

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 (then called the 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

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 Communities;
- 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 Community 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)

- Seventh-day Adventist Church, (Greater Sydney, North and South NSW Conferences)
- Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand - NSW and ACT Deaneries
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of NSW & ACT, Board of Education

1.4 Affiliated Groups

1.4.1 Initial Structure of Affiliated Groups

In response to the restructuring of the NSW Department of Education and Education 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 Present 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 1335
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 NSW public 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.

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 Communities.

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 SRE and GRE

ICCOREIS is primarily concerned with Special Religious Education (SRE), but it has an 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 Communities.

General Religious Education (GRE) is defined in *Religious Education Implementation Procedures* 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

DRAFT