

Prologue

Choices

STORY ONE

Impressive. He stretched out his legs and reflected on the interview just concluded. Yes, he certainly was impressive. But, would he fit in? There's that accent – a bit too heavy – although he was very articulate. And the theological college ... Just a tad more fundamentalist than the school is used to ... although the Masters degree itself came from a nationally recognised institution. And it is certainly relevant – What's the title? – 'Teaching Today's Teenagers Faith' ... But what is faith ...?

Geoffrey Harrington-Barr's thoughts began to drift. *It's an Anglican school I'm head of. So, the faith dimension's intrinsic, but it usually looks after itself. But interviewing for the Head of Religious Studies puts it upfront. The trouble is, faith has so many meanings ... It used to be clear-cut when I was a kid at Geelong – chapel services – pretty boring, but part of your duty, doing the right thing by your fellows – why that was largely why I went into education. And definitely God is there! I've never really doubted that, he pondered, although today's kids do We probably need a bit of that punch this guy has, but*

An image of the Old Grammarians came to his mind. *How would they like an ethnic enthusiast leading RE? Well, in fairness, most of them have moved with the times. You can't run a high-powered business with an inkwell. And Jack on the board hasn't been backward in criticising poor old Peter Duckton. A bit unfair*

really. The Reverend Duckton knows the school and the kids like him. He doesn't cause ripples, no dramas – and isn't that how we want it to be? Geoffrey wasn't sure of the answer. His mind flitted over that one. And Peter cares about them. He always gives time to the kids needing a listening ear. Would Mr Sekarajan do that? His referees say he has good relationships. Well, probably he would ... why doubt? He handled the interview well, yes, very well, actually – considering the angles the questions came from. Yes, no reason really to doubt his personal skills, and he did get a high distinction in the pastoral theology subject. Now the other guy, Gordon – no, Jordan – he would get on with the kids, but a bit naïve for the parents, and would the staff work with him?

The swishing door interrupted his reverie, as Shelley returned from escorting the applicant to the car park. Almost at the same time Rob came in with the teacups and biscuits.

'Well, what did you think of that one?' Shelley asked.

'Potential. He's got potential.' *I'm not going to let her push me into a decision here. Shelley yes, she's an expert in curriculum, decisive, going somewhere, but it's not her school in the end. She'll move on, she's applying for principalships now. Still, her perspective's valuable.* 'What's your feeling?'

'Doesn't fit,' she said briskly. 'Too religious. Bit of a control freak probably – will want religion to take over.' Then she added as an aside: 'Good for a cricketing coach though.'

Yes, well that is a factor. The school's more rugby than cricket but old Duckton hasn't really pulled his weight with co-curricular. We need to change that. And this guy sure has the goods with cricket – been captain of several district teams, state representative, on the board of his local club. Goes to all the matches – God! he was almost as keen on cricket as he was on God.

Rob was responding to Shelley's comment. 'That's what I liked about him. Genuine sportsman. I think he'd transfer it to the rest of the scene, too. Gave me the impression he'd give everyone a fair go. Likeable chap, and you can't really fault his qualifications for this job.'

Well, you would think that, wouldn't you. Geoffrey smiled a little as he thought of Rob's passions. He was the junior chaplain. That was why he was on the interviewing panel. *But apart from teaching a few classes RE, you really only see him running coaching sessions, attending matches, organising new sports – what was the latest – ultimate Frisbee, for God's sake! Well, the kids all like him, not much chop in the classroom but you could argue he brings God to where*

the kids are. Well, does he ever mention God out there? Maybe not. I just assume ... Comes back to that question about faith ...

Geoffrey jerked himself back to the concrete here and now. He would make this decision but their responses were important for his assessment.

‘He’d be good with RE curriculum, Shelley. We need to up the ante a bit there. The subject should have some respect in an Anglican school. And Rob’s right – he’d make a real contribution on the field. Sommers has been doing cricket but he’ll retire in the next year or two and it would be good to have a back up. Maybe even get a girls’ team going. Are you concerned he’s a bit too over the top religion-wise?’

‘I guess that’s it.’ She paused thoughtfully. ‘I prefer Jordan – he’d fit the ethos better. Less intense. But you’re right, we’re an Anglican school and we should have a well-qualified person in that role.’

That’s what I like about her, thought Geoffrey. Sometimes a bit blunt, but she’s fair-minded and can judge objectively. She gets things done – not warm and woosy but the staff respect her and they deliver. The academic’s really taken off since she’s been in charge.

‘Where’s Jordan got an edge over this fellow?’ He looked at them both directly. ‘Let’s analyse it a bit.’

‘Knows the scene. A bit younger.’ Rob proffered a little diffidently. *A bit too much like you, perhaps. Could be a competitor. Maybe that’s why you prefer the God-botherer.* ‘He’s an all-rounder, but you couldn’t really call him a sporty type. He’d do chapel well. Knows the rituals and would put some life into it – I think.’

‘That’s what impressed me,’ said Shelley. ‘He’s from this background. Would fit like a glove. Not rock the boat but keep the kids focused on important values. The other ... well, um ... couldn’t say he wouldn’t, but you’re right, I do feel he’d push the spiritual a bit too hard. Let’s be honest, that’s not why parents send their kids here. It’s the icing on the cake, maybe, but not the cake.’

‘The co-curricular is where we’ve really got the cutting edge,’ said Rob. ‘We need to maintain it. Dan Sekarajan would make a real impact there. And he’s pretty competent in the classroom by all accounts. I could leave that side of things to him and feel it would be well-cared for. I mean, sport is just as important as religion in defining the ethos. I’d go for him, Geoff, but the call is yours.’

Yes, the call is mine. It is an Anglican school. Either would do that bit. But it’s only a bit. I agree with Rob – his cricketing background is something you can quantify. It would be good for the school to diversify from rugby, rugby, rugby.

Appeal to a wider group, but still the right sort. Maybe he's too full-on, but he has got people-skills, and you can hardly argue against a Head of RE being full-on about religion ... My call – will it change the school? Maybe. Is that good? Never can tell. I'll make the call.

'I'll call him this evening. See if he's willing to start before the summer season. Thanks for your time, Rob, Shelley. See you at the combined staff meeting tomorrow morning.'

Choices

STORY TWO

The Reverend Lena Lennox (known universally among the girls as 'The Lynx') replaced the phone and reflected on the comments of Mr Grymball.

'Just a bit heavy, Lena. I appreciate you are sincere and religion is important to you, but it sounded just, well, you know, a bit *American* – not quite the rational, academic image we've always had here ... Parents send their daughters to Fairton Anglican College, trusting the school to show good values, but, um, you know, you don't have to say 'Jesus' all the time to get Christian morals.'

What did I say to that? Lena asked herself. I should have said, 'Christianity is actually about Jesus', but he wouldn't get that. He's a decent man, when all's said and done, and he gives a lot of his limited time to this school.

She wriggled uneasily in her swivel chair, and reviewed the conversation again. Mr Grymball's daughter was in Year 11, and he was a pleasant and usually constructive member of the Parents & Friends. He had waited for a week before phoning to comment on her recent presentation at the orientation evening for the incoming Year 7s. He had been in the background there, serving tea and passing out flyers on the P&F social.

He's thought it through. He knows Fairton families. He's saying I've gone a bit far this time. A moment of rebellion struck Lena. Well why shouldn't I? Those kids need to know about Jesus, not just think being ambitious and self-sufficient is going to make them happy. As if everybody really does glide through life just because of a bit of private schooling!

'Work hard, get a good career, have self-respect, self-confidence, help those who need a bit of support ...' The mantra of respectable, socially responsible, professional parents echoed in her ears. *But there's more than that!* she felt like screaming. *There's eternity, there's spirituality, there's the cry of a soul which wants more than just more 'things'.* That was the mood that had dominated in her

during the orientation evening, as she had looked out over the hall filled with excited, expectant Year 6 kids about to take the big step into secondary school.

She wished she could have justified herself to Mr Grymball instead of listening politely and agreeing that it would better suit the clientele to take a more toned down approach. Her position over the four years she had been chaplain here at Fairton was that she would present the Gospel clearly but respect the constraints of the institution. That meant recognising the primary educational purpose of the school and giving plenty of space for divergent opinions. She ran a balanced program that presented material objectively and asked students for critical responses, not personal ones. She rarely received any criticisms. Chapel and RE ran smoothly and were taken seriously. That could all be lost if she alienated Mr Grymball and those he represented.

Not to mention the head! An image of her slightly patronising smile as she stroked her finely manicured fingers and made, ever so gently, a point about serving the community, floated into Lena's mind. At the moment a 'let well alone' attitude prevailed and the chaplain's talks at chapel passed largely without comment from the hierarchy.

That brought Lena's thoughts back with a jerk to Dave's email which had popped up just before Mr Grymball rang. She herself had contacted Dave after hearing glowing reports about him from the youth leader at the parish church she attended intermittently when there were no clashes with her chaplaincy duties at Fairton. Her inquiries consistently indicated that he was a relevant and lively speaker, who would challenge the comfortable middle class moralism which was so typical of the families at Fairton. Just the sort of speaker who'd make the girls think a bit deeper. She'd written suggesting he might be a guest speaker and here he was responding with some definite ideas.

The measured voice of the head superimposed itself over the email. *'Now Lena, this is an educational institution. We don't want any form of indoctrination. The parents are really quite upset. I believe Mr Grymball has already explained the general feeling to you ... Yes, Lena, you are chaplain but do it with sensitivity for God's sake. Don't stir up a hornet's nest with hellfire preachers, for God's sake.'* Lena shuddered as she imagined the tight little talk in the spacious, well-appointed office.

For God's sake. Yes, well, for God's sake – literally – I need to keep communication positive, keep them respecting the chaplaincy and the God it stands for. I have to take the long view.

Once she made up her mind the Reverend Lena Lennox always acted without hesitation. She selected the 'Reply' button and typed the email.

Dear Dave

Thank you for your suggestions about a youth service at our College. I am sure that it would be interesting for the students.

However, my inquiry was only tentative and I do not think we can squeeze you in during the current academic year, as the program is already set. I am unsure if the students and their families are quite ready for this to be interrupted. I do try to ensure that every event progresses their openness to Christianity. I may contact you further if I see an appropriate opportunity for what you offer.

Once again, thank you for the time and thought given to your proposal. I wish you well in your endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

(The Reverend) Lena Lennox

Chaplain and Coordinator Religious Education

Fairton Anglican College for Girls.

She hit 'Send' and let the chair tip backwards as she exhaled, her gaze drifting upwards. It was dealt with. For God's sake.

1.

Introduction: Anglican schools and the independent sector

This is a book for the many people whose children are enrolled in Anglican schools or who themselves teach in Anglican schools and who want to understand the schools with which they are connected. It is also a book for a different group of people: those who believe the story of Jesus Christ is a message of hope in an alienating and uncertain world and who believe this is a matter of importance for Anglican schools.

The prologue has set the scene for this book by describing two fictional but typical scenarios revolving around the choices of key decision-makers. The dilemmas faced by Geoffrey and Lena are infused with irony and illustrate in concrete form the issues with which this book is concerned.

The decisions of Geoffrey and Lena show in action what the research inspiring this book uncovered, that is, that Anglican schools are pulled in conflicting directions and that there is often internal disagreement about their aims and priorities. Indeed, there appears to be a crisis of meaning at their very core. Anglican schools have two identities, one spiritual and one social. The problem, as I perceive it, is that these twin identities are not recognised. In fact, they are tangled together and neither is clear. They need to be distinguished so that building strong Anglican schools can proceed coherently by understanding the nature of each. This is the primary purpose of this book.

Anglican schools have been strongly influenced by the culture of their parent church. Given that the Anglican Church has trouble defining itself

and is marked by significant internal division, it is probably not surprising that, in the interviews I conducted, only rarely could leaders and teachers in Anglican schools articulate a school's distinctive Anglican characteristics or its overarching purpose.

But Anglican schools are a significant element in the non-government educational sector and it is critical that they can explain their distinctive purpose. The growing body of parents who are entrusting their children to Anglican schools are entitled to know what they stand for and the principles that underpin operational decisions.

The research upon which this book is based drew on intensive observations and in-depth interviews with practising teachers in Anglican schools across Australia. Three schools in three different states were analysed in depth. Here they are given the names St Elspeth's Grammar School, Hillside Anglican School and Denleigh College. Teachers in these schools also referred to another eighty independent schools and more than fifteen state schools where they had worked. I have quoted these informants throughout this book to illustrate points. When quoted, first names (which are pseudonyms) are used. These focus field studies were supplemented by a comprehensive survey of background works covering Australian Anglicanism and Australian education.

Based on the information that I gained through this research, I have tried to describe the ambiguities and tensions evident in Anglican schools and to analyse the way they relate to the dual spiritual and social identity of the schools and what this might mean for Anglican schools today. My critique seeks to provide a basis for understanding the positive qualities offered by the dual Anglican identity and to challenge stakeholders in Anglican schools to face the realities of the twenty-first century secular Australian context and to make informed choices which will lead to the inherent positive potential of Anglican schools being realised.

Anglican identity

The Church of England, from which the Anglican Church of Australia is descended, was a crucial institution in shaping British life. From the colonising British, the Australian people have inherited values and attitudes which mark Australia as a 'Western' nation despite its geographical proximity to Asia and despite the recent waves of immigrants who have globalised its culture. Anglican schools in Australia have their roots in the educational establishments of Victorian England whose character was strongly influenced by their connections with the institutional church.

Yet the Anglican Church has grappled with its identity since the sixteenth century when it declared itself independent from the Roman papacy. Those who call themselves ‘Anglican’ give varying and sometimes conflicting answers about its essential nature and major priorities. Some emphasise its continuance with the Catholic faith with a tangible link to the apostles (the first followers of Jesus); some want to exclude anything but the teaching of the Bible in its worship; some celebrate a liberal and inclusive ethos; some bemoan its doctrinal opaqueness; some see it primarily as a guardian of morality; some castigate it for abusing children or for exuding wealth-induced complacency; some celebrate it as a truly global and multi-faceted communion, while for others it is seen as a fractured legacy of imperialism whose time has passed.

When this kind of institutional confusion is coupled with the complexities of the contemporary educational context, it is perhaps to be expected that the Anglican approach to education is marked by ambiguity and paradox. At a 2012 seminar for teachers and chaplains employed in Anglican schools, the then Director of St Mark’s National Theological Centre, Tom Frame, asked the assembled group to define the key features of Anglican schools and the particular outcomes – spiritual and educational – that these schools ought to pursue. He noted that there was no shared view of what was distinct about Anglican schools or on their objectives. Plainly, this was a matter needing to be urgently addressed.

I have attempted to answer these questions on the basis of information about what actually happens in Anglican schools rather than relying on idealistic or rhetorical mission statements. The evidence I have gathered suggests that, although the staff in most Anglican schools do not understand their identity or their potential, the schools actually display distinctive Anglican characteristics which are, I will argue, viable, vibrant and valuable. These characteristics offer much to the largely secular society in which the schools operate.

My view is that the dual spiritual and social identity derived from an Anglican heritage must be understood and embraced by leaders and communities of Anglican schools. Taking intentional action is critical because demand for places is steadily growing from a broadening range of clientele even though few of them associate with any Anglican congregation, where numbers are diminishing. Anglican schools owe these stakeholders a clearer explanation of their purpose and their distinct principles. But they can and must offer much more than mere explanation. If the leaders of Anglican schools recognise and articulate their uniquely Anglican ethos, the schools will be in a better position

to help students to think, feel and act as total human beings who can bring hope to Australian society.

The conversation

The continuing debate about the nature and mission of Anglican schools has intensified in recent years with the publication of three related books. This fact in itself indicates the liveliness of discussion. A brief comparison of these texts will highlight the specific contribution of *Challenge and Choice* whose content addresses different material for a different audience.

New Perspectives on Anglican Education appeared in 2011. However, it would be better titled *New Perspectives on Anglican Education in the Diocese of Sydney*, since the atypical conservative evangelical Anglicanism of that diocese is the un-argued stance. The book clearly takes for granted that the role of Anglican schools is to encourage children to ‘follow Christ’.¹ It makes no case for Anglican education as distinct from its bedfellows in the Christian schooling sector and, by the final chapters, even the references to Anglican education have been subsumed under the explicit use of the language of ‘Christian education’. The book is theological in its orientation and addressed to insiders who agree with its premises. Moreover, it is a manifesto for what ‘should be’ rather than a realistic description of what is. As the authors acknowledge: ‘this project has become one of identifying what Anglican Education might look like in the future, not simply what it is now.’²

Challenge and Choice takes up the invitation given in the forward of *New Perspectives* for others to join the discussion.

Ministry in Anglican schools was launched in 2012. It is a collection of essays drawn principally from chaplains, pastoral care workers and administrators working across Australia.³ Therefore it represents the breadth of thinking in the Anglican Church of Australia and, unlike *New Perspectives*, it is written from within a specifically Anglican school context. It, too, is narrow but in a different way to *New Perspectives*, because it focuses mainly on chaplaincy with only passing consideration of other modes of Christian influence. Apart from my own chapter in the collection, only that by Hastie describes objectively the current situation, although several chapters, notably those by Lowe, Harrison and Sargeant, and Stewart, explicitly set chaplaincy within the realities of the Anglican school environment.

Ministry in Anglican Schools was intentionally written by chaplains for chaplains. It assumes that ministry is located mainly in the conduct of chaplaincy. On the whole the contributors appear to accept the cultural milieu in which

they operate without interrogating how it relates to the Anglican identity of their schools. None of them explores in any depth the significance of the non-religious position of most of the staff. Several chapters seem to imply that the school community shares the Anglican worldview. I believe that the varied approaches in this book illustrate my view that the identity of Anglican schools is ambiguous or confused.

The most recent work related to this book is *Teaching Well*.⁴ It is a goldmine of thoughtful articles on the whole gamut of issues faced by Christian teachers. Philosophically it appears to identify most closely with the Christian schooling movement through its focus on philosophy of education and curriculum. Although it contains contributions from a clearly Anglican perspective, it is certainly not a book about Anglican schools nor is its brief to explain or defend the unique character of Anglican schools. By way of contrast, this present book *is* about Anglican schools. It also claims to describe accurately what they are really like and to explain why. Because it uses empirical information to define Anglicanism in schools, it provides a firm foundation on which to understand them, and to suggest how a uniquely Anglican character can be harnessed for good. My stance in *Challenge and Choice* is sociological, not theological, and does not assume any religious position in its readers, only an open-minded interest in understanding the Anglican schools with which they are associated.

Growth of the independent sector

The value of such understanding is evident from the growth in the independent sector and the significant role of Anglican schools within it. Despite the overtly secular nature of Australian society, a shift in social attitudes in Australia is demonstrated by the phenomenal growth in the private educational sector from only 19 per cent in the mid 1970s to 29 per cent in 1995 to 34.3 per cent in 2009 Australia wide.⁵ In 2011 that most secular and resolutely left wing of jurisdictions, the Australian Capital Territory, marked a tipping point when it became the first to record more enrolments in private than public schools. At the same time, non-public school enrolments in New South Wales had reached 37.9 per cent.⁶ Moreover, in 2011 45 per cent of those using public schools indicated that they would prefer a private school if they could afford it.⁷

Reasons for this growth have been explored in recent research such as that of Campbell and his colleagues who suggest that the current middle classes feel let down by government schools. In the new market driven educational environment which ensued with the reintroduction of government money for private schools in the 1970s, these parents have taken the initiative to

ensure social capital for their children, and turned to independent schools.⁸ Factors influencing parents have been summed up by Barcan as concerns about school reputation, teaching, results, discipline and especially about the peers with whom children will mix.⁹ Significantly, surveys of parental motivation do not usually rate religion as a priority for selecting independent schools, although a Department of Education and Training survey in 2007 noted that for 45 per cent religion was considered one important factor. The same survey contributes to the strong evidence showing that values are a major drawcard. Plainly parents do not feel confident that public schools can deliver important character-forming qualities.¹⁰

A sample of comments from teachers whom I interviewed confirms the general picture of parental motivation:

Ryan: I don't believe parents send their kids [here] because it's religious ... They send them for academic, co-curricular, it's a fantastic community and has a great reputation within the community. It goes back to the well-roundedness of the child. Pastoral care is often touted from parents.

Beverley: Schools start to self-select over time and reputation is the issue and parents will have a feeling which sort of school is there, and they send them because their child will fit in or because they'd like them to be like that.

Mark, headmaster: Well the expectations of most parents is still, get them a good ATAR and good discipline – as long as it's not my child! – and Christian forgiveness! Most surveys keep saying that parents just want the child to get a good ATAR – or the best they possibly can. If you ask parents, I'd say the three things they want are good results, good discipline and that the kids are happy and safe.

In this growing market for independent education, Anglican schools represent the largest and most influential segment of the non-Catholic sector. According to the website of Anglican Schools Australia, there are over 150 Anglican schools throughout Australia, educating more than 150,000 students and employing about 15,000 teachers.¹¹ While there are about three times as many Catholic schools, bare statistics do not tell the whole story.¹² The majority of Catholic schools are local primary schools, while most Anglican schools are K–12 with student numbers weighted towards the secondary end. In addition, Anglican schools include some of the best known and most aspired to schools

in the country: institutions like Geelong Grammar, Melbourne Grammar, Shore School Sydney, Abbotsleigh in Wahroonga, SCEGGS Darlinghurst, 'Churchie' in Brisbane, St Peter's in Adelaide. As a sector they punch beyond their numerical weight. Even newer Anglican schools have a high reputation as is shown by how real estate agents use their presence as a selling point for neighbourhoods in which they are placed.¹³

Anglican schools have developed an ever-increasing market share over the past 30 years and in several states Anglican 'systems' are competing at the low-fee paying end of the spectrum. Moreover, such schools pull in clients way beyond practising church adherents, educating many children of professional and influential families whose voices are significant in shaping Australian society. Commenting on the My School website in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in January 2011, Bonnor noted that high-fee private schools, which are dominated by Anglican ones, enrol the highest socio-economic slice of the population.¹⁴

Criticism

They also attract plenty of government money, a matter of lively controversy in the ongoing debate about funding.¹⁵ Many people resent the money poured into the independent sector, claiming it is at the expense of public schools, which are under-resourced and left to manage the most disadvantaged children and then criticised for not achieving parity with wealthy independent schools. For instance, the following represent common views:

Public schools are required to accept all comers; many private schools pride themselves on their ability to choose the right children to teach ... But despite private schools' determination to retain the right to discriminate when choosing their students and staff, as well as their freedom to set whatever fees they think the market will bear, it seems the taxpayer at large is supposed to support all of these private choices with public money.¹⁶

For more than a decade, we've known that our schools have been advantaging students at the top while slowly abandoning those at the bottom. Public schools in particular are becoming, to use John Howard's words, safety nets for the poor.¹⁷

The reforms recommended by the Gonski review of educational funding sought to address such inequities, but at the time of writing, aspects critical to achieving such aims had been shelved by the Coalition government.¹⁸

There are also, however, those who are suspicious of the schools on purely religious grounds, fearing that they are organs of religious indoctrination, that they undermine a cohesive democratic society and that the use of taxpayers' money to support them contravenes the spirit of non-sectarian Australia enshrined in Section 116 of the Constitution.

Research by the Australia Institute in 2004 criticised independent schools for being exclusive and not promoting values of: 'tolerance, respect for difference and equality of opportunity [which] are vital to sustaining a socially cohesive society yet are unobtainable when high fees act as a barrier.'¹⁹

The British philosopher, Stephen Law, claims that most religion-based education is grounded in an authoritarian stance which undermines authentic education which is marked by rationality, autonomy and critical thinking:

Encouraging pupils to think for themselves, to debate freely and openly different moral and religious points of view, is precisely what those who think children should be taught to defer more or less uncritically to Authority on moral and religious matters are against.²⁰

But when independent schools in contemporary Australia are subjected to factual analysis, there is little evidence that they indoctrinate students with unthinking submission to authority, intolerance of diversity or negative social attitudes. Nor indeed do they appear to make much difference to the religiosity of their students.²¹ Against the arguments of those supporting a purported intrinsic link between democratic values and state schools are indications in the 2005 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes that students going through independent schools actually show more positive civic and democratic attitudes and participation in civic and social life than others.²²

One independent school teacher made the contrast explicit, noting:

I've seen some state schools where any help outside statutory teaching time is ad hoc and due to the good nature of the individuals. Good deeds are the exception not the rule, but the opposite occurs here.

Values in context

This kind of extra care given to students and the active encouragement of students themselves to engage in service programs, represent 'value-adding' in a literal sense and is a key motivator for parents selecting independent schools.

One of my contentions is that Anglican schools need to be much more explicit about the intrinsic link between the values they espouse and how these

values are founded in Christian belief. It seems reasonable to state here that, even if parents do not explicitly choose independent schools on the basis of religion, insofar as they do choose on the basis of values, they are implicitly acknowledging a spiritual dimension.²³

It is not as if public schools are without values. In an analysis of the ‘failings of private schools to protect public values’, Wilkinson asserts that the central values of public education are that it is ‘secular, tolerant and universally accessible’. These values are explained in terms of social justice, whereby mutual respect across cultural diversity is promoted, everybody has access to high quality education which equips them for post-school workforce participation and the disadvantaged are respected.²⁴ However, by selecting independent and religious schools, increasingly parents are acting on a belief that these values are not adequate. Perhaps a clue can be found in considering more closely the reasons which Wilkinson’s article offers as the drivers of the shift from public education.

The perception of better values in private schools is one of these reasons, but the belief that the private sector offers a better quality of education in relation to, amongst other things, teacher quality and facilities appears to be the deciding factor. Earlier the article quoted a DEST study which explains that the term ‘other things’ effectively means a ‘secure environment and academic reputation’.²⁵

This explanation obscures the fact that quality of education, teacher quality, secure environment and academic reputation are actually all value-laden concepts. It is values of personal care, individual respect and consistent standards which produce a secure environment; good teachers show values of ‘caring, being positive, a sense of fulfilment, duty’ as explained by one of my non-religious interviewees; academic reputation is gained by a focus on learning which is maintained through good student management and integrity in curriculum content and assessment. Media reports of high performing government schools consistently demonstrate that they have lifted their achievement through enforcing rigorous standards in behaviour and school work, the two critical factors influencing parental choice towards the independent sector.

For instance, the principal of Glenala State High in Brisbane turned around a school with a poor reputation by enforcing proper school uniform, punctuality and completion of study tasks. The overarching value is now personal and community responsibility. She commented: ‘I’m running a tight ship, with strong, clear processes that identify the responsibility of all members of the community.’²⁶ Responsibility, whether communal, as emphasised by the

political left, or personal, as emphasised by the political right, is undeniably a moral value.

In this opening chapter I have sought to demonstrate that the idea of values is complex and multi-faceted. It certainly goes beyond the simplistic promotion of overt attitudes or codes of behaviour. Culture, which is a central concept in this book, is essentially values in action. In other words, habitual patterns of behaviour in a society or an institution like a school are an expression of values, whether articulated or not. Because values are central to culture and central to the role of Anglican schools, much of this book will deal with them both explicitly and implicitly. Campbell makes the point that the 'values debate is crucial to discourse of school choice in middle Australia.'²⁷

The next chapter will explore some aspects of how values interact with contemporary Australian culture. This places Anglican education within its social context. The chapter then uses this theme to explain something of the cultural and historical background which has created the social identity of Anglican schools. This is a foundation for the major theme of this book, the dual identity of Anglican schools and how this duality can make a positive contribution to Australian society.

Endnotes

- 1 T Cairney, B Cowling and M Jensen, *New Perspectives on Anglican Education: Reconsidering purpose and plotting a future direction*, Anglican Education Commission, Sydney, 2011, p. 18.
- 2 Cairney, Cowling and Jensen, *New Perspectives on Anglican Education*, p. 39.
- 3 Anglican Schools Australia, *Ministry in Anglican schools: Principles and Practicalities*, Barton Books, Canberra Australia, 2012.
- 4 K Goodlet and J Collier (eds), *Teaching Well: Insights for educators in Christian schools*, Barton Books, Canberra Australia, 2014.
- 5 A Barcan, 'Review Essay: The new middle class and education', *Policy*, Vol. 26 No. 1, 2010, p. 47, <http://www.cis.org.au/images/stories/policy-magazine/2010-autumn/26-1-10-alan-barcan.pdf>, accessed 14 April 2014.
- 6 D Harrison, 'Can do better: most ACT students are in private education', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 May 2011, <http://www.smb.com.au/national/education/can-do-better-most-act-students-are-in-private-education-20110519-1ev1z.html>, accessed 6 November 2012.
- 7 J Buckingham, 'Opinion: Why do state school parents want to go private?' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 2011, <http://www.smb.com.au/opinion/why-do-state-school-parents-want-to-go-private-20110916-1kdth.html>, accessed 6 November 2012;