

CEFPI Australasian Region

Report to the Executive and Regional Board re The International Conference in Nashville, USA

14-17 September, 2011

[A] International Board Meeting

The Board met twice on the morning of the 14th September. The first meeting was 'The Old Board' chaired by Don Gilmour and the second meeting was with 'The New Board', chaired by David Edwards. There was not much difference between the two. Judy Hoskens, the outgoing past Chair left the second meeting.

Issues Discussed of Relevance to us.

UK Chapter

Neil Logue, Chair of the new UK Chapter was introduced. He talked about the existence of a body he calls '*The Learning Centre*'. This is a loose association of people and expertise in the UK who are involved with school design. Apparently they have worked around the world, including Australia and New Zealand. This body is the foundation of the new UK Chapter. I do not think that there is a connection between this body and other UK bodies we know of, like Ty Goddard's organisation or PEB. Two other members of the group are:

Gareth Long. gareth@garethl.com

Alison Watson alison@classofyourown.com

Financial Affairs

The Head Office accounts for the year to July were tabled and a lively discussion was had about improving the financial position. Like other associations, CEFPI is doing it tough in the present financial climate and the new committee will be taking initiatives to improve the financial standing of Head Office. Despite this, membership has held up at around 3,500 and there is strong activity at Regional and Chapter levels.

Policy Changes

Resolutions were passed as to how policy changes are adopted by the International Board. If necessary, our Region could initiate debate for these.

Board Tenure

There was discussion about the eligibility for service on the International Board and Board tenure. Documentation will be coming to the Regions about this. Although our relationship is different from other Regions, we should still comply with the stipulations when selecting our representative in the future. Essentially, the person must be shown to have served CEFPI for a time and contributed to International Committees as well as being active in Chapters and Region.

Another change is that the chair will be elected from the Board of Directors and not a popular vote as previously.

Certification Programme

I presented an update of our work on this committee including the amount still to be done! The CEFPI Commission was formally enacted by changes to the By Laws and so our committee is now, 'The Commission'. We have the task of implementing the programme in the next 12 months. This will be some mountain to climb.

Partnership with NSSEA (National School Supply and Equipment Association)

CEFPI and this association are combining to present a symposium in San Antonio in November. This is a new initiative. It will be interesting to see how it works out in a few respects, especially financially. I am told that the smaller symposiums are quite successful and perhaps more so than the annual International Conference. This may be a future trend. We have talked about this too in relation to our ever-growing Regional Conference.

[B] Learning Tours

There were three tours organised this year. Tour 1 visited an Elementary School and a High School. Tour 2 went to an Elementary School, a High School, a Middle School and a school in a shopping mall. Tour 3 went to The Country Music Hall of Fame and cost \$25 !!

I took tour 2. We were lost twice and so had to cancel our visit to the Middle School. The other two schools were fairly regular and predictable American models. The school in the shopping mall at Hickory Hollow, however, was quite inspirational. This was a school for high school-age kids who drop out of the system for various reasons and are encouraged to come back and obtain credits for their final qualification. A small group of around 200 kids operates in a disused retail space in a local shopping mall. The mall was in need of a tenant when a department store moved out and the suggestion was made that a school could be a viable replacement. The mall manager told us that it worked very well. The students did not create trouble and indeed assisted her around the place, for example, with the hanging of the Christmas decorations.

The space would have been around 700-800 m². It was open planned with chest-height office partitions in places. There were 6 classes in operation doing various things. There was no acoustic issue as the carpet had been left on the floor. All the kids seemed to be on task. The teachers were exceptional with the encouragement and discipline they gave to the kids. It was a welcome relief from the traditional, in size and location, and it was successful. So, with little architecture and limited furniture it was a flexible learning environment with positive attitudes all around. (See www.academy.mnps.org).

[C] San Diego State University Certification Programme

I attended the seminar run by the University's Professor Cynthia Uline. Her certification programme has been developed in conjunction with CEFPI and utilized CEFPI members for course teaching. This is a comprehensive programme which covers all the areas of Education Facility Planning and is undertaken by practitioners of all ages. It surprised me that people who had been in practice for 35

to 40 years had done the course and were full of enthusiasm for the benefits of the course. Some had evangelistic zeal, claiming that it had changed their life around. I am aware of two Australians who are undertaking and course. Vincent Bok in Melbourne is also thrilled with the experience. It is an on-line, collaborative course which can be completed in two years. One benefit is the international flavour in that, with different ways of procurement in different places, the discussion on –line about this is enlightening for the students. It is a benefit rather than a distraction. I am keen that we encourage more Australians to undertake the course. It is a Graduate Certificate, units of which can be credited towards a Masters at some stage. The certificate will also give graduates a strong start for the CEFPI certification programme.

[D] School Awards

Australian schools were included in those submitted for Design Awards. St Michael’s Grammar School in St Kilda won a distinction award. The School for Autism in Victoria was also represented. The MacConnell Award was won by Marysville Getchell High School - a school in Marysville, Washington State, USA

[E] Opening Ceremony

The Opening Ceremony included the changeover of the Chair persons. Awards were also given, including the Chairman’s Award, The Planner of the Year Award and several Fellowship Awards

A video was shown of the Federal Education Secretary, Arne Duncan, telling all about the Obama plan to inject \$20 billion into schools. This is a parallel to our BER. What advice can we give!!!??

The UK Chapter people were welcomed and they had a spot on the platform to tell us what they were all about.

Following them was the guest speaker, Dr Peter Gevatt, Director of The Office of Childrens’ Health Protection. His talk was about the relationship between healthy kids and schools. School buildings have to be healthy for kids and that includes their location. Too many kids are obese because schools are located on the outskirts of town and kids have to bus it or be driven and are not walking as they used to. 58% of kids live over 2 miles from their school. He also pointed out that many kids go to school to eat! Because of their family income levels, they receive free or part-free breakfast and lunches. And schools as places are often better environments than their homes.

Out of 51m kids in school in the US, 31m are on free or assisted lunch and 11m on free or reduced breakfasts. 22m kids are technically living in poverty. Childhood obesity increased from 5% in 1972 to 16% in 2008 and 30% of kids are overweight. There are problems of Diabetes, Heart Conditions, Cancer and Asthma. The solution is a combination of exercise and good food.

With regard to energy efficiency, some schools are able to achieve 60% by smart operations but 35% is quite achievable with good design and operations.

[F] Trade Show

The trade show was as extensive as ever but it was located far from the CEFPI conference hall and foyer. This was far from ideal as we had to specifically walk a couple of hundred metres to get there

(a huge place, largest conference centre in the US which runs about 20 conferences at the one time). They had drinks and lunches there to encourage us to make the journey. It will be interesting to hear the feedback from the exhibitors about this.

[G] Sessions

2021 Classroom of the Future

Three rooms were set up to be classrooms of the future. Architects, interior designers, carpet vendors and technology people collaborated to create these exemplar spaces for us to view. Some had kids working in them. They were quite impressive in demonstrating what can be done with modern, flexible furniture and technology.

The Mayfield Project

Laura McKintosh ran the session and had done an enormous amount of preparation for up to 60 participants. She lugged a lot of material over the Pacific for this. In the end there were 14 attendees including 2 Australians. This was very depressing but not surprising. I recall that Mick Ross didn't have anyone turn up for his session last year in San Antonio. If it doesn't look really relevant, they won't come. Steve Harris had a far better attendance at his seminar. We should bear this in mind when thinking of future proposals.

Students Designing Schools of the Future

This was a great session all about project based learning by middle school kids designing a future school environment from recycled materials. It is run as a competition between schools whereby the kids have to present to a panel of adults. The finalist teams of kids and teachers then travel to Washington DC where they meet their congressman, look around the town and have a presentation to announce the winner. It is the sort of programme that we could undertake here and then submit our winner to participate in the US competition. I have some material on this which we can look at. It would be great to be able to sponsor a group of kids and a teacher to come over and be a part of this programme.

The Key Role Design and Furniture has in Enabling Teachers to change Pedagogy

Stephen Harris from Northern Beaches Christian School gave a great presentation to about 40 people. It was well received. I think it should have been a keynote. In many ways Australia is ahead of the pack in school design because I think we are more prepared to take risks with our designs where we can. Many of us know his already!!

[H] The Closing Session

The closing session took the form of an international expert panel chaired by Steve Bingler. I didn't think it worked and neither did a few others. There was too much preamble and not enough clear guidance for the formulation of questions. The panel were also confused. However, a couple of interesting things were said:

If we are talking about alternative designs for 21C schools, what about alternative designs for CEFPI Conferences? Could we not have them in a school? (Problems) and the Swedes asked me where all

the teachers were!! They suggested that in future CEFPI members who register a teacher to the conference should get a free pass themselves. We have the same problem – a lack of teachers, so we could think of innovative ways like his to encourage teachers to attend as well, bearing in mind their work commitment and holidays, etc.

The same things came up as did in the very first conference I attended in Baltimore in 1999. How are we going to change the system?? How do we get to a 21C school and what does it look like? Does it exist anywhere? Of the panel, our Stephen Harris acquitted himself very well. He should have been a keynote.

The conference venues are locked in for the next 3 years so any change is to be considered now.

Overall, I felt that the conference was a significant cut-down event in comparison to the conferences of a few years ago. Attendances, for example were down from the 600s to 350. Hence, there was a lack of buzz that previous conferences had had. A number of previous activities did not feature, like the conference dinner, inspirational speakers and closing keynote. This reflects the tight economic times in the US which is being felt by Head Office. I sense there is a desire to revamp the format of the conference, perhaps to locate it closer to real education, using technologies, etc. However with conference venues locked in for the next few years, this is hard to do.

[I] Next International Conference

The International Conference for 2012 will be in San Antonio from September 22 to 25. The theme will be **'Connect and Create'**. It would be good to send this information to our members and ask who would be prepared to present on this theme.

[J] Final Thought

As I was reading the Wall Street Journal for the 18th and 19th September in the Nashville Airport Admirals Club, I noticed a brief paragraph relating to US Schools. Here it is:

- *Tomorrow's work force isn't looking too fit for what jobs may come. SAT scores for the high-school graduating class of 2011 fell in all three subject areas, and the average reading and writing scores were the lowest ever recorded, according to data released on Wednesday. A report issued Monday showed that middle-class public schools, which educate most students, pay lower teacher salaries, have larger class sizes, spend less per pupil than low-income and wealthy schools and are underachieving.*

So there you have it.

Andrew Bunting

Australasian International Board Representative

21st. September, 2011