



ICCOREIS

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

SRE UPDATE

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Sharing the Message in the Hunter

WE know that SRE is a good thing, but it's a message that rarely gets into the media. For too long churches have been talking among themselves rather than with the community about SRE.

In the Hunter, that's no longer the case. The Hunter Christian SRE Committee decided earlier in the year that if SRE (school scripture) is to thrive into the future, parents need to choose it for their kids. That means that the general public needs to be hearing about the benefits of SRE so that when parents face the SRE question on the enrolment form, they have good information on which to decide.

We discovered that advertising in mainstream media is expensive so a promotional campaign was launched to raise funds. Individuals and churches were approached and the whole venture was steeped in prayer. Money started to come in, enabling promotional materials to be designed and ordered. One of the member churches offered the services of their graphic designer to create a logo to capture the message that we felt was missing in media coverage of SRE.

Simply, SRE - it's a good thing!

Here's what has been done to engage with the public:

- ◇ an Opinion Piece in the Newcastle Herald
- ◇ a Facebook page: Hunter Christian SRE (feel free to like it to get updates)
- ◇ redesigned website with parents and schools rather than just SRE teachers in mind
- ◇ five paid radio ads created by local Christian Radio Rhema
- ◇ one radio ad created for the two stations most listened to by parents of public school kids. Scheduled for twice a day at school drop off time for the first two weeks of term 4.
- ◇ radio interviews on Radio Rhema about the campaign, inviting donations
- ◇ A3 and A4 posters created and churches, coordinators and SRE teachers approached to place them throughout the region



New page on ICCOREIS website

Check out the new SRE Training webpage for a list of training requirements and training organisations.

<http://www.iccoreis.asn.au/resources/teaching-sre/training/>

The table on this page outlines training courses which address the majority of outcomes and competencies within the Basic Training Framework for primary school SRE teachers.

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- ◇ bumper stickers made available
- ◇ articles in the Catholic newspaper *Aurora* and the Anglican magazine *Encounter*
- ◇ a letter to public school principals offering the Christian SRE Information for Parents brochure, also asking if they'd display 'SRE: Question, Explore, Discover' on their school playground noticeboard in October
- ◇ churches approached to highlight SRE in their services on the weekend of 17/18 October
- ◇ a prayer event at a local church for SRE teachers to come and pray together and be prayed for
- ◇ running games and activities for kids under the SRE- It's a good thing! banner at a local City Council holiday festival.

We've been surprised and delighted by the response which has been overwhelmingly positive.

If other regions would like to do something to get out a positive message about SRE we'd love to help. Posters can be viewed on the SUPPORT page at www.huntersre.org.au and you'll see pictures of the bumper stickers and banner on the Facebook page Hunter Christian SRE.

Contact sallysmith12@gmail.com or katebaker@newcastleanglican.org.au if you'd like the files to use.

Sally Smith,

Chair Hunter Christian SRE Committee



Urgent Action required by SRE Coordinators

Regarding SRE in 2016, a recent Department of Education (DoE) Fact Sheet says

*'The Principal is to send a preference letter to all students in Kindergarten, and Year 7, as well as all subsequent new enrolments in the 2015 and 2016 school year.'*¹

This action is required because of the very recent change to the (as yet only online) enrolment form question on SRE.

Now that the enrolment form question on SRE has changed and where SRE is programmed for 2016, the principal needs to provide an opportunity for every parent/carer whose child was enrolled in 2015 to indicate their preference. A parent/carer's preference is indicated through completing a DoE template letter, which should be sent home at the very beginning of Term 1 2016.²

In order to facilitate this preference letter being sent in a timely manner for organising SRE in 2016, and so that SRE is accurately represented, local SRE coordinators should arrange to meet with the principal to confirm the providers who are participating in delivering SRE in 2016. In a combined arrangement, all the Christian providers should

be listed in the preference letter so it is obvious to parents/carers that SRE is provided by a number of different Christian denominations cooperating together.

Where the local school administration has used hard copies of the old enrolment form this year, the introduction of the new question on SRE is crucial for 2016 enrolments. Establishing the parent/carer response through completing the preference/participation letter is vital for each child's inclusion or exclusion in the 2016 SRE program.³

Peter Adamson

ICCOREIS Deputy Chairperson

1. Fact sheet on SRE and SEE

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/assets/SREandSEE%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>, accessed 27/10/15

2. Preference/participation template letter (see table at bottom of page)

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/index.htm>, accessed 27/10/15

3. New enrolment form (see p.2)

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/gotoschool/enrolment/detsef.pdf>, accessed 27/10/15

Secular? What does it really mean?

Secularism [at its simplest] is the separation of church and state so that religion does not interfere with the working and institutions of governance: law, judiciary, police, health, transport and education (Davies, 2014).¹

A number of researchers have described a 'dynamic secular governance' in Western societies. Where this separation of church and state is not a hard dichotomy, either/or – black/white, but exhibits a dynamism that is often unique to the particular context of a society e.g. Australia; USA; UK etc.

So what is secularism in Australia?

If you imagine that there are many versions of 'secularism' and they lie on a continuum from what has been described as 'soft secularism' to 'hard secularism',

'soft secularism' accommodates all religions and even incorporates them into aspects of governance

'hard secularism' bans all religious expression in public life e.g. wearing of the headscarf or the Christian cross

The definition that suggested, "Secular = not connected with religious or spiritual matters", is at the 'hard secularism' end of the continuum.

I would propose the understanding of secular used in the original Education act [1880] and the more recent one[s] sits at the **'soft secularism'** end of the continuum.

Section 116 of the Australian Constitution reflects this position.

To support this view I would draw your attention to the sentence deliberately included immediately following the statement in Section #30 [Ed Reform Act (NSW) 1990] to explain 'secular instruction':

The words 'secular instruction' are taken to include general religious education as distinct from dogmatic or polemic theology.

Hence the use of the word 'secular' in the Act (1990) implies an understanding of the term that accommodates all religions and even incorporates them into aspects of governance.

It is from this point that the dynamic relationship between general religious education and special religious education should be explored as distinct yet complementary assets of curriculum in NSW State Schools.

Dr Ann Maree Whenman

Lecturer Religious Education ACU

Former Chair of ICCOREIS

1 Davies, L. (2014). One size does not fit all: complexity, religion, secularism and education. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 34(2), 184-199. DOI: 10.1080/02188791.2013.875647

Vale Maureen Power

A very faithful SRE teacher, Mrs Maureen Power, whose funeral was held on Friday 21 August, must be one of history's longest serving Catholic Catechists, with a total of 75 years service. She received an award at the SRE Celebration held in 2012 at Parliament House, Sydney.

This is an excerpt from the booklet printed to accompany the Celebration:

'Mrs Maureen Power is most loved in St Brigid's parish, Marrickville. She began her work as a Theresian 75 years ago and since then has worked tirelessly with children's faith education which went far beyond teaching Catechism which she



did with joy, enthusiasm, humour and grace. Her care for the children flowed over into pastoral care and involvement with their families, countless hours of visits, phone calls, cups of tea and chats to offer support, kindness and the strength of faith to struggling parents, families, single parents and more. Her work for children, originally Sunday mornings, then became organising and running the Religious Instruction program in over six government schools.

But her work grew beyond faith education for children only. She was instrumental in setting up the Adult Faith Education program – The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Alongside this work was her involvement in organising Sunday Worship for the children. "Miss Maureen", as she is affectionately known, loves children, loves their families, loves her faith –and EVERYONE adores Miss Maureen.'

Technology is great – when it works!

Here are some technology-free ideas to add impact to your lessons.

When telling the **story** use physical objects: eg small blanket or towel, basket, wrapped doll, toy snake, stick. Search cheap stores for items like stars, a crown, stuffed sheep, a large toy fish, old looking jug, battery operated candle, shawl, gift bags or boxes of different shapes, party hats, candy canes.

Some teachers make a collection of **soft toys** and use them as props, or prompts for the bible story. It's amazing how useful a sheep, teddy and soft doll can be! This is particularly important for Stage 1 children who love to touch concrete objects.

Drama: have children act out as you tell the story. Provide simple props which help focus their attention. Tip: leave the PowerPoint on so that children get clues about the story from both visual and auditory sources.

Recap the story from last week using a picture from the curriculum material: either PowerPoint picture you have printed out or one from the extra resource material or workbook. Ask who the people are in the picture, and what the children remember of the last lesson.

Jenny Harris, experienced SRE teacher

Responsibilities of an approved provider

"Approved provider" is the official term for any faith group which provides SRE lessons in public schools in NSW. Applicants must complete documentation for the Dept of Education (DoE) and set up processes and procedures to train, authorise and support their SRE teachers. It's quite OK to use training organisations which already train SRE teachers.

In December each year the DoE requires a written assurance that all the conditions it has for SRE are in place. This provides a good "checklist". Top of the list are

- ◇ "initial and ongoing training" covering such topics as classroom management and child protection issues
- ◇ using an approved curriculum which is publicly available—usually on a website
- ◇ SRE teachers must have a Working With children Check number – obtained in NSW through the Office of the Children's Guardian. This number must be verified by the authorising provider.

The Religious Education Implementation Procedures are available on the DoE website:

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

Initial training is covered by Basic SRE Training (6 modules) which has been agreed to by all members of ICCOREIS. Training that fulfils the competencies and outcomes (at least to 80%) is required. Some distance training and online training is available. Contact the Executive officer for details or see the new SRE Training webpage (p1).

ICCOREIS produces a SRE handbook which is on the website: <http://www.iccoreis.asn.au/resources/>

Specific questions for the DoE, should be addressed to the SRE and SEE officer:

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