

THE QUEENSLAND EXPERIENCE

As we approach the centenary of federation, it is clear that the old inter-colonial rivalries, which in the late 1800's were focussed on political and economic issues, have not died. What was once expressed through the threatened withdrawal of Western Australia by Lord Forrest; what has continued as Sydney/Melbourne rivalry for the whole century; and the classification of Queenslanders as reactionary and rednecks, is continued through nowadays even into sporting activities, as evidenced in State of Origin and AFL finals.

In approaching the topic of "The Queensland Experience of Lutheran Education", it became clear to me that to do so without reference to other states and their experiences would be difficult. We in fact define ourselves very often by our differences from others. The church is not exempt from this. We define ourselves in relation to other Christian churches, not so much in what we have in common, but in the areas where we differ. Even the title of this session signals that there is something distinctive and different about Queensland Lutheran education. What I propose to do is to explore what may have been distinctive in, some of the influences which may have created the difference, and whether in an age when communication is shrinking even the areas which are global in dimension, the Queensland model of Lutheran education is still as distinctive as it once was, or was believed to be. Finally, I should like to ask some questions about the effectiveness of the Queensland approach, what measures we might adopt of that effectiveness, and the challenges which may lie ahead of us. Some elements of what I say will represent a personal view or interpretation, and I invite those of you who may bring a different perspective to question or challenge my views at the end of this presentation.

It was, I believe, the late John Zweck, while on the faculty of LTC, who first used the term "the Queensland model" to describe what he and others perceived as a regional approach, which differed significantly from that which was adopted in the southern states. To trace the origins of that difference requires us, I believe, to delve into the history of Lutheranism in Queensland in contrast to South Australia. (The history is different again in Victoria and New South Wales, but more closely linked to the South Australian experience. Time will not permit us to enter into this, however.)

The history of the Lutheran migration to South Australia to escape religious persecution in Silesia in particular, and the Prussian Empire in general, is too well documented to require further recounting here. What is sometimes forgotten, however, is that the persecution ceased within about six years of the first migration, yet the flow of German settlers in South Australia continued at a steady rate. While the motives for these later migrations may have differed, the new arrivals came into German Lutheran communities where the strong Lutheran confessionalism of the first influx of migrants had established a dominant church culture, which was able, in spite of controversy and even schism, to prevail and to sustain the religious traditions of the Altlutheraner in the new church(es) in South Australia, and eventually in Victoria and New South Wales. Many aspects of the culture of Australian Lutheranism, as well as its theological stance, can be traced back to these roots.

German settlement in Queensland, by contrast, was for the most part not identifiably Lutheran. The Gossner missionaries who settled Zion's Hill (later German Station, now Nundah) were in many respects theologically naive and confessionally negligent, if not ignorant. They were devout Christians with a deep concern to bring the Christian gospel to the aboriginal people (though as far as is known, not a single conversion took place), but the Lutheran congregation established there after the missionaries became free settlers quickly faltered and failed, and the mission families eventually provided clergymen and lay leaders in the Anglican, Presbyterian and Baptist churches. There was never a sense of confessional Lutheran identity.

A trickle of German migrants in the 1850's became a flood in the 1860's, with strong government encouragement and incentives after Queensland became a state in 1859. They settled primarily, though not exclusively, in the south-east corner. Some statistics are revealing.

Table 1

CENSUS YEAR	% LUTHERAN				BORN IN GERMANY
1871					LOGAN DISTRICT – 20% QUEENSLAND – 7%
1901	LOGAN DISTRICT – 18%				LOGAN DISTRICT – 6.5% QLD 6.5%
1921	BEENLEIGH 52%	WATERFORD 45%	COOMERA 5%	NERANG 3%	BEENLEIGH 9%
1947	39%	24%	6%	1%	

Many, possibly most, like the Gossner missionaries before them, were sincere and devout Christians; few would have claimed to be confessional Lutherans. For most the term evangelisch (protestant) was the preferred description. There were exceptions, however, among whom a significant group was about 17 families who settled at Bethania in 1864. Significantly they found the theological position of Pastor Haussmann, a former Gossner missionary, unsatisfactory, and though he had gone to considerable lengths to assist them on their arrival, they refused his services as pastor and turned to South Australia for a genuinely Lutheran pastor. They were “altlutheraner” from the Uckermark, north of Berlin, whose parents had survived the persecution which drove their brethren out of Silesia to South Australia. This small group was to exercise a strong influence in creating a confessional Lutheran awareness among the scattered, unorganized groups of German and Scandanavian settlers who took until 1885 to form a church structure in a Synod. (Typically for Lutherans, within a few months there were two synods!)

What was the attitude of these early Lutherans to the establishment of schools? In South Australia, where many lived in almost exclusively German communities, a school was seen not only as a social but also as an ecclesiastical necessity – church and school went together, sometimes literally when the church served for a time also as the schoolhouse. The teacher ranked next to the pastor in social standing, and was expected to be theologically as well as educationally sound.

In Queensland, by contrast, (and I am describing these differences in extreme and general terms, which may not reflect the full reality), while many German settlements quickly established schools, few were seen as primarily or even partially religious institutions. The shortage of pastors to serve small and far-flung groups diminished their influence on the types of schools and their purposes. Several cases may serve to illustrate the point.

Pastor Hellmuth, the confessional Lutheran who had come from Germany to replace Pastor Haussmann at Bethania, also served congregations at Philadelphia (Eagleby), Elkana (Atherton) and Woongoolba. At each place a school was established, in addition to the one erected at Bethania. The fortunes of the Bethania school, and even its existence, fluctuated until its closure in 1909. At Alberton, however, a pattern was established when the possibility of a government school arose. As at Bethania, there were supporters for both the government and the church school, but it was clear that at Alberton both could not survive together. Hellmuth argued strongly that members of his congregation should support the denominational school, but when even his congregational leaders supported the government school cause, the battle was lost. Disappointed, Hellmuth soon resigned his charge and transferred to the parish at Bundaberg.

A similar situation had arisen previously at Bethania, where German Lutherans were among the strongest supporters of the proposed government school at Waterford. Yet once that school was established, Education Department records reveal the frustration of the teachers that on one day of the week, the German students, who usually constituted the majority, would absent themselves in order to attend the Friday German school (usually conducted by the pastor, sometimes with his wife). Acceptance of full government education did not destroy a belief in the importance of intensive instruction in their traditional faith in the language which for them conveyed it most clearly and convincingly. The pattern of one day a week German school was replicated in many places, until conflict with authorities over regular attendance relegated German school to Saturdays – instruction in German in the morning, German confirmation lessons in the afternoon.

A third interesting instance occurred at Tallegalla on the edge of the Rosewood Scrub between Ipswich and Toowoomba. Here there was no organized parish and no call for a Lutheran school, but the settlers, poor beyond imagination in the early 1870's, wanted schooling for their children. The government agreed to establish a provisional school under the normal conditions, namely that the community provided and maintained the school building. A simple slab construction was duly constructed, but a series of teachers stayed for only short periods of time, often only a few months, before leaving in frustration at the appalling conditions, the constant lateness of children who were permitted to begin the long journey to school only after completing onerous farm chores, the assumption by parents that harvest was a priority in family lives and justified absence from school for three or four weeks at a time, and above all, their inability to communicate with, let alone instruct children who knew no English, and who were in a totally German community placed no importance on learning it. The problem was solved when the community found a bi-lingual teacher. He was in fact teaching in the Lutheran school at Alberton, which unlike most Lutheran schools, had been able to find a sequence of capable teachers. His position in a Lutheran school did not, as was the case in South Australia, provide security and status, and he willingly accepted the security of a government position. The absence of commitment to Lutheran education (as opposed to secular education) and the dearth of qualified teachers, and the lack of a strong church structure and tradition combined to inhibit the development of Lutheran schools.

By the time of the onset of World War 1, during which Lutherans were categorized as Germans and were prosecuted as security risks, saw their churches burnt down and their numerous schools in South Australia and Victoria closed by government legislation in 1917, there were no Lutheran schools left in Queensland to close. Whereas after the war in the south many schools reopened as soon as the government permitted it, it was to be another 27 years before a Lutheran school opened in Queensland, in fact two in successive years – St Peters Lutheran College in 1945 and Concordia College (then CMC) in 1946, each owned and operated by one of the two synods into which the Lutheran church was then divided.

It is interesting that as World War 1 led to the closure of Lutheran schools, World War 2 was a partial catalyst for the new Queensland schools. Those who led the movement to establish the new colleges were pastors who had themselves experienced the benefits of Lutheran education. In the case of St Peters, Pastor Gerhard Dohler was a former Lutheran teacher in South Australia, and Pastor Max Lohe, the president of the Queensland church, was the son of a distinguished director or principal of Immanuel College and Seminary in Adelaide. While they argued eloquently for the principles of Lutheran education, their most telling arguments with Queensland church people were pragmatic ones. State secondary education was not widely available in Queensland (about 12 schools serving the whole state) and a Lutheran college would therefore fill an urgent educational need. Young men who wished to train for the ministry had no choice but to travel to Adelaide for their secondary education as well as their seminary studies. Cost and separation were deterrents to most families. Finally weight was added by the fact that wartime travelling restrictions had prevented a group of Queenslanders studying in Adelaide from returning home for several years.

The goals were clear – preparation of men for the ordained ministry, provision of secondary education with a strong Christian base, training of young people for responsible church membership and leadership.

Concordia College grew out of similar ground but belonging to a synod with strong links to the LCMS in the USA, with a well-developed school system, it was a school in the southern tradition. For many years, for example, its principals were clergymen, some from the USA. It grew more slowly for many years and continued to see its mission almost exclusively as serving the church.. St Peters, by contrast, though served for its first 25 years by headmasters from the south, developed a different character. Situated strategically in the capital city, it gradually overcame the stigma of its supposed Germanness, looked beyond the rural Lutheran population for its students, and as its academic reputation grew, became a school which served families of many denominational backgrounds, and sometimes of none. Its proximity to the University of Queensland created links with the academic community, and the growth of new wealthy suburbs nearby brought it to the attention of the professional classes. Its reputation for high academic standards and strong discipline appealed to a wide range of parents, and without compromising its mission and practice as a Lutheran school, St Peters for the first time in Queensland brought Lutheran education to the notice of large numbers of the wider community, who recognized the quality of what the church could offer through such a school. Unconstrained by a rather inward-looking tradition from the south, the school was able to create and respond to community acceptance, and in a sense to become a lighthouse school for Lutheran education in Queensland.

The development was not, of course, without its challenges or its critics. It was necessary to work hard to remain true to its mission as a school of the church, to re-interpret practice in the light of growing numbers of non-Lutheran and even non-Christian students, to meet the demands of a new clientele and to continue to serve the old one faithfully. The process began in the headmastership of the late Mr Bill Lohe and was continued with vigour and success by Mr (later Dr) Carson Dron. Coming into the Lutheran Church from another tradition, he was able to apply his deep understanding of Lutheran theology and principle without the constraints of past practice and tradition. It was in St Peters development that the beginnings are to be found of what has been called the "Queensland model" of Lutheran education.

The availability of Commonwealth Government funding was a significant influence on the development of non-government schools. Beginning with capital grants for libraries and science laboratories in the late 60's and extending to regular recurrent funding in the early 70's, this new source of revenue not only secured the future of the two colleges and one primary school of the newly united synod in the Queensland District. It also made it possible for Lutheran communities to consider seriously the establishment of new schools. Consideration became action, and in the 1970's a sudden growth in the establishment of new schools emerged.

TABLE 2

1975		3 schools
1976-80	BETHANIA BILOELA BUNDABERG CLONTARF MAROOCHYDORE TOOWOOMBA (MARTIN LUTHER) GRACE LUTHERAN COLLEGE REDEEMER LUTHERAN COLLEGE	11 schools
1981-85	ASHMORE CABOOLTURE EVERTON HILLS GATTON MIDDLE PARK RACEVIEW REDLANDS IMMANUEL LUTHERAN COLLEGE	19 schools

In the late 1960's the emerging interest of district authorities in Lutheran schools was manifested in the establishment of a Schools Committee of the new synod. The committee identified a number of parishes which it felt could support a school. Visits were made and encouragement given – to no avail. The work of this enthusiastic group resulted initially in the opening of not a single school. Yet perhaps the seeds of interest were sown, for today there are flourishing Lutheran primary schools in most of these centres. One major hurdle had been lowered – finance. Suddenly it became possible to contemplate the development of new Lutheran schools. But to what end? In a district where there was no strong tradition of Lutheran schooling for the spiritual nurture of the children of the parish, why should schools be built? Were the numbers of potential enrolments sufficient to make them viable? What model or pattern was to be followed? Two were available. In Toowoomba Concordia College had devolved its primary classes to a local congregation, resulting in the formation of the first long-term Lutheran primary schools in Queensland since before World War 1. (Two schools after World War 2 - Guluguba near Miles and Greycliffe near Biloela were interesting but relatively short-lived.) The two Toowoomba schools were in the traditional mode of nurturing the members of the church. St Peters provided an alternative approach. Though it is doubtful that a conscious decision between the two was ever made, it was a reality that in some areas the success and reputation of St Peters had given the whole church a reputation as a reliable provider of excellent education.

Running parallel to this development, however, was also the group of schools in Toowoomba, by now expanded to include Nalkari Kindergarten, which grew out of Concordia Primary School, and which was eventually incorporated into it. The style and purpose of these schools gives the lie to the proposition that a single approach to Lutheran education had developed in the District.

The early childhood movement was in some respects a strong influence on subsequent developments, and in several ways. The first Lutheran kindergarten in Queensland was set up at Nazareth Lutheran Church, Woolloongabba, in 1962. Initiated by the newly arrived American, Pastor Wendell Dahl, it was an attempt to deal with the fact that this congregation, which had celebrated its centenary, was on the fringe of the inner city spread, with an ageing membership and a diminishing base in the surrounding suburbs. (About 80% of the members lived closer to at least one other Lutheran congregation.) It was an effort to reach out to the local community which the church could otherwise not easily reach, to serve the small but significant (in terms of the congregation's future) group of young families, to provide a means of evangelizing, and to generate an external focus for a congregation which had begun to decline as it relied upon the once large but now diminishing number of traditional Lutherans who had made it strong. The history of its kindergarten is a microcosm of the troubled kindergarten movement in the LCAQD, and I shall therefore pursue it a little further.

Staffed initially by Lutheran teachers and then Christians of other churches, it provided a strong programme of Christian teaching integrated into sound principles of early childhood education. Numbers of children were attracted into the Sunday School. However, little direct contact with their families was achieved, and most left the Sunday School when they left the kindergarten. For many years the leadership of the community committee of management which was required by the Creche and Kindergarten Association was lodged in the hands of congregational members, but as they moved on it fell to other parents who had no loyalty to the church. The congregation showed no interest in using the mission opportunities, and finally the Creche and Kindergarten Association, which provided the funding which made the kindergarten financially viable, became increasingly insistent in its view that Christian teaching was inappropriate for kindergarten children, and threatened withdrawal of funding if it were continued. Directors, many of them trained by the C & K Association, were reluctant to challenge the advisors. The right of involvement by the local pastor was challenged. The kindergarten finally became little more than another community kindergarten, which happened to use a church-owned facility. On a positive note, links with the church through the Schools Department have been maintained and strengthened in recent years, and there is now evidence that the staff at the centre see it as a part of a wider system of Lutheran education.

The tension between congregational goals and mission and the power and attitude of the C & K Association became stronger where congregations were serious about Christian teaching and mission opportunities. It was resolved in varying ways. In Toowoomba Nalkari was incorporated as a pre-school into the primary school, removing it from C & K control. In Rockhampton disagreement between the community committee and the congregation was resolved by the relocation of the kindergarten to another site and the loss of some congregation members.

The developments on the Redcliffe Peninsula, a little north of Brisbane, provide a model for what can be achieved. The late Pastor Jo Stolz, one of the unsung heroes of Queensland Lutheran education, took charge of this small Home Mission cause, and soon he and his wife established an early childhood centre, which grew to include both a child care centre and a kindergarten. Non-Lutheran Christian parents were so pleased with the programme that they pressed for a primary school. The small congregation, recognizing its inability to establish and manage such a venture, called upon the LCAQD for assistance, and Grace Lutheran Primary School at Clontarf remains to this day the only primary school in the Queensland District which is owned by the District rather than having local ownership. High quality Christian education again met a positive response from local Christian of other churches, which led firstly to the addition of secondary classes at Clontarf in 1978 and finally the establishment in 1980 of Grace Lutheran College at Rothwell, which currently enrolls almost 900 students. This spectacular physical growth has been accompanied by the expansion of the local congregation into a strong self-supporting body. While other factors have also contributed to this growth, it is clear that the witness and influence of integrated Lutheran education from birth to Year 12 has been a major factor.

The tension in the relationship with the C & K Association remains unresolved. Strong representations by Schools Department officers have elicited only a reiteration of C & K policy and principle, and attempts to have funding provided direct from government with the intermediation of the C & K Association and the imposition of its limitations on practice have to date borne no fruit. The extent to which the centres operate as nurture and outreach agencies of the church depends largely upon the attitudes of the staff, the Schools Department and sometimes the level of congregational interest. Hopeful for the future, and wishing to support those who wish to use its services, the Schools Department provides subsidized assistance to the early childhood sector, in the hope that more church-owned centres will become an active part of the church's mission.

The 1970's witnessed the beginning of a growth in Lutheran schools, which, despite contrary expectation, continues to the present day. It is difficult to assess the extent to which this was initially the release by the availability of government funding of a pent-up desire for Lutheran schools; whether it was a response to community demand for schooling of the type exemplified by the earlier schools; how much was a reaction to rising community expectations of education; whether it was a desire by congregations to find another agency for outreach into their communities; or simply to undertake another big congregational or parish project. I suspect that all these motivations were present in varying degrees at one time or another.

By the end of the 1970's the growth was so marked that the District Education Committee (chaired by a certain Adrienne Jericho) found that school issues were so dominating its agenda that the other elements of its role – parish education, Sunday Schools etc. – were being neglected. In response to their concerns a task force was established which finally led to the creation of what became the Schools Department of the LCAQD. One of the early outcomes of the work of this task force was a document which outlined a suggested series of steps to be followed by congregations considering opening a primary school. The first step was a consideration of the ways in which the proposed school would be a part of the ministry of the congregation. This may suggest an incipient concern about the reasons for which schools were being considered, combined with a desire at District level to ensure that they would be genuinely a part of the church's gospel proclamation.

The growth is easily illustrated.

School Growth LCAQD - 1945 to 1999

TABLE 3

	1945 1960	1961 – 1965	1966 – 1975	1976 – 1980	1981 – 1985	1986 – 1990	1991 – 1995	1996 – 1999
Primary		+ 1 = 1	- = 1	+ 6 = 7	+ 7 = 14	+ 2 = 16	- 2 = 14	= 14
P – 12 or 1 – 12			+ 1 = 1	=1	=1	=1	+ 4 = 5	= 5
Secondary + some Primary	+ 2	- 1 = 1	- 1 = 0	= 0	= 0	= 0	= 0	+ 1 = 1
Secondary		+ 1 = 1	- = 1	+ 2 = 3	+ 1 = 4	+ 1 = 5	- 1 = 4	- 1 + 1 = 4
TOTAL	2	3	3	11	19	22	23	24

The phenomenon of P-12 schooling reflects growing community demand for continuity of schooling in a particular style. Some primary schools have grown into P-12 colleges; some colleges have extended down into the primary years; some have been established as P-12; and some primary and secondary schools have amalgamated into one institution. This reflects adaptability and flexibility in meeting changing needs and circumstances, a freedom from the constraints of tradition.

It is more difficult to evaluate how effective the schools and early childhood centres have been in their role as agencies of the church. Primary schools appear at first glance to be more effective in bringing children and their families into the church, if this is perceived as the primary mission goal. Primary children still call for a greater degree of parental supervision and involvement. (Some early adolescents, on the other hand, would prefer to appear to be the products of spontaneous generation, or at least to have come directly from an egg – anything to avoid the public acknowledgement of having parents.) Church members and leaders hear our schools justified as mission agencies. Understandably they often seek evidence of their effectiveness in this respect. How can such a demand be answered? Statistics of children baptized or confirmed? Families brought into membership? These could possibly be collated and provided, though with difficulty and some inexactitude. But is this the real measure of what our schools are to do? Is restoration to attendance in other churches not also important? Is not the creation of an awareness of a spiritual dimension to life in a secularized world not significant? Can we hold the work of the Holy Spirit in the generation of saving faith to a five-year or even a 12-year schedule? We are in the business of sowing seeds, not of reaping harvests. We work to God's timeframe, not a human one. We are called to faithfulness in our Christian living and witness and proclamation. We are not called to success in human terms. Yet the results, thank God, are there. And will be in the future in ways and in lives that we cannot now foresee or predict. As Christians we live hopefully – for ourselves and for others.

BUT! We are also at risk of using this future perspective as an excuse, as self-justification. If we justify the existence of our schools by pleading for a mission outreach goal, we cannot and

must not ignore the present, especially for those in secondary schools, where students are at an age where questioning and challenge of adult views, ideas and values are not only natural but also important.

The involvement of the Lutheran church in the education of aboriginal people warrants comment. The school was a vital part of the Cape Bedford Mission north of Cooktown until World War 2, when the settlement was summarily evacuated south. Re-established at Hopevale after the war, it was provided with a government school, though sympathetic government officials agreed for many years to appoint Lutheran teachers if the church could identify them. This special treatment ceased some years ago.

As the Hopevale people recognized the need for higher education levels for their children, numbers of aboriginal children were enrolled in the boarding houses at Concordia and St Peters. Though ill-equipped to deal with their special needs, the colleges expended great effort to assist them in the social and cultural adjustments as well as educationally. Many became a significant influence in the community when they returned there, regardless of their level of academic achievement. Some have gone on to become important leaders among their people, in the church and beyond it. Among them are Noel Pearson, David Costello and the late Wayne Rosendale.

For children who wished to attend Hendra State High School in Brisbane rather than one of the colleges, the Nundah congregation established Deedar Hostel and provided dedicated house parents to care for students far from home and family. Declining numbers finally led to its closure.

Most recently Peace Lutheran College in Cairns has provided educational facilities closer to the communities from which the indigenous students come. It has established programmes tailored to the needs of its indigenous students and has achieved a remarkable degree of harmonious racial integration. Special government assistance has enabled the provision of the boarding facilities for students from the remote communities, making it the third Lutheran boarding school in Queensland, and the first new one in almost 50 years. We may ask, however, to what extent and how well have Lutheran schools met the challenge of education for urbanized aboriginal children.

The percentage of Lutheran students in Lutheran schools has been a matter of interest for many years. In Queensland it ranges from 10.8% to 48.7% in the primary schools, 13.9% to 44.3% in the secondary, and 10.8% to 15.9% in P-12 schools. What proportion of the remainder belong to Christian families who are seeking from the schools reinforcement of Christian teaching in the home? What proportion are from unchurched families who want their children to find the faith their parents have lost? How many see the Christian teaching and practice of the schools as burdens they accept in order to access the excellence of the academic and extra-curricular programmes? We cannot know the answers, but we need to accept the challenges inherent in the questions.

Lutheran schools in Queensland are served by a Schools Department with a team of five highly professional officers and their support staff. They have a high reputation in the educational community, with government, with other systems, and in their local communities. Are they being seduced by success? Is their mission outreach intentional? Are clear strategies in place? Is school practice always consistent with the gospel? As new schools emerge and as existing schools grow and change, as any dynamic institution will, we need to continue the struggle to learn what we are to be in a changing society both as educational institutions and as church agencies. If outreach is to be a real part of our goals and our *raison d'être*, it must not be allowed to be incidental and accidental. We cannot hide behind platitudes. In an increasingly secularized and consumption-driven world, our schools have a challenge and an opportunity to carry us into the new millenium.

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