

## Why Buttimer?

An obvious and natural question for those living in the 'antipodes' is why attend a Buttimer programme. The question has merit and deserves an answer, given it is held in the United States, is very expensive, takes participants out of school for two weeks and there are excellent Lasallian courses conducted in our own back yard.

As a graduate of Buttimer, my answer to this question is

- It uniquely reminds participants that they are part of the International Lasallian family which is a rare opportunity for those coming from Australia and New Zealand. I engaged with people from all over the United States, Canada, Singapore, Pakistan, Africa and Ireland from a wide range of mission experiences.
- The course content and learning experiences are cutting edge. It is delivered by experts in their field of Lasallian studies with international recognition, including Br Jeff Calligan, Br Bill Mann and Br Tim Coldwell, to name but a few. It is rare to get together such a group of scholars.
- Holding it over a three year period is a 'stroke of genius'. It gives participants time to mature and grow as students over a sustained period of reflection between each year. It fosters and cements strong bonds of friendship with other Lasallians with an international perspective.
- It is rightly regarded as the premier option in Lasallian studies at the international level with no rivals apart from the CIL programme in Rome.
- It stamps New Zealand's presence on the international stage giving us voice and influence.
- It acts as a conduit between Brothers and lay partners to collaborate together in the learning process as well as praying and worshipping together.
- The Buttimer programme gives a 3-dimensional 360 degree view of De La Salle, the man and Saint, his extraordinary farsighted pedagogy and inspiring spirituality.

## Succession Planning

It is a truism that we all accept that the educational and religious landscape is rapidly changing, bringing both opportunities and risks. It is of paramount importance that we are responsive to it. Like climate change, it will be 'adapt or die', particularly in relation to the stewardship of the Lasallian charism in our schools.

- The Lasallian context in New Zealand is a case in point. We have gone from three Brothers' communities to one and within the next fifteen years may have none. The availability of DLS Brothers to lead the mission is diminishing every year. Lay partners will be increasingly called upon to step up to become the animators of the Lasallian charism, lead the mission and provide high quality professional development. Without well considered succession planning, the risks to the Lasallian charism and mission are real and not imagined.
- I wish to pay tribute here to Br (Sir) Patrick Lynch. He was the key driver behind New Zealand's engagement in Buttimer. He read the sign of the times and took a visionary approach in ensuring Buttimer was a core part of succession

planning for New Zealand. He has inspired our Australian colleagues to follow suit!

- Buttimer is a considerable financial, professional and personal investment. It's an honour and privilege to be selected for it. Not to put too fine a point on it, it does also carry significant responsibilities and obligations. It is a legitimate expectation that Buttimer graduates will be the key 'go to' people for their own school and our region who will inform, animate, organise and protect our Lasallian heritage. They will be supported by the principals, Boards and Brothers so we won't have to do it alone but we can't have 'shrinking violets' and backseat passengers when the stakes are so high.

**Patrick Walsh**

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