



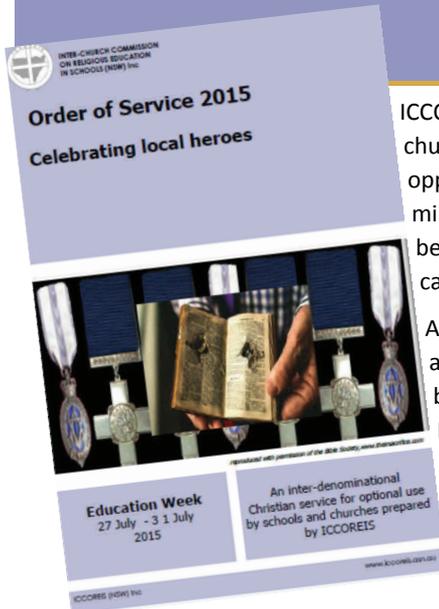
ICCOREIS

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

SRE UPDATE

Volume 21 Number 2
July 2015

Education Week



ICCOREIS has prepared an inter-denominational Christian service for use in both schools and churches. The theme for 2015 is "Celebrating Local Heroes" and it is an excellent opportunity to invite some local heroes such as police officers, fire fighters, doctors, nurses, military personnel, (in uniform if appropriate) so they can be acknowledged. It would also be appropriate to thank those who contribute to the school community: assisting in the canteen, reading groups, sports groups and as mentors.

A notable personality in the local community could be invited to give a short message or answer a few questions about their lives that children might like to ask. It is important to build some connections with the bible passage which focuses on Tabitha, also known as Dorcas. One of the most positive messages for the children is identifying that very simple activities can make them a hero too: being truthful, kind, encouraging and helping others.

You can download the service from the website in colour or mono formats (<http://www.iccoreis.asn.au/news/>). There are also *Suggestions for Use* including songs

Review

In order to fulfil Recommendation 14 of the Parliamentary Review into SRE & SEE (2011), the Department of Education is currently conducting an independent review of Special Religious Education and Special Education in Ethics. It is being carried out by ARTD Consultants. Providers have been assured that the review is not being conducted to determine whether SRE should continue: it will inform ongoing improvement of SRE and SEE.

Christian providers of SRE and other religious traditions strongly encourage all those who value the place of SRE in public schools to contribute to the review via an online survey.

It only takes 10-15 minutes to complete a series of questions that may be found at <http://artd.com.au/sre-see-review>. There are three separate surveys for *Parents/carers*, *SRE Teachers*, and *Other interested parties*.

Parents, grandparents, SRE teachers and all supporters of SRE are therefore urged to make sure that the valuable contribution made by SRE to Public Education in NSW is recognised and enhanced and that SRE continues to operate as an opt out system that does not require annual re-enrolment.

So please, **Have Your Say before July 31st** when the web portal will close.

HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT SRE..

Please have your say in the Review of 'Scripture' Classes in Public Schools before July 31st

Don't miss your opportunity to highlight why SRE is a strength of Public Education.

For details how you can contribute to the review and voice your opinion, please turn over. Go to bit.ly/sre-review to contribute.



Sticking to the Agreed Curriculum

I have a number of friends who have food intolerances or allergies (plus my own intolerance to tomato) so when having a meal together we are all mindful to not include something that could harm another person and enjoy the foods that we can all share (and our bodies agree on).

It's the same with our SRE curriculums. When teaching in combined arrangements (i.e. with other denominations), we need to celebrate and teach the Bible accounts and stories that unite us as Christians rather than highlight the denominational differences.

Without a doubt, the recent media attention concerning SRE curriculums that has been somewhat misplaced, has highlighted the importance of sticking to the agreed curriculum as approved by your authorising body (and local minister's associations). This includes any additional resources that you may want to include.

For primary school settings there are a number of 'commercially' produced ones that are readily available and approved by providers. Within the curriculum there may be suggestions for use of media resources and something personal.

Whenever we bring a 'part of ourselves' to the lesson it is important to remember that we are not just teaching our own beliefs, but rather representing all the churches involved in SRE and it needs to fit within the DEC guidelines and be age appropriate.

Cheryl Clendinning

SRE Consultant & Trainer for the Association of Baptist Churches in NSW & ACT

GodSpace, Production Coordinator

Signs of the Times

The Hunter Christian SRE committee has continued to run Basic SRE training again this year, after increasing their team of trainers at the end of 2014. There have been excellent numbers in attendance and the feedback has been really encouraging. It appears that most people are taking on board the fact that they must do basic training every three years as well as ongoing training and this is swelling the rate of participation.

We know that SRE is often in the news these days, so the group has undertaken to generate some local positive publicity. This will culminate in a focus on SRE throughout the Hunter region in October, but there is plenty of activity already.

One of the Anglican representatives, Kate Baker, created a sign and arranged for its installation in a very prominent position along one of the main arteries to the city - inescapable to those caught in traffic.



SRE is in a prominent position in the Hunter



Basic training in the Hunter is alive and well



The Hunter Christian SRE Committee thanks John Donnelly for his service as he steps down from the committee

Meeting in Goulburn

As Executive Officer, I attended a meeting of the Goulburn SRE group on Monday April 20. I was briefed on a number of questions they had for me and prepared a PowerPoint and some handouts including the DVDs shown at the 2012 and 2014 SRE Celebrations. We watched these at the beginning of the meeting and the group was encouraged by them.

Some of the issues we addressed were:

- Statistics on SRE across the region
- Whether numbers have been affected by SEE
- How to respond to the reviewer's surveys for the current SRE and SEE review
- What is working well in SRE across the state
- The Enrolment form

The meeting was attended by 5 local representatives: Maija Henzell, SRE Coordinator from an independent church in Canberra; Helen Charles, Baptist coordinator in Goulburn; Brian Champness, Anglican representative from Goulburn; Bruce Gorton the Presbyterian minister in Goulburn; and Matt Mitchell the Presbyterian minister in Cootamundra. Matt and Maija had travelled up to two hours to be at the meeting on a very cold, wet and bleak day.

Although SRE seems to be going well in the region, the age-old problem of recruitment is an issue, with teacher numbers in decline. In addition, Bruce Gorton, the driving force of the group, and Matt Mitchell are both nearing retirement and are concerned for the longevity of the group and support for SRE.



I include one of the tables of statistics extracted from data provided by the Department of Education and Communities (DEC) which I prepared for the group. It is encouraging to see that the actual total of SRE enrolments (for those denominations displayed) increased over the 3 year period. Please note: this data shows only a selection of denominations.

I was warmly welcomed to the group and enjoyed the opportunity to engage with local issues and give a broader perspective to what is happening across the State.

Sue Sneddon
Executive Officer

Data from DEC - Comparing 2012 and 2013/14 Enrolments by Denominations

Denomination	2012 Ranking	2012 Enrolments	2013/14 Ranking	2013/14 Enrolments
Anglican	1	124,311	1	121,340
Assemblies of God	9	1,184	9	1,124
Baptist	6	4,774	6	4,538
Brethren		415		371
Catholic - Western & Roman	2	89,280	2	95,913
Congregational		202		202
Greek Orthodox	4	10,033	4	10,201
Presbyterian	5	6,412	5	6,229
Salvation Army	8	1,802	8	1,683
Serbian Orthodox	7	2,042	7	2,151
Uniting	3	19,884	3	18,155
TOTAL		260,339		261,907

Banned Books

Recently, the DEC took the unprecedented step of emailing all principals of both primary and high schools proscribing the use of books used in SRE. Two of the books are recommended resources in some high school SRE curricula. One of the books has been a popular resource for a decade at least.

The issues accompanying this action by the DEC are not generally known. Firstly, there was no consultation with providers regarding the books, or for that matter any advice about problems with resources used by teachers. Secondly, even the memorandum to principals requiring immediate action gave no hint of the perceived problems with the books that led to such a directive. The principals were required to get a signed declaration from all SRE teachers, including those in primary school, that they were not using the books. Thirdly, it is providers, like the members of ICCOREIS, who authorise the curriculum and banning books that support the Christian faith and its ethical standards is potentially a presumptive and frightening expansion of the power of government.

There was a third book, Dr Patricia Weerakoon's *Teen Sex by the Book*, which was comprehensively banned. The irony is that no SRE provider in ICCOREIS is aware of any teacher using this book. The publishers have never promoted the book as suitable for SRE.

In fact, the cover of the book has a large label: 'M Recommended for 15 and over. Adult themes. Sexual References.' This in itself would make any trained SRE teacher very cautious about even referring to the book, much less teaching from it. Again, it is a worrying development when the DEC bans a book by a professor who until recently was at the forefront of sex education globally. To date, the DEC has not provided evidence from her peers in sex education that the contents were unsuitable, even harmful. This is the only implication a member of the public could draw from an unqualified ban.

These moves by the DEC challenge all SRE providers to continually audit the curriculum and resources used in teaching high school. This is as true for seminars as it is for weekly classes. Providers like the members of ICCOREIS give an assurance to the DEC annually that our teachers use an approved curriculum with age-appropriate teaching strategies. If, as it seems, the DEC is now scrutinising SRE teachers as if they were their own teachers, we must live with this and do an even more credible job of teaching the Christian faith.

If you have concerns about a high school curriculum or resource contact Peter Adamson, our Deputy Chair.

Changes to Religious Education Implementation Procedures

Regular readers of the SRE Update will be aware that there have always been guidelines for the implementation of SRE. These guidelines are set by the DEC and informed by the legislation for special religious education.

From time to time the "Religious Education Implementation Procedures" have been modified and over the last 8 months have changed at least three times. What this means for us, as providers of SRE, is that the DEC website needs to be checked regularly:

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/index.htm>

So what are these changes? Some are relatively insignificant, relating to administrative changes such as change of email address for the SRE and SEE officer (p.7), change of address for National School Chaplaincy website (p.11) and page 10 is actually non-existent.

The information on the WWCC is outdated (p.8), since WWCC numbers have been required for all SRE teachers from March 30 this year.

One notable change, since March 25, is that there are additional requirements governing voluntary student activities of a religious nature in schools such as lunch-time groups and other voluntary religious activities which fall under the supervision of the principal.

Interesting Statistics from Census at School Australia

In the 2013 census of school aged children, the Australian Bureau of Statistics report:

- More girls use the internet for social networking (52%) than boys (38%)
- Boys most often use the internet for playing games(47%) while girls use it less (19%)
- Netball remains the preferred sport amongst girls (21%)
- Soccer is the preferred sport for boys (17%) and has been since 2010
- Pizza and pasta has remained the most irresistible take-away food since 2010. Over 20% choose it as their favourite each year.
- Internet access at home is becoming increasingly part of everyday life. Students who cannot access the internet has decreased from 14% in 2006 to 5% in 2013.
- Reducing bullying in schools continues to be the leading social issue for students across all states and territories.
- Having healthy eating habits is the second most important social concern
- Conserving water is the most important environmental issue for students.
- Having access to the internet is the third most important of all listed issues.

Australian Bureau of Statistics website: <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/CaSHome.nsf/Home/C@S+2013+Interesting+Statistics>

ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc.
Website
www.iccoreis.asn.au

Executive Officer
Mrs Sue Sneddon
ph: 02 4979 1335

PO Box 756
Newcastle NSW 2300
e: execofficer@iccoreis.asn.au