

North

Christian Community Schools Limited

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Northside Christian College

Organisational Review

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Northside Christian College – Organisational Review

Introduction

At the request of the Board of Northside Christian Centre Inc (the Centre) Christian Community Schools Limited (CCSL) is undertaking a review of the activities of the ministry of the Centre known as Northside Christian College (the College). The review looks at a number of different areas of the operation of the College the focus of this part of the review process is the organisational structure of the College and the Centre as it impacts upon the operations of the College.

A number of documents have been provided by the Centre and form the basis of this review. These documents include:-

- Statement of Purposes and Rules of Northside Christian Centre Inc.
- Position Descriptions for the Chairman and Directors of the Centre, and the Principal and members of the College Council.
- The Prospectus of Northside Christian College
- A document entitled *Organisational Structure 1997* for Northside Christian College.

Legal Structures

The College is conducted as a ministry of the Centre and is not separately incorporated. The Statement of Purposes and Rules of the Centre provides for the establishment and conduct of Christian Colleges (Statement of Purposes clause (v)) and the appointment of a College Council (Rule 29).

Rule 29 determines that the College Council consists of:

- The Senior Pastor (who is also the Chairman of the Council)
- The Associate Pastor
- The Principal
- At least four parents of students of the College who 'seem scripturally, educationally and naturally qualified'

Although not precisely clear from the Rules it seems that the parents appointed to the Council are nominated by the Board of Directors of the Centre before being notified to the annual general meeting of the Centre as required by Rule 29. Certainly Rule 23(4)(c) makes it clear that the Board of Directors has the authority to remove any such appointed member of the Council.

The role of the Council is to set fees or charges for educational services and is responsible to collect income due to the College, make payments on behalf of the College and keep the accounting records of the College. In so doing the Council 'shall act in accordance with directions and formulated policy set out by the Board' as required by Rule 29. Arguably there is no power in the Rules for the Council to act beyond the setting of fees etc as outlined above. While the intention of the phrase 'shall act in accordance with directions and formulated policy set out by the Board' may have been to provide a broader management power within Board determined guidelines this clause seems to have been drafted as a limiting provision rather than an enabling one.

On this interpretation the Board of Directors of the Centre constituted under Rule 22 is responsible for the management of the College by virtue of Rule 20. This is subject to the qualification that the Church Business Council established under clause 28 may have some role in relation to the management of money and 'all secular business' although again the Rules do not provide a positive power for this group.

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The position description for a member of the College Council provides a different perspective on the role of the Council. This document indicates that the Board of Directors has 'delegated the responsibility of the management of the College to the College Council'. Whether this is allowed under the Rules of the Centre is questionable. While Rule 20(2)(c) seems to provide the Board with very broad powers, presumably including to power of delegation, it is limited by the requirement that such acts 'appear to the Board to be essential for the proper management ... of the Assembly' (emphasis added).

While these comments are somewhat pedantic it is important that documents such as a Statement of Purposes and Rules provide clear guidance for future users. A thorough review of these documents of the Centre is obviously outside the scope of this review. It is, however, recommended that the rules relating to the College Council be redrafted to ensure that the Council has clear authority to undertake the activities it is intended to pursue. This could be done in a number of ways. One approach would be to redraft Rule 29, using terminology used elsewhere in the Rules, along the following lines:-

29 (b) The affairs of the College shall be managed by the College Council subject to such directions and formulated policy set out by the Board. *In line*

Another approach, which we recommend, would be to use the power of the Board to make By-Laws under Rule 38. Using this approach the Rules would be stripped of the majority of references to the College and the framework for its operation would be contained in a set of written By-Laws. The same approach could then also be adopted for other ministries of the Centre, which are not specifically referred to in the Rules.

The By-Laws approach, apart from issues of consistency with other ministries, also has the advantage of greater flexibility, as changes to the By-Laws are not subject to the same adoption requirements as changes to the Rules. The requirement in Rule 31 that changes to the Rules be approved by a majority of more than 75% of the members may make changes to those Rules rather difficult to achieve. The initial removal of specific references to the College will require approval in this manner but any subsequent changes to the By-Laws will not be constrained by this requirement.

The Role of the College Council

The position description for a member of the College Council has been used as the basis for this review of the existing operation of the College Council. As mentioned above this document contains the statement that the Council is responsible for the management of the College that is then qualified such that capital expenditure, budgets, staff appointments, policies and discipline will be referred to the Board for ratification. These qualifications seem so great that, if this document is followed, the Council can hardly be described as responsible for the management of the College. Indeed it may be argued that the requirement that effectively all decisions are subject to ratification by the Board actually encourages irresponsible management as the Council has no effective authority and thus cannot legitimately be held accountable.

The items outlined under various major functions headings also seem somewhat confusing. In some cases, leadership, education and development, the role of the Council is couched in terms that appear to make the Council operationally subservient to the Principal through the opening phrase 'To assist the Principal...'. In relation to the management function, effectively the financial and administrative aspects of the College's operations, the Council's role seems to be the ultimate authority, subject to the earlier comments. Despite this the position description for the Principal also seems to assert a similar unconstrained responsibility for this facet of the College's operations. Regardless of these impressions the

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constraints imposed by the Board of Directors leave effective control of these areas in their hands.

This overlapping responsibility and 'shared' authority has significant potential to hide ineffective practices and reduce the effective accountability. The addition of a College Bursar and Centre Administrator to this equation provides further opportunities for these problems to develop. The growth and success of the Centre and the College that have occurred to date are suggested to have occurred largely in spite of the structure that has been adopted rather than because of it. Indeed the 'successful' operation of the College under this structure is probably largely a reflection upon the individuals involved rather than the processes used. While the existing structures may have been sustainable to date if the College and Centre are to continue to grow and develop an alternative structure is considered necessary.

An Alternative Model of Governance

The relationships between churches, boards, parents and the principal have been the cause of considerable friction in schools over recent years. As schools mature and the 'first generation' of board members, church members and parents move on the initial understandings that were mutually and often implicitly held regarding the interrelationships between these groups tend to be lost. This has led many schools to re-evaluate and re-assess their structures and modes of operation to provide a model that can sustain further growth and development.

In examining and evaluating the experiences of a number of schools CCSL believes that an approach to governance based upon the Policy Governance model developed by Dr John Carver provides a sound solution. This model provides a conceptually sound basis for governance that has significant potential for vastly increasing the effectiveness of Boards and Councils. In attempting to apply any model to the operations of the College and Centre it is necessary to firstly have a clear understanding of the role and function of each actor within the community that makes up the College/Centre. The major actors are:-

- Board of Directors
- Centre Members
- College Council
- College Staff
- Parents
- Principal
- Senior Pastor
- Students

A brief description of the role assumed for each is given below:-

Board of Directors: as a group have a role in assisting the Senior Pastor in the leadership of the Centre and hold a limited 'reserve power' in relation to recommending the removal of the Senior Pastor.

Centre Members: as a group hold limited 'reserve powers' relating to the removal of officers of the Centre in limited circumstances and the approval or otherwise of changes to the Rules.

College Council: as a group is responsible for the leadership and governance of the College as a Ministry of the Church and a support for Christian parents.

College Staff: are called as individuals to utilise their ministry gifts as a pastor/teacher.

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Parents: as a couple/individual have a Biblical responsibility for the training and education of their children.

Principal: as an individual is called to exercise his/her ministry gift to lead the operations of the College in conjunction with the College Council

Senior Pastor: as an individual is called to exercise his/her ministry gift to lead the operations of the Centre in conjunction with the Board of Directors

Students: as individuals have a responsibility to learn and to respect the authority of parents and the church as exercised through the Principal and College Staff.

This can also be conceptualised in terms of a cascading of authority and accountability:-

- The Senior Pastor/Board of Directors responsible for the operations of the Centre as a whole;
- The College Council responsible for the operations of the College;
- The Principal responsible for the leadership of the College

This hierarchical chain of command model excludes parents who, as a group, have no direct role in the governance of the school. Their role can, however, be encapsulated within this framework if the College Council is also viewed as a 'trustee' of the responsibility of individual parents. A trustee undertakes activities for the benefit of beneficiaries of the trust but is normally not obligated to follow directions from the beneficiaries. It would seem odd, however, for a trustee not to take cognisance of the wishes of those for whose benefit the trust is established.

In this model as you move up the chain of command the **depth** of involvement with any particular activity decreases but the **breadth** of involvement increases. This acknowledges that time is limited and that a choice must be made between depth of involvement, management, and breadth of involvement, governance or leadership. Thus the Principal would be involved in considerable amounts of detail relating to the College, but would not be directly involved in the other activities of the Centre. The College Council would not have the day to day involvement of the Principal but would be involved in looking at the 'bigger picture' for the College and how it relates to other activities of the Centre. The College Council would also be responsible for ensuring that this 'bigger picture' encompasses the aspirations of parents in its role as 'trustee'. The Senior Pastor/Board of Directors would have the 'birds-eye' view, having minimal involvement in the day to day activities of the numerous ministries conducted in the Centre but providing an overarching spiritual and temporal leadership and guiding the strategic direction for the Centre and its activities.

This hierarchical model fits well with the mode of operating proposed under Carver's Policy Governance model. This model attempts to ensure that governing boards focus on leadership rather than management and that managers are given the freedom to manage. To do so the task of the governing board is reduced to four major activities:-

- Development of the Mission/Vision/Goals/Outcomes for the 'organisation'. In relation to the Board of Directors the organisation is the Centre as a whole, for the College Council the scope of authority relates to the College only.
- Development of broad policies that describe the limits of acceptable means to achieve the Mission/Vision/Goals/Outcomes. Once again the Board of Directors is interested in

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developing policies applicable across the Centre as a whole, the College Council concerned with the College itself.

- Determination of acceptable processes for the board's own operations. The Board of Directors and the College Council may develop somewhat distinct modes of operation to reflect their differing roles.
- Building a strong relationship with the chief executive officer of the 'organisation'. The Senior Pastor in relation to the Board of Directors and the Principal in the case of the College Council.

Rather than attempting to determine what actions are acceptable and lead towards positive outcomes for the organisation this model sees the board develop a series of desired outcomes and parameters that delineate what processes to achieve those outcomes are unacceptable. By determining what is unacceptable boards actually provide more authority to those charged with meeting outcomes. By defining clear outcomes boards increase the effectiveness of accountability of those responsible for meeting these outcomes. This model seems particularly suitable for the multi-tiered authority structure presently adopted by the College/Centre and is far more effective in leading a growing organisation than a process of ratification and possible 'serial rubber-stamping'. Some further information regarding the operation of this model can be found in the attached seminar paper entitled *Role of the School Board*.

Regardless of the mode of operation adopted by the Centre/College comments from the Survey conducted as part of the wider review of the College indicate that there is a perception that the College lacks autonomy from the operations of the Centre. We believe that this perception can be addressed whilst still maintaining that the College operates as part of the ministry of the Centre and in accordance with its overall mission by restructuring the composition and role of the College Council.

As indicated above Rule 29 determines that the College Council consists of:

- The Senior Pastor (who is also the Chairman of the Council)
- The Associate Pastor
- The Principal
- At least four parents of students of the College who 'seem scripturally, educationally and naturally qualified' who it is assumed are appointed on the nomination of the Board of Directors of the Centre.

While accepting the desire of the Senior Pastor to exercise strong leadership over the direction of all the activities of the Centre we do not believe that this necessitates a direct involvement in the College Council. Where the Senior Pastor is chairman of both the Board of Directors and the College Council the appearance is given that he controls all aspects of the College's activity. By having the Senior Pastor as chairman of the Board of Directors, but not on the College Council there is a demonstration of some autonomy within prescribed guidelines. These guidelines should, in fact, give greater accountability. We recommend that greater flexibility be provided in relation to the involvement of pastoral staff. It may also be worthwhile providing the option for non-parent church members to play some role in the governance of the College. A revised College Council composition could be as follows:-

- Five church members who 'seem scripturally, educationally and naturally qualified' nominated by the Board of Directors (the Associate Pastor could be thus nominated)
- The Principal
- Three or four (see below) parents of students of the College who 'seem scripturally, educationally and naturally qualified'.

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The process of selection of the parents on the Council is a potentially contentious issue. There tends to be a strong parental expectation that this will be through some democratic process, and this is certainly one option. The existing process is a valid alternative model. It would seem wise, whatever model is adopted, to endeavour to ensure that the persons selected are representative of the parent body, including parents from churches other than Northside Christian Centre. If a democratic process is chosen we recommend that only three parents be elected to the Council to ensure that the nominees of the Board of Directors have a majority in the event of any significant problems arising. If the existing process is retained this is not as necessary and the current number of parents involved on the Council could be maintained.

The role of the College Council also needs to be reviewed to allow it to effectively govern the operations of the College without undue restrictions being placed upon it. In particular the process of ratification of Council decisions by the Board should cease with the Board developing policies that determine the boundaries for action by the College Council and allowing them to work within those boundaries.

Conclusion

Regardless of the organisational structures established the continued growth and development of the College will largely depend upon the relationships amongst those in the College community. The proposed structures and modes of operation attempt to assist in the development of mature and sustainable relationships where groups and individuals are provided with the freedom to exercise their God-given gifts within an environment of proper and effective accountability. The model proposed relies less upon the role of any individual in ensuring accountability than upon formalised and documented processes and policy. In so doing we are attempting to ensure that 'all righteousness' is not only done but is seem to be done.

The comments made in this review should not be seen as critical of a mode of operation that has seen the College come into existence and grow to its present size. Rather they should be seen as attempting to build upon the foundations that have been established to facilitate the further growth and development of God's kingdom through the College and the Centre.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Amend the Statement of Purposes and Rules of the Centre to remove references to the operations of the College.
2. Establish a set of by-laws under Rule 38 of the Rules of the Centre to govern the operations of the College
3. Adopt an approach to governance that: -
 - Defines the Board of Director's role in terms of providing over all direction and limitation policies for the Centre within which the College Council is free to operate without reference to the Board.
 - Provides that the College Council shall be responsible to the Board for the leadership and governance of the College
 - Defines the Principal's role in terms of leadership and administration with policies determined by the College Council.
4. Amend the composition of the College Council in the proposed by-laws to comprise:
 - Five church members nominated by the Board
 - The Principal
 - 3 or 4 parents of students either elected from the parents or nominated through the Board as meeting scriptural criteria and elected by the parent body