

Governance for Vision & Mission

Governance Conference | 25-27 June 2026
Pan Pacific, Melbourne

Godly Governance Conference 2026

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 Pan Pacific Hotel, Melbourne

The most critical responsibility of the board of a Christian school is to ensure it stays true to its Christ-centred vision and mission. It isn't always clear what vision and mission faithfulness looks like, or how a board might know if things are on track. It can feel like trying to see through walls, to the school's essence.

Stewarding this most important aspect of school life is based in a solid understanding of the Christian purposes and nature of the school, the implications and impact of the vision and mission, discernment of the Christian character of the school, and what core risk management practices should be in place. The 2026 Godly Governance Conference will explore these topics and equip boards more fully for their calling.

Speakers include:

- **Dr Darren Iselin**, Director of Research and Innovation, Christian Schools Australia
- **Dr David Loewen**, Executive Director, Society of Christian Schools British Columbia
- **Richard Vanderpyl**, Leadership Consultant (former principal who now specialises in 'special character' evaluation of Christian schools in NZ)
- **Simon Matthews**, Executive Director, Independent Schools Tasmania
- **Dr Ken Dickens**, Former CEN CEO / Principal of NICE
- **John Collier**, Interim Principal Covenant Christian School NSW
- **Sam Burrows**, Manager Biblical Foundations, Christian Education National

Program

Thursday 25 June

- 5:30pm ● Registrations Open
- 6:30pm ● **Conference Dinner**
Evolution of the School – Knowing the Floor from the Foundations
Dr Ken Dickens

Friday 26 June

- 8:30am ● **Welcome, Introductions & Prayer**
Andrew Goelst, CEN Board Chair
- 8:45am ● **Devotions**
Di Hooley, CEN SEO Tasmania
- 9:15am ● **What is a Vision and Mission?
The Importance of the Who and Why**
Simon Matthews, Executive Director, Independent Schools Tasmania
- 10:00am ● **A Risk Mindset and the Christian School**
Bel Ritchie, Manager Governance & Consulting Services
- 10:30am ● Morning Tea
- 11:00am ● **The Risk of Drift – Mission faithfulness Through Living Stories**
Dr Darren Iselin, Director of Research and Innovation, Christian Schools Australia
- 12:00pm ● **The Educational Creed in Practice – the way our Christian purposes and worldview shape curriculum, programs, policy and community**
Dr David Loewen, Executive Director, Society of Christian Schools British Columbia
- 1:00pm ● Lunch
- 2:00pm ● **What is an All Things Education – Participation in the Plan**
Sam Burrows, Manager Biblical Foundations
- 3:00pm ● Afternoon Tea
- 3:30pm ● **Mission Rekindled – Lessons from Reclaiming the Ground**
Dr John Collier – Interim Principal Covenant Christian School NSW
- 4:30pm ● End of day

Program

Saturday 27 June

- From 6:30am** ● Breakfast
- 9:00am** ● **Devotions**
Di Hooley, CEN SEO Tasmania
- 9:30am** ● **Lived not Laminated – the Special Character of the School**
Richard Vanderpyl, Leadership Consultant
- 10:30am** ● Morning Tea
- 11:00am** ● **Introducing the Governance Green Tick**
Lee Jones, Director Governapp
- 11:30am** ● **Vision and Mission Framework – Putting it into Practice**
*Simon Matthews,
Executive Director, Independent Schools Tasmania*
- 12:30pm** ● Lunch & Departure

Presenters



Dr Ken Dickens

Former Principal of NICE

Ken has been a teacher, principal, and lecturer. He was previously CEO of Christian Education National and principal of the National Institute for Christian Education. His doctoral studies focused on the relationship of theology, worldview, and culture as they impact the vision and practice of schooling. Ken lives in the Blue Mountains with his wife Jennie.

Ken and Charlie Justins authored the recently released CEN Publication '*All Things Education*'.



Diane Hooley

CEN State Executive Officer for Tasmania

Di Hooley is a seasoned and mission-driven educational leader with more than 20 years' experience spanning early childhood to senior secondary education in Australia and the UK. Deeply committed to Christ-centred education, she has served in a range of roles including Principal of Newstead Christian School (2018–2024) and has been the State Executive Officer for CEN in Tasmania since 2025.

Di's experience extends to advocacy with state and federal leaders, professional development facilitation, and fostering strong networks across the Christian education sector. Di has qualifications in education, divinity, and leadership, and is known for her relational depth, clear communication, and passion for helping educators integrate a biblical worldview into every aspect of teaching and learning.



Simon Matthews

Executive Director, Independent Schools Tasmania

Simon started his education career as an Early Childhood teacher and transitioned into school leadership roles in Government and Independent schools in Tasmania and Victoria.

In 2024, Simon was delighted to return to Tasmania to join the team at Independent Schools Tasmania, commencing as Executive Director in August 2025. Simon and his wife Veronica chose Christian education for their four sons and are now excited to see their grandchildren also benefitting from that opportunity.

Presenters



Bel Ritchie

CEN Manager of Governance and Consulting Services

Bel currently serves as the Manager of Governance and Consulting Services with Christian Education National, supporting school boards with training, resources, and advice to strengthen board function and effectiveness, and overseeing CEN's consultancy support offerings. Bel's educational and professional background has involved serving in leadership roles across various Christian, independent, Catholic, and government education sectors, building a strong foundation in policy development, cross-sector collaboration, and organisational change. Bel holds a Master of Business Administration and various governance qualifications. In addition to her (almost inexplicable) passion for risk and compliance, Bel is delighted to be married to John, and mum to three children who are at school at Covenant.



Dr Darren Iselin

CSA Director of Research & Innovation

Darren is a seasoned leader in Christian education with over 30 years of experience in both the Australian and international spheres. His extensive career spans multiple CEO, executive, principal, and senior leadership roles across K-12 schools and higher education. Currently, Darren serves as the Director of Research and Innovation with Christian Schools Australia (CSA) where he ideates, collaborates, and coordinates a diverse range of key national research projects, partnerships, publications strategic initiatives, and thought leadership across the sector.

Darren's academic credentials include doctoral studies at the University of Queensland where his PhD thesis "How Principals are Cultivating Sustainable School Cultures Within Christian Schools During Changing Times," received the esteemed Grassie-Basset prize for the best thesis in Educational Administration from the University of Queensland, as well as the Research in Educational Leadership Management Award from the Australian Council of Educational Leaders (ACEL).



Dr David Loewen

Executive Director of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia

Dave Loewen is the Executive Director of the Society of Christian Schools in British Columbia. Prior to that he served as a teacher, vice principal, principal, and Superintendent. Dave's PhD focused on Organizational Theory and Leadership Studies with research interests in communicative ethics. He holds adjunct faculty positions at both Trinity Western University and Alphacrucis University and serves as a mentor in Regent College's Master of Arts Degree in Leadership, Theology and Society. He is happily married to Sharlene and is a proud father of Chloe (married to David), Olivia, and Ilyah and a grandfather to Asher. Dave finds being the outdoors (hiking, climbing, swimming, paddle boarding, reading and napping) life-giving.

Presenters



Sam Burrows

CEN Manager of Biblical Foundations

Sam Burrows serves as Manager of Biblical Foundations for CEN, working alongside Christian educators across Australia to strengthen the theological and pedagogical life of our schools. His work is increasingly focused on how Christ shapes not only what we teach, but also how we understand knowledge, formation, and the world we live in. Sam previously worked as a lecturer at Laidlaw College in New Zealand, teaching theology and education papers. He completed his master's thesis in 2022, focusing on current spiritual trends in New Zealand and the wider West. Through this network, he hopes to see schools formed by a shared theological imagination - faithful to Scripture, attentive to history, and confident in Christ's claim over all things.



Dr John Collier

Interim Principal, Covenant Christian School

John describes himself as an "accidental principal," though he has led six schools over 37 years across government, Indigenous, immersive Christian, and Anglican contexts. He served for 12 years as Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School and St Andrew's Cathedral Gawura School and has held senior leadership roles including Chair of the Anglican Education Commission, Chair of AHISA (NSW/ACT), Chair of the Independent Sporting Association, and Chair of the International Baccalaureate Heads' Association (NSW/ACT). A Fellow of the Australian College of Educators and the Australian Council for Educational Leaders, John has received national recognition for educational leadership. His doctoral studies explored Christian education, leadership, and culture, with a focus on engaging 21st-century young people.

John has written extensively on Christian education and leadership, authoring four widely used books. After serving as Dean of Education at Morling College and Interim Principal of Shore, he commenced in 2026 as Interim Principal at Covenant Christian School, Belrose.



Richard Vanderpyl

Leadership Consultant

Richard Vanderpyl is a leadership consultant and former school principal with more than 34 years' experience in Christian education in New Zealand and internationally. He served as Principal of Middleton Grange School in Christchurch from 2010-2019, followed by Head of Christian Alliance International School in Hong Kong from 2019-2025.

Richard holds a Master of Education (Administration) with First Class Honours and is a Winston Churchill Fellow and New Zealand Government Scholar, researching high-performing schools in the USA, England and Wales. His work has informed educational improvement and leadership practice across the sector. A former Chair of the New Zealand Association for Christian Schools, Richard has led numerous national conferences for Christian teachers and leaders.

Richard is particularly passionate about student spiritual formation and about supporting schools in strengthening their Christian special character. A recent highlight for Richard is becoming an Opa!