



THE 2000 REUTHER ORATION

JANUS AT THE CENTURY'S GATE: LOOKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS AT LUTHERAN EDUCATION

**Robin L Kleinschmidt
2000 National Lutheran Principals' Conference
Tanunda South Australia**

19th July 2000

*Distributed by the Board for Lutheran Schools
197 Archer Street
North Adelaide SA 5006*

THE REUTHER ORATION

The Reuther Oration acknowledges the outstanding service of the Rev T T Reuther to Lutheran education in Australia from 1955, when he began duties as a chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, NSW, to 1993 when he retired from the position of National Director for Lutheran Schools.

Pastor Reuther's life within Lutheran schools commenced when he was a student first at Light Pass Lutheran Day School and later at Immanuel College.

After completing theological study at Immanuel Seminary he took the opportunity to undertake post graduate studies from 1950-1954 at Concordia Seminary, St Louis. Whilst on board ship (returning from the USA) he received a call to become chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, where he served to 1962.

After serving two parishes (Appila and Coonalpyn) from 1963-1968, he was called to be Headmaster of Concordia College Adelaide, where he joyfully served for fourteen years plus one term until 1983 where he accepted the invitation to become the inaugural National Director for Lutheran Schools.

During his outstanding service to Lutheran schools in Australia, he also completed Master Studies in Educational Administration.

He was an active member of the former Headmasters' Conference, member of the Australian Council of Education Administration, and honoured for his services to education by being made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

His ministry to Lutheran schools was highlighted by a professional approach based on a clear theological thinking. In the inaugural Reuther Oration, Pastor Reuther spoke of faithfulness, which was a characteristic that those associated with schools admired in him. He modelled faithfulness.

The Reuther Oration is designed to provoke and promote thinking about an aspect of Lutheran education. The Oration is usually delivered as part of the National Principals' Conference.

ROBIN L KLEINSCHMIDT

The 2000 Reuther Orator is Robin Kleinschmidt, Head of College at Redeemer Lutheran College at Rochedale, Queensland.

He is a product of Lutheran schooling, having attended St Peters Lutheran College as a boarder for six years. He has a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours in Latin language and Literature) and Bachelor of Education from the University of Queensland. After five years with the Queensland Department of Education he returned to teach at St Peters in 1965, becoming Deputy Head in 1970. In 1976-77 he was guest lecturer at St Olaf College, Minnesota, where he also studied religion and philosophy.

In 1980 he became founding Headmaster of Redeemer Lutheran College.

He was a member of the Board for Lutheran Schools from its inception until 1990. He has served on the LCAQD Church Council and General Church Council. From the inception of the LCAQD Schools Council he was chairman for 12 years and is now vice-chairman.

Beyond the Lutheran schooling system he was a member of the Qld. Board of Senior Secondary School Studies for nine years, as Deputy Chairman for six years. He has also served on the Executive Committee of the Association of Independent Schools of Qld. for four years and chaired the AISQ Education Committee for three years.

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JANUS AT THE CENTURY'S GATE:

LOOKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS AT LUTHERAN EDUCATION

I count it a singular honour to be asked to deliver this oration, in large part because of my high regard for Pastor Reuther, both as an educator and as a robust advocate and a passionate protagonist for Lutheran education. I am very aware of being the first to deliver the oration who is not a theologian or an academic. In this knowledge I have therefore chosen to present what is unashamedly a view from the field, a practitioner's perspective rather than a scholarly analysis.

My topic, as you are aware, is JANUS AT THE CENTURY'S GATE : LOOKING BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS AT LUTHERAN EDUCATION. I confess in advance that despite my love of history, the backward glances will be few and fleeting. In selecting the topic I recognise that I run some risks. The first is that less than a year after the resounding success of ACLE, there is a potential for a degree of duplication and repetition. I hope those instances will be minimal. The greater danger is that in looking to the future I have no greater wisdom than those who sit before me. Some may well disagree with me, and there is no clear way to refute counter-opinions. If disagreement leads to robust debate and discussion, it will be a healthy outcome. I have also chosen not to address those many generic issues of the future with which we shall also have to grapple, most of all, the impact of technology.

A question which we need constantly to ask ourselves about Lutheran schools is Why? What is our purpose, our justification, our raison d'être? We need to ask it again and again because the old answers may cease to be relevant. It is easy to trace the answers in our history, and we all know them well, going back to Reformation times, to the early Lutheran migration to Australia, up to and beyond the World War II period. But the last forty years have been a little more problematical. Growth in the number and size of schools, the decline in the proportion of Lutheran students and of Lutheran teachers, improvements in facilities as a result of Commonwealth Government capital and recurrent funding have all contributed to a major reshaping of the external characteristics of Lutheran schools. The schools movement took on a life and a momentum of its own, independent of planning and direction by the church at District or national level. As congregations and parishes became aware of the possibilities opened up by the new funding arrangements, school establishment gathered an energy which has not subsided to this day. But the old justifications no longer held good for many of the new schools. Nurturing the children of the Lutheran Church, preparing men for the ministry and others for full-time church service, building a strongly Lutheran laity were no longer so relevant as the proportion of Lutheran students fell below 50%, and as low as 9%. I suggest that in our desire to offer Lutheran schooling to Lutheran families, and finding that we needed others to generate the enrolment numbers needed for financial viability, we discovered two things. Firstly we found that we had an approach to education, not just specifically Christian education, which had unique characteristics which were valued in our wider community. And secondly we learnt by experience that the Holy Spirit really does work in the hearts of children and adolescents in wonderful ways, and was using Lutheran schools to bring them to faith. Out of this emerged the model of the school as a mission agency of the church. I do not believe that it was intentional at the beginning. It was a gift which God gave to us, a gift which has become a task and a responsibility.

Most of us have lived through the era of the school in mission. We know the challenges, the failures, the difficulties. We also know the joy of seeing young people come to faith in the living Christ through the schools, and often leading their families with them.

For a time, a long time, I believe, church leaders were at a loss to understand the growth and to know how it might be integrated into the total ministry of the church. Suspicion attended the move from call to appointment of teachers, the introduction of award-based salaries, the breaking of the nexus of employment conditions for teachers and pastors. We have all lived through that era and are aware of the massive culture shift which it generated. What is equally significant, however, is the more recent embracing of the school movement by the church and church leadership. Rather than having the support of individual leaders, the schools have been validated by our combined church leadership. The role of schools as agencies of outreach and evangelism is now widely accepted and promoted not only among schools, but also by synodical decisions. The development of new schools in Sydney and Western Australia is clear evidence of intentional mission through schools at synodical level.

This is certainly cause for satisfaction. It also presents each school with a challenge, a challenge to increased effectiveness, whether that school is engaged primarily in nurture or in outreach. It is a call to increased reliance on the work of the Holy Spirit, and to faithfulness in service rather than to success in human terms.

What of the future? Is the changing social environment generating values and attitudes favourable to the presentation of the gospel to children and their families? Many of our current families are only one generation away from active Christian faith and living. Yet for increasing numbers of them any form of religion is a new experience. They value relationships; they seek sound values for their children; they see tolerance of diverse views as a virtue. But commitment to religious beliefs or ideals is foreign to their fundamental values. The Christian faith and the church no longer have a special place in their thinking. With little or no direct experience of the church and its teaching, they are easy prey for media attacks on the institutional church. A multicultural society demands that no one religion should claim any rights above another. Post-modern denial of absolute truth has a vicelike grip on many who have never heard of post-modernism.

Hardly a fertile field for sowing the gospel seeds. Yet it is not only the direction of the future. It is already upon us, particularly but not exclusively in urban areas. Many families will come to our schools for the sake of quality education, of moral teaching, of sound discipline. As their numbers grow, as they inevitably will, within some of our schools there may be polarisation between the Christians and the irreligious among students. The role of the Christian teacher and the practice of relational Christianity will become even more critical in this setting.

We should be foolish to deny that we already live in a post-Christian era. Our society is secular, dominated by materialism. Sacrificial love, service, living for others may be lauded in others, but are regarded as ineffective for oneself. A god who dies to save his people is meaningless to those who do not see a need to be saved.

Of course it has ever been thus. The love of God is always preached into an unheeding world. The social attitudes at the beginning of the new millennium, however, seem especially unreceptive, indeed hostile, to the gospel message.

This is not to say that Lutheran schools can do nothing to counteract these values. Quite the reverse. To do so is precisely our task if we are to be truly in mission. But the task is becoming larger and harder. Our human resources are being stretched thinner. If Lutheran schools are to be true to the mission task we have claimed and which the church has acknowledged, they will need to study their social context, to understand the forces exerted on the belief systems of students and their families, and to find ways to present the Christian message which speak to those circumstances. We operate in a multi-faith context in which the most common position is no faith.

I recognise that this is a pessimistic view of our social values. I know that though they are the prevailing attitudes, they are not the only ones. Are we to serve only those who see the world as we do? A great Australian educator once said that the task of Christian independent schools was 'to keep alive the rumour of God.' I once responded to the elegance of the language of the statement but considered the goal far too modest for Lutheran schools. At the turn of the century, some thirty years later, I think that perhaps it is the best we can achieve for some of our students – to create an awareness of a spiritual dimension in life, a vague recognition of the numinous, even a flickering possibility of a real being who knows and cares about us. In other words, we often need to engage in pre-evangelism as much as in evangelism. And perhaps some day the rumour which we have spread in the sea of rampant secular materialism, the ideal of an ultimate and absolute good in the morass of selfish greed and indulgent self-absorption – that rumour may grow to a conviction, fed by experience and memory together, set afire by the silent work of the Holy Spirit. We sow seeds for the future. The flower of faith may bloom even in the bleak desert of modern secular materialism. But in sowing the seed we need to be wise as serpents. We need to understand our enemy.

At the same time as we undertake this daunting task, we are also to feed and nurture the faith of those who already belong to the body of Christ. A vastly different task, calling for different methods. We all know the effectiveness of the quiet witness of a Christian student to a non-Christian friend. Many of us have also seen how easily Christian students are cowed into silence and reluctance to display their faith by the weight of opposing numbers and attitudes, especially in the adolescent years when peer attitudes and peer approval outweigh all else.

The why for Lutheran schools therefore remains constant – to proclaim faithfully the glorious news of God's love in Christ. It is the how which must change to meet changing social attitudes. And the how also presents us with daunting challenges. Some of the challenges can be named, quantified, measured, faced and overcome. Others are more elusive. How are we to deal with other opposing world views? They present a greater challenge to Christian faith than other world religions do. Few of these philosophies are new. They re-emerge in different forms, often trivialised and made to appear more innocuous because they are so ordinary. The relativism of opinions – one is as good as another; the empiricism of the scientific method (for all the fading of its power) – 'show me the proof or I won't believe it'; the denial of any absolute truth; the elevation of self; the glorification of the natural world; its opposite, the mindless exploitation of the natural world – the list can become endless. It is an important part of the challenge in Lutheran schools to see the trends, to analyse the issues, and to reduce them to bits which are digestible by children of the ages which we serve in our schools. It is a huge task for busy teachers. It demands that they be well read, thoughtful, analytical, socially aware and spiritually mature, and that they look beyond this lesson, this day, this unit of work.

One of the great achievements for Lutheran schools in recent years has been the production of the LIFE curriculum. But if LIFE remains merely a Christian Studies curriculum, if it does not spread beyond the walls, and the times of the Christian Studies class into every aspect of school life and experience, then we shall merely have created another box, another compartment, another category of learning. We shall have reinforced the idea that God can be confined within limits, preferably in the church building, probably at the altar, and does not come into every aspect of our daily lives. The compartmentalising of religion is, I believe, a particular risk for secondary students, both because of the stage of their development and because of the organisation of their school day. The Christian teacher of Science, of Geography, of Computer Studies, has as critical a role to play as the Christian Studies teacher.

None of this is new. It merely becomes more important as we work with young people who are the products of a society with fragmented values and attitudes. Their need for a secure centre, a firm point of reference for their lives is even more urgent as old social values and verities are discarded and lost. Proclamation of the Word and worship must remain central to our strategy. The shape of the worship and the ways of presenting the Word will need to adapt to social change as in the past, while ensuring that the central message is not compromised.

There are also, however, challenges of a different sort. They are more easily grasped and understood, though not necessarily more easily overcome. I shall list a few, and again they will be familiar. There are issues of

- teacher supply
- school leadership
- school governance
- school expansion/new schools
- school size
- curriculum
- financial security
- relationship with government and the risk of over-dependence
- the challenges of other Christian schools

I shall have time only to skim the surface of some these important topics. Some are of course interrelated.

The LCA is a small church with a large and growing education system. For many years the question has been asked, 'Where shall we find committed Lutheran teachers?' Doomsayers have predicted for years that the pool would soon be empty, but God has continued to call men and women to serve Him in this ministry. Does this prove that there will be an unending supply, and that the real problem is our lack of faith in God's provision? I propose that there is a limit, and that we are rapidly approaching it. We are blessed to have a primary teaching service which is still predominantly Lutheran. What of the early childhood and secondary sectors? In some cases application lists of 40 or 50 names contain not a single Lutheran, and often few Christians. Committed Christian teachers are at the heart of our work. We are at a time when the predicted teacher shortage is beginning to bite, yet new schools are planned and existing schools are expanding. Analysis of future needs by National and District Directors reveals the problem but does not solve it. The moves to recruit and train new teachers for the Lutheran teaching service have been among the most positive initiatives in recent years. Yet the actual numbers of graduates are miniscule in relation to the needs. As the numbers of confessing Christians in our society declines and as our needs grow, how realistic will it be to aspire to even a majority of Lutheran teachers in our schools? If this scenario emerges, as it has already done in some places, how are we to promote and preserve the specifically Lutheran

character of our schools? I am not suggesting that it cannot be done, but I do believe that we shall need to continue to support strongly those training programmes, both pre-service and inservice, which help us to identify, understand, and then promote what is characteristically Lutheran in our approach to schooling.

The issue of the availability of suitable teaching staff leads directly to a consideration of school size and growth in the number of schools because of the additional strains they place on a limited pool of teachers. We need to focus the bright light of honesty on both the past and the present in considering the establishment and expansion of schools. Mission was used as the justification of schools growth in the 1970s and 1980s. It is clearly no coincidence that that growth followed closely on the availability of capital funding from government. Can we ever know to what extent mission was the motivating force, and to what extent an unintended but happy outcome of schools established basically to serve a small Lutheran population? At least some schools were established because of pressures and support from Christian parents of other churches who had seen the effectiveness of Lutheran schooling.

What of today? Is school expansion genuinely driven by the wish to broaden the opportunity to spread the gospel message? How strong is the influence of waiting lists, the seductive influence of the prospect of a bigger school and a higher local profile? How often are financial viability and the need for economies of scale the starting point for consideration of growth? The ministry justification is always provided, is indeed required, and the planning for it is done faithfully. Yet I rejoice and am a little surprised when I see a proposal for a new school which derives primarily from a desire for more effective ministry. The Western Australian and Sydney developments are prime examples of this.

It is not my intention to denigrate the noble aims of local parishes, congregations and school committees. Financial viability and school survival must be protected and strategies for them must be devised and implemented. My concern is whether our governing bodies give due consideration to the primary reason for the existence of Lutheran schools when confronted by the urgent practical demands of school governance.

The governance of Lutheran schools is a critical factor in their effectiveness (or otherwise), and will become more so in the future. The accountability of School Committees and College Councils to their congregations or parishes, their Associations and to the Districts has always been strong. It has been one of the mechanisms which has linked the schools and the church strongly and which has guarded against the danger of which we are so often warned, the risk that our schools may drift away from the church and its mission because of their financial strength, their size, and the diminishing numbers of Lutheran teachers and Lutheran students. We have been blest in having so many men and women of the church who are willing to devote their energies and endless hours of their time to school governance. But we (and they) are already finding that devotion and willingness are not enough.

The conventional wisdom dictates that a governing body should comprise members with a healthy mix of interests and skills – educational, theological or churchly, legal, engineering, health, building, business and finance. (It also dictates that these school governors should be wealthy and generous, setting the standard in giving to the school). The latter characteristic is unlikely to be achieved very often, and for Lutheran schools should probably not be a criterion at all. How successful are we in bringing onto our committees and councils the breadth and the wealth of skills and abilities in the first list? Once again the small size of our church in relation to the number of schools presents a difficulty. We have limited numbers of members with professional backgrounds, and there are many demands on their time from within and beyond the church. It is not uncommon for College Councils particularly to experience significant delays in finding new members and to be unable to access the range of skills they need. For the future, the expansion in school numbers can only exacerbate the problem, at a time when those skills will become even more critical.

Accountability to government has rapidly supplanted accountability to the church as a major role in school governance and administration. Industrial relations issues, workplace health and safety requirements, anti-discrimination legislation and its impact on enrolment policy are but a few of the areas with which they need to be familiar. A sleeping accountability issue, which may well awaken soon, is conditions placed upon the acceptance of government grants. We have been fortunate that effective lobbying by NCISA and other national groupings has ensured that accountability procedures have not become onerous. There was a time when it appeared they would do so. Current moves by the Federal Minister for Education to link funding to participation in national literacy and numeracy initiatives rouses the spectre of enhanced accountability requirements and conditional recurrent grants. These are major policy issues, not administrative ones, and call for surveillance and response at local governance level as well as at district and national level.

There is a legitimate concern about the availability of men and women of the calibre needed to govern Lutheran schools. They will all learn on the job, but more is needed than interest, commitment and willingness to learn. The greater the extent to which they bring generalist skills to their role, the more

important will be their training for the position, both by local induction and through programmes by external providers, especially District officers. Regular and thorough training sessions will place a heavy burden on those personnel.

We forget easily that Australia has the highest percentage in the world of students in non-government schools. Bipartisan party support for government funding for non-government schools has lulled us into a sense of security about the continuance of government funding. In the 1870's some Lutheran communities closed their schools in preference to becoming grant schools accepting government money. A century later in the 1970's state and Commonwealth governments directed increasing amounts of money to non-government schools in an effort to ensure that they attained minimal resource standards. At that time there were some in Lutheran circles and elsewhere who were concerned that schools would become dependent on government funding. Contingency plans were devised in some places against either the withdrawal of funding or the imposition of unacceptable conditions. In 2000 the only consideration is how much we can get from government. Schools are established in the confident belief that both capital and recurrent funding will be adequate to support their development. How many new schools are now established on the basis of the input of significant local finances? How many would be in a financial position to survive or even resist if unacceptable conditions attached to funding? The fact and the quantum of funding is unlikely to change significantly. The imposition of conditions is more probable. Are we ready to consider the sort of relationship with government which exists in Catholic schools in New Zealand? Could we retain our unique character under those or similar circumstances?

Effective leadership in Lutheran schools will always be critical to their effectiveness. Leadership, as we have long recognised, is located in many parts of the organisation, not only in the person and work of the Principal, Headmaster, Head of College. The governing bodies are clearly leaders, and among the staff there will always be instances of strong educational leadership, both formal and informal. It is clear that the ability and willingness of capable teachers to exercise positive leadership in appropriate settings is a strength of our schools. Yet it is almost always the principal who is regarded as the most public and powerful school leader. Regardless of leadership style, he or she will be and should be held responsible for the health of the organisation. Where are we to find men and women with the vision, the Christian commitment, the range of skills, the loyalty to the church, the emotional stamina, the resilience, to lead schools which grow constantly in complexity, and the more so as they grow in size?

In the late 1960's I was privileged to be asked to act as minute secretary to a meeting of the headmasters (for they were all male) of the colleges of the newly created Lutheran Church of Australia. All six of them. To me they seemed educational giants. Their discussions opened for me areas of thought and speculation which came almost from another world. Yet the schools which they led were simple organisations by contrast with the schools of today. Their concerns were of a different order and of different dimensions. Their leadership styles could be and were less democratic and participatory, more directive, some might say more autocratic than today. Yet their primary objective in the 1960's was the same as ours in 2000 - how were they best to translate the Christian gospel into effective school activity and experience which would lead then students into a deeper relationship to Jesus and a stronger loyalty to His church?

The history of formal school leadership in the L.C.A. from that day to this is a mixed one. The condition of our schools today attests to the strong and effective leadership they have experienced. Yet we know too of the sad situations which have arisen. The need for principals called into service some who were not yet ready but who responded to the church's need and call. Some of them were effective and grew into their roles; some succumbed to the pressures, or stepped aside when they were no longer needed. Their sacrifice and that of their families has perhaps not been fully recognised. The severance from formal leadership of a significant number of principals and heads is evidence of weaknesses in our schooling structure – failure of governance, excessive expectations, insufficient support (for both principals and governing bodies), inhouse politics. Some fine educators have been lost to our schools, or at least to top leadership roles, when we could least afford the loss.

How will the LCA identify, prepare and support school leadership in the future? Together with training of committees and councils, it is, in my view, one of the most urgent tasks. There have been sporadic attempts over the years, with mixed success in the area of identification. Significant changes are finally occurring in redressing the gender balance among principals. The 90s have witnessed a more focussed attempt to offer training both before and after appointment. Short programmes and post-graduate studies are to be commended as means of both preparation and support. However as the role becomes more complex and the schools larger, the demands on principals have grown rapidly and will continue to do so. Councils and committees will continue to need help to understand the multiplicity of pressures and tensions in the role, to be realistic in their expectations, and to provide adequate support (personal and emotional, as well as financial and professional support) for the principal and his/her family.

I am more confident than I once was of the potential of the church to locate sufficient school leaders of quality. But they must be prepared for their role and assisted in it. I wonder how well the six educational giants of 1968 would cope with a Lutheran college in 2000.

My comments on the remaining issues will be brief, not because they are unimportant, but because their significance calls for a deeper treatment that I could accord them here.

Curriculum – Is there or should there be anything distinctive about the shape of the curriculum in a Lutheran school? I have referred to the LIFE programme. What beyond that? We are constrained at upper secondary levels by entry requirements of tertiary institutions and by accreditation requirements in vocational education. What of the earlier years? Is it proper for us, in the best interests of our students, true to our character and goals, that we simply accept in every respect the courses presented to us by state authorities? Is there any genuine innovation in this area in any of our schools? I suspect there is, that there are those who are able to meet accreditation or registration requirements while still exercising their creativity in order to produce courses and programmes unique to their schools. If so, they should be shared. Being in the educational mainstream need not mean absolute conformity.

To what extent are our schools analysing the current curriculum trends and resisting what is questionable? Is there sufficient analysis of the comparative merits of study of the humanities and genuine effort to promote them in the interests of a broad education?

In Queensland in recent months there has been strong criticism of the new syllabus for SOSE, with accusations in the media that it is driven by a particular social agenda and reflects leftwing liberal attitudes at the expense of more soundly based traditional values. Regardless of one's views of the validity of the criticism, it points to the need for Lutheran schools to analyse carefully the elements of curriculum presented to us and to examine the assumptions and values underlying them. We are seeking to win the hearts and minds of our students for Christ. It is not paranoid to assume that there may be others who will seek to use schooling to promote their own beliefs and goals. Are our schools embracing technology and vocational education because of their intrinsic educational value, or because of external social, political and economic pressures? To what extent are we prepared to allow the education we offer to become purely or primarily functional and instrumental in its aims? Have we the courage and the means to resist these trends if we have reservations about them? Christian education deals with the spiritual aspects of life. Our whole curriculum should therefore genuinely nurture the human spirit of our students.

The question of the establishment of new schools has arisen several times in this address. For the past thirty years it has been a grassroots movement rather than the outcome of intentional planning, despite some calls for a strategic plan. The reemergence of synodically driven school establishment is a direction which we should welcome, as is the desire of Lutheran congregations to provide Lutheran schooling and of parents to access it. However, at national or district level we should be activating amber warning lights in regard to several issues –

- the long term availability of Lutheran teachers and principals
- the resource implications of providing theological training for growing numbers of teachers
- the effect of growing competition from other low-cost Christian schools
- the reluctance or inability of many sponsoring congregations and parishes to provide significant up-front financial support and ongoing capital funding
- resulting from this, the relatively long term level of high capital debt, which impacts on the new school's capacity to direct funding to high quality educational programmes rather than to debt reduction and interest redemption
- the risk to the church of the accumulated capital debt of all the schools, especially in a climate where new schools with high debt levels appear at far greater risk than in similar situations ten years ago
- the importance of ensuring that the quality of the whole educational offering, not only the Christian teaching, is maintained at a high level

I believe that in the years ahead our schools will be able to form stronger alliances and partnerships. External pressures and the need for support have already moved us in this direction. As long as our systemic organisation remains a coordinating and supporting mechanism rather than a directive and controlling one, it will continue to facilitate these partnerships at a variety of levels – school to school, teachers to teachers, principals to principals, students to students, extending with the help of technology to even more direct and effective interstate and international alliances. Lutheran schooling has long since broken out of the mould of a parochial, inward-looking attitude. It entered the educational mainstream many

years ago. Those Lutheran educators who have played leading roles in state and national education bodies are in the vanguard of many more who in future years will make a contribution on behalf of Lutheran education to the wider national educational associations and enterprises.

Lutheran schooling in Australia manifests a singular unity in its commitment to the teaching and proclamation of Christ's message of forgiveness, love and reconciliation. In other respects it displays a remarkable diversity. It is a diversity which we should cherish because it is designed to meet local needs, and should extend, because there are needs as yet unmet. What must bind us together in that diversity is our Lutheran name, character and commitment. We have a proud heritage and we have demonstrated our capacity to change and adapt appropriately. We should not be embarrassed to promote the Lutheranness of our schools as we cooperate and compete with others who plough the same educational field – the so-called Christian schools, low-cost Anglican schools, Catholic schools.

Lutheran schooling can enter the new century with confidence, with pride in what has been achieved, with resolve to face the challenges, old and new, and with trust in God to guide and uphold us as we strive to do His work.