back) Chehade Richa, Geoff Mansfield, Denise Humphreys, Helen Magdas, The Hon. Adrian Piccoli, Wally Mills, Ron Taylor, Sasa Radoicic, (l-r, front) Phil Watson, Maureen Power, Joan Goodwin, Mary Smith, Cheryl Hallinan, Maureen Ravia, Hazel Schulman, Mark Ohlmus.*





# Celebrating SRE



Newcastle train travellers

were presented. Nominations were received from across the State for service to SRE of all kinds. SRE teachers have a servant heart and all who received an award did so with gracious humility. Award winners included: Janet Broughton from Menai Baptist for "faithfully teaching SRE for many years despite being wheelchair bound and enduring chronic ill health"; Cheryl Hallinan for training scripture teachers across a third of NSW. In 2010 she also travelled 100km each week to teach scripture at an isolated two-teacher school at Mayrung; Mark Ohlmus who pioneered SRE at Maclean High School, and worked with SU NSW to ensure that over 90% of North Coast High Schools are served by a full-time SRE teacher; Ron Taylor who worked with 75 Churches on the NSW Central Coast over 20 years to build networks of SRE teachers all along the Coast; and Phil Watson, illustrator for the Big Rescue Bible (which is provided free of charge to Scripture classes by the Bible Society) and who also teaches SRE himself. Maureen Ravia and Hazel Schulman, two long serving Jewish teachers also received awards.

Perhaps the picture that said a thousand words was diminutive Mrs Maureen Power of St Brigids in the inner city suburb of Marrickville standing in front of young and handsome Chehade Richa. Maureen received thunderous applause when her award was announced for teaching SRE for 75 years, and Chehade, a 22 year old law student who teaches in his non-lecture times, was told he had a lot of catching up to do.

"Surprised", "honoured" and "uncomfortable in the limelight" – were some of the comments made by those receiving the awards. "It was an honour to be nominated, and to receive the Award from the Minister of Education was very special. All the recipients were very proud and it was so nice to meet and chat to them," said Hazel Schulman.

Mark Ohlmus said of his award "I felt genuinely affirmed. I intend to use the experience to encourage, to inspire and to reflect to other SRE champions this same affirmation and endorsement provided from the Government at both political and DEC levels. I was privileged to be in such an insanely prestigious room with these and other assorted dignitaries in celebration of what we do in schools."

"It was wonderful to be unified with others in this ministry!" Michelle Whenham (receiving an award for

Janet Broughton who was too ill to attend).

"I feel very honoured to have been chosen to receive such a prestigious award and can only implore and advise other people, be they young or old, to involve themselves in their community," commented Mrs Maureen Ravia, one of the Jewish awardees. When Master of Ceremonies, Carl Faase, asked Maureen why she teaches SRE she replied, "I just love it".

The sense of occasion meant that contingents of SRE teachers came from far and wide: from the Snowy Mountains in the south to the Nambucca Valley in the north and west to Deniliquin, Bathurst and Orange. A group travelled by train from Newcastle, beginning the day with prayer and sent off with the blessings of the local training group and a lovingly packed lunch. Over fifty SRE teachers came from the Wollongong area.

A personal and animated slant on SRE was given by Tom Yanco, a University student majoring in media who spoke of the value of SRE in his own life and Eva Shepherdson, currently enrolled in a Masters of Education, who aims to work as an HSIE teacher in schools.



Helen Magdas

Helen Magdas spoke of the benefits of her (Greek Orthodox) Church's involvement with ICCOREIS. She said "ICCOREIS has been the catalyst for the improvement of SRE teaching in our church... We have organised yearly seminars for our teachers... There has also been the opportunity in these seminars to share ideas with other faiths."

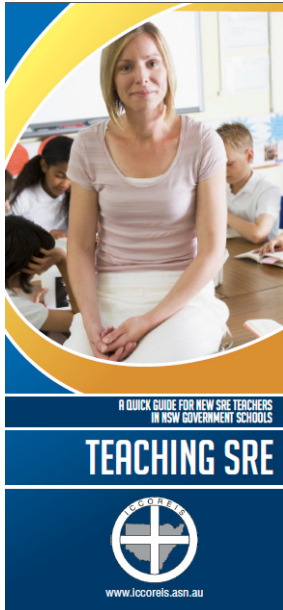
As a primary principal, Helen Colquhoun attested to the importance of SRE in a school, "SRE teaching supports the "Values We Teach" which underpins everything we do in a school. It is offered to students from diverse religious backgrounds in a multi cultural school like mine. At Chester Hill North Public School there are 78% students from a non-English speaking background and 50% are Arabic & attend Muslim scripture. Students build a sense of belonging as they experience the love & care of SRE volunteers who are an important part of the whole school life."



Helen Colquhoun

Each person who attended was invited to complete a postcard with their story of SRE. You can expect to hear more great stories of SRE when all the postcards are returned.

# Resources



## LAUNCH OF THE ICCOREIS SRE BROCHURE: Teaching SRE

This tri-fold brochure has been produced by ICCOREIS to meet the need for a concise summary of the role of an SRE teacher.

It covers topics such as how to become an SRE teacher; preparation before lessons; the way you speak to a class; and, where to get help.

Interest in the brochure which was

launched at the SRE Celebration came from SRE coordinators who would like to make them available to all their teachers, as well as a member of another faith who found them equally beneficial.

Copies are available from ICCOREIS and as a download from the website. Contact the Executive Officer for more information.

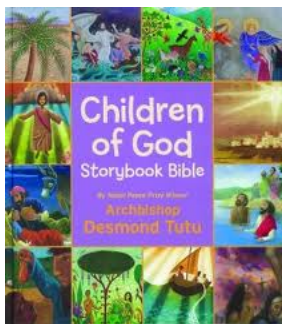
## Volume Control

Here's a good idea:

Use a DVD to review a story that has been told the week before. Simply turn the volume off and ask questions as it is playing, such as who is speaking, what might they be saying, and what will happen next. The pause button can be used while answers are given. This is an excellent idea for well known narratives such as Easter and Christmas.



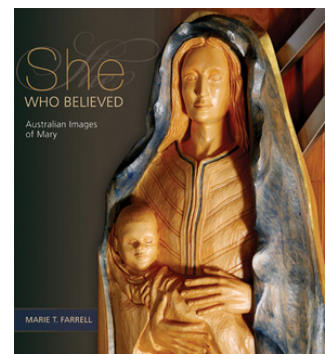
## New Books



Children of God Storybook Bible by Nobel Peace Prize Winner, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Collins 2010, (about \$25). Delightful short stories for young children with vibrantly colourful illustrations created by artists from all around the globe.

Large print: Jesus Returns to Heaven and other Bible Stories

Miles Kelly, Buddingpress, 2011 (about \$10). Contains a mix of stories told simply, starting with Jesus and doubting Thomas, breakfast on the beach, the ascension and stories of Peter, Saul and the road to Damascus.



She who Believed: Australian images of Mary, Marie T Farrell, St Pauls Publications, Strathfield, 2009. 14 photographs and descriptions of different artistic interpretations of Mary. Includes contemporary and Aboriginal depictions of Mary.

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