

DOCTRINAL BASIS OF THE MISSION AND VISION OF LEVNT AND ITS EDUCATIONAL BODIES

Background

Since 1839 Lutheran schools and educational services, operating in accordance with the Lutheran tradition have been providing education to Australian children. The Lutheran Church of Australia (“**Church**”) currently has a variety of agencies through which it ministers to and serves the people of Australia and New Zealand.

Lutheran Education VIC, NSW, Tas and ACT Limited (“**LEVNT**”) owns, operates and is affiliated with early childhood services, primary schools and secondary schools throughout Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania (“**Educational Bodies**”).

Each of these Educational Bodies is conducted in accordance with the doctrines, beliefs and principles of the Church. Educational Bodies are agents of the Church, established to serve the community, bear witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and draw people into Christian fellowship, nurture and worship.¹ Their mission field is “the world of the school”.

This statement sets out the overarching mission and vision of LEVNT. It also sets out the Lutheran doctrines, beliefs and principles that articulate what it means to provide a Lutheran education, and which may be adopted by each of the Educational Bodies.

Mission and vision

LEVNT’s mission is to educate students in a Christian environment by providing inspiring educational opportunities that enable them to reach their full potential.

LEVNT’s vision is to be a leading system of Christ-centred, innovative schools inspiring students for life.

To this end, LEVNT and the Educational Bodies seek to provide a Lutheran education to the children and young people whom God has entrusted into their care.

What is a Lutheran education?

A Lutheran education upholds and affirms the Confessions of the Lutheran Church of Australia, as informed by the Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions (“**DSTOs**”)² issued by the Church.³

Accordingly, a Lutheran education is a formal education in which the gospel informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all Educational Body activities. That is, a Lutheran education encompasses all aspects of each Educational Body’s activities and programs (whether academic, co-curricular, disciplinary, pastoral, community-based or otherwise). Through each Educational Body, the Church deliberately and intentionally bears Christian witness to students, parents, teachers, friends and all who make up the “world of the school”.⁴

This means that the gospel is central to each Educational Body’s operations, in that it:

- (a) critiques all educational philosophies and practices;

¹ *The public ministry in the Lutheran school* (DSTO II J5), updated October 2001, paragraph 1.2.

² See in particular Doctrinal Statement and Theological Opinion (“**DSTO**”) II J1 – J7. A list of all DSTOs is available from <https://www.lca.org.au/departments/commissions/cticr/>.

³ In the event of any conflict between the DSTOs and this statement, the doctrines, beliefs and principles articulated in this statement will prevail.

⁴ *The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools* (DSTO II J1), updated October 2001, paragraph 1.2.

- (b) affirms the uniqueness, within the totality of God's creation, of each individual, created in the image of God;
- (c) affirms the gift of salvation;
- (d) enables new life in Christ; and
- (e) is reflected in the lives of educators, who understand and live out the gospel.⁵

A Lutheran educational program:

- (a) serves students, parents, the church, the community, and the government, by providing a quality education for the whole person;
- (b) strives for excellence in the development and creative use by all students of their God-given gifts;
- (c) equips students for a life of service;
- (d) provides an alternative to a secular, humanistic philosophy and practice of education;
- (e) includes, as a core part of the program, a Christian Studies curriculum which has been developed intentionally from the perspective of what the Lutheran Church believes and teaches; and
- (f) involves the school community in regular Christian worship.

Importantly, Educational Bodies offer a Lutheran education to all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability, provided that they and their families undertake to support willingly and freely the purposes of the Educational Body.

What are the Confessions of the Lutheran Church of Australia?

LEVNT and the Educational Bodies hold to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church of Australia in declaring that they:

- (a) accept without reservation the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as a whole and in all their parts, as the divinely inspired, written and inerrant Word of God, and as the only infallible source and norm for all matters of faith, doctrine and life;
- (b) acknowledge and accept as true expositions of the Word of God and as its own Confession all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, namely:
 - i the three Ecumenical Creeds: the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed;
 - ii the Unaltered Augsburg Confession;
 - iii the Apology of the Augsburg Confession;
 - iv the Smalcald Articles;
 - v the Small Catechism of Luther;
 - vi the Large Catechism of Luther; and
 - vii the Formula of Concord.

⁵ *The public ministry in the Lutheran school* (DSTO II J5), updated October 2001, paragraph 1.4.

What role does each Educational Body's staff play in realising LEVNT's mission and vision?

Educational Bodies are an integral part of the mission of the Church and one of the many ways in which the Church seeks to carry out the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, which reads (in the New International Version):

¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Whilst conformity with the religious doctrines, beliefs or principles of the Church may be an inherent requirement of certain positions, there is no requirement that *all* employees of *all* Educational Bodies be practising Lutherans. Educational Bodies have discretion as to how best to staff their organisation to realise the mission and vision of LEVNT, subject to the requirements below.

In arriving at this position, LEVNT recognises that for the Great Commission to be realised, the gospel must be proclaimed to those who have not yet heard it. Including employees who do not share the Lutheran faith in the life of Educational Bodies presents a further opportunity for the gospel of Christ to be shared, and the Church extended.

Nonetheless, all who teach in or administer the affairs of an Educational Body must:

- (a) carry out their responsibilities and duties in accordance with the Confessions of the Lutheran Church of Australia as informed by the DSTOs and this statement; and
- (b) avoid conduct which may cause injury to the religious susceptibilities of people of Lutheran faith.

Further guidance may be found in *The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools* (DSTO II J1 – J3).

Principals and other leadership positions

Ideally, the leadership positions of principal, deputy principal, head of sub-schools and head of Christian Studies (or any equivalent position, whatever called) will be filled by an active communicant member of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

In particular, Principals are the educational and spiritual leaders of the school, and are responsible for delivering an educational program that meets the requirements set out in this statement.

At the very least, these leadership positions must be filled by individuals who conform to the doctrines, beliefs or principles of the Educational Body and who commit to specific Lutheran accreditation requirements for their role. These staff are key persons who have responsibility for leading the Educational Body in ministry and mission to the world of the school.

In certain circumstances (e.g. where no suitable applicant has been found after an extensive effort to recruit), these specific requirements may be waived by:

- (a) the Board of the Educational Body, following consultation with LEVNT, in relation to a particular appointment to the position of Principal; or
- (b) the Principal of the Educational Body, following consultation with LEVNT, in relation to a particular appointment to the positions of deputy principal, head of sub-school and head of Christian Studies (or any equivalent position, whatever called).