

Christian Day Schooling in Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

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Jonathan Vanden Berg

The Christian Reformed Churches in Australia, (CRCA) take very seriously the responsibility of the schooling of their covenant children. The commitment to children attending a Christian School runs deep in the blood of our membership. Our schools were established out of commitment to our responsibility towards covenant children and a Reformational World and Life view pedagogy.

In 1962 the first Christian School was opened by Christian Reformed Churches, the next the following year. We now have Christian Schools in every state and territory in Australia.

Through our Classis church visitation questions, churches are annually asked this question. Q 39. (a). "Does session [local church council] actively promote the Christian Schooling of the church's covenant children?"

From the Christian Reformed Churches establishment of schools came a national organisation today known as the Christian Parent Controlled Schools Association (CPCS). This organisation, which exists alongside the church organisationally, is now cross-denominational, with its staff being Reformed in outlook.

Since the establishment of the first school in 1962, 85 Christian parent controlled schools have been established. There are now more than 22,500 students in these schools employing more than 2,300 full-time teachers.

We have more Christian Parent Controlled Schools than we have Christian Reformed Churches. One elderly minister said to me that the

major contribution the CRCA has brought to Christianity in Australia is Christian Schooling.

Our schools are not governed by the church, but parents. They are now aligned with many denominations, not all Reformed. Some are concerned that this could contaminate the initial purpose of their establishment, that being a commitment to our responsibility towards covenant children and a Reformational World and Life view pedagogy.

However, recent development in the CPCS indicate that the movement is still very committed to the covenant responsibility and world view. These developments are:

1. Over the past three years extensive work has been put into the amalgamation of all of the Christian Schools associations in Australia. CPCS did not amalgamate because of their commitment to these three things. (a) Parent Control, not church control. (b) Bible Foundational, not Bible Additional. (c) Ongoing Teacher Training.
2. The ongoing development of teacher conferences that are strongly focussed on Christ-focussed curriculum, as well as the National Institute of Christian Education (NICE) post graduate studies program for teachers, which are a part of the CPCS. Schools require teachers to start the Post Graduate studies in the 2nd year of teaching to ensure they understand the philosophy of CPCS. The NICE courses are very focussed on Christ-centred curriculum and Reformed World and life view.

Both the commonwealth and state Governments recognise the value of private schooling and invest heavily into the private schools, which in turn make the possibility of Christian families to send their children to Christian schools more likely. Christian schools in Australia receive about 60% of their income from Government funding.

The policies on students having to be from Christian families vary across the individual schools. There are some schools which will only accept children from Christian families that can prove their church membership and require references from Pastor/elder etc. Most schools do accept a percentage of children from non-practising Christian families. The highest I am aware of is 20%.

A more recent development within the CPCS is the establishment of schools in the remote Aboriginal communities in the far north of

Australia. Three new schools have been established in remote communities and are in desperate need of teachers that can remain long term and in need of church sponsorship/support. It is interesting to see the Gospel going forth into the remote, tiny communities of people, not through the church as a mission organisation but the schools.