

June 2018

## LEA SERVICE AWARD

**Robert Hoff**

**For services to Lutheran schooling  
1973 – 2018**

The Lutheran Church of Australia thankfully acknowledges the faithful and committed service of Robert Hoff to Lutheran schools for almost 46 years.

Robert commenced his principalship in Lutheran education when, after only five years as a teacher in the South Australian Education Department, he was appointed as the founding principal of St Paul Lutheran Primary School, Blair Athol SA. In his eleven years' leadership at St Paul, Robert established the school as a strong, vibrant and confident learning community. The school reflected its leader and showed a strength and courage well beyond its years. At St Paul, Robert and Sandra also developed strong church-school connections, ensuring a relevant and inclusive shared ministry. Their working and personal relationship with Pastor Wayne and Wendy Zweck was significant; not just in a ministry and community building sense, but in a long term family sense as Sarah Hoff and Michael Zweck, after being St Paul children together, later married. The legacy of a relevant and inclusive shared ministry has been repeated at each place they have served with Robert's leadership and understanding of Christian education and community engagement seen by many as a leading and shining example of excellence and achievement.

In 1984 Robert and Sandra moved to the Gold Coast as Robert took up the challenge of establishing Trinity Lutheran Primary School, a school only three years old and in need of clear vision and strong leadership. In his thirteen years at Trinity, Robert not only led the development of a highly successful and widely admired double stream primary school, but Trinity Lutheran College sprouted from these achievements and the primary school's excellent reputation. Robert was widely criticized by a number of Lutheran colleagues for double streaming at Trinity; in later years, the majority of Lutheran primary schools that have the location and capacity have double, triple and quadruple streamed. Robert's example has influenced many others. He was doing something before other primary educators, made it successful and led by example.

Interestingly, while Robert contributed to and served on a number of Lutheran church and education committees in his early years of principalship, it was at Trinity that he started his extensive journey of influence and leadership both nationally and internationally. He became a member of the Independent Primary School Heads Association (IPSHA) (1986), an IPSHA board member (1998-2008) and was IPSHA President from 2002-2004. He was a member of the National Executive Council of the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) from 2002-2011 and a member and deputy chair of the Principals Australia Institute from 2006-2009.

The criticism Robert received in expanding Trinity only encouraged Robert to ensure Trinity's increased success and standing. As a sign of the regard he is held in by the Trinity community, the Trinity multipurpose hall, by far the largest building on the school site, has been named the *Robert Hoff Community Hall*, in recognition and honour of his achievements.

In 1997, Robert and Sandra moved back to South Australia when Robert began his principalship at Immanuel Primary School, Novar Gardens SA. Robert's ability to engage community, build the school's already excellent reputation and focus on student success and achievement soon took effect as Immanuel completed its triple streaming plan. Robert also has shown consistently that he is able to surround himself with highly capable co-leaders, committed teachers and support staff, excellent governing bodies and passionate parents. The famous Trinity Art Shows on the Gold Coast were replaced by the Immanuel Dinner Auctions. The Immanuel Primary School curriculum was internationalized with the adoption of the International Baccalaureate PYP. Numerous other South Australian Lutheran schools followed suit, again, Robert Leading the way. In 2011 the Immanuel Early Learning Centre was established; and Robert always and still found the time to mentor other principals, serve on church and education committees as well as go to the football, cricket and tennis, both in Australia and overseas. His determination to keep on learning from others and attending the best professional development

ACN 143 905 373

197 Archer Street  
North Adelaide SA 5006  
T 61 8 8267 7318  
F 61 8 8267 7320  
E [lea@lutheran.edu.au](mailto:lea@lutheran.edu.au)  
[www.lutheran.edu.au](http://www.lutheran.edu.au)

Robert's love for learning and innovation has seen him travel extensively. He is a master at identifying excellence, improving and adapting it to his own community's needs, and implementing programs and services that others envy and admire. He is an entertainer, socializer, provocateur and challenger. He is a global learner, passionate leader and an almighty stirrer.

The loyalty of his staff can be illustrated with the following staff comments about Robert:

- *A strong, faith based leader*
- *A genuine, nurturing and kind person*
- *His compassion and support to people in times of need is like no other*
- *A principal who is a living example of what it means to serve*
- *A principal who has placed great importance on family and family values, both in his own life and to us his staff*
- *He lives and breathes service and often shares that we live to serve others*

Robert and Sandra are also acknowledged in the patient, consistent and loving manner in which they have raised and supported their two daughters, Jodie and Sarah. Both now are richly experienced, confident educators, both are highly respected school leaders in their own right; both clearly show their own faith journey in their personal and professional lives and both enjoy laughter, good company and life to the full.

Robert and Sandra are also tremendously proud of their son-in-law, Michael Zweck, and their two grandsons, Hudson and Flynn.

As an agitator and leader for change, Robert has been recognized by both LCA and external educational associations as an innovator, promotor and practitioner of excellence in educational leadership. A list of Robert's contributions contains the following:

<b>Lutheran Church of Australia</b>	<b>Wider educational community</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board for Primary Education (Secretary)</li> <li>• Board for Lutheran Schools</li> <li>• Lutheran Teachers College Council</li> <li>• Board for Congregational Life</li> <li>• National Magazine Committee (Chair)</li> <li>• Board of Publications</li> <li>• Board for Mission</li> <li>• Committee for International Mission</li> <li>• Australian Conference for Lutheran Education 2004 (Chair)</li> <li>• Lutheran Principals Australia (Executive Committee member and Past Chair)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Australian Council for Education Leaders (ACEL) (Fellow)</li> <li>• Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) (Fellow, life membership)</li> <li>• Independent Primary Schools Heads Association (IPSHA) (honorary life membership)</li> <li>• Pricilla Australia Institute: John Lang Professional Development Award for service to other leaders</li> <li>• Noel Volk Excellence Award for contribution to AISSA</li> <li>• ACEL SA Educational Leadership Medal</li> </ul>

Throughout Robert's innovative and visionary leadership, the core essence of Lutheran education has always been at the forefront – the proclamation of Jesus Christ as his living Saviour. He has and always will remain passionate about this.

Robert and Sandra leave a significant lasting legacy to Immanuel, Trinity, St Paul and across Lutheran education, particularly primary education in Australia. Robert has served for almost 46 years. His achievements are remarkable. His loyalty to Lutheran education is unquestioned. His influence has been wide and deep. Thank you.

On behalf of the LCA and LEA, I wish to acknowledge and commend Robert Hoff. His faithful and conscientious service to the Lutheran Church of Australia, through his service in Lutheran education, has been outstanding and is humbly recognised through this Award.

**Stephen Rudolph**  
**Executive Director**  
**Lutheran Education Australia**