

Commission on Faith and Unity

The Commission's Mandate

Within the National Council of Churches in Australia the Commission on Faith and Unity has been given a mandate that is essential to the ecumenical endeavour. Its mandate requires the Commission to focus and reflect theologically on (i) the faith that unites us, (ii) the Gospel imperative to work towards unity, and (iii) the way in which our member (and other) churches can move towards greater visible unity in worship and common life in Christ.

This theological task is crucial. While it is important for the churches to work co-operatively and jointly in every possible aspect of the church's mission on the ecumenical journey, without the theological task being done together, the causes of disunity will not be addressed and the Body of Christ will remain divided. If the church is to be the church, the theological task is urgent.

The Covenanting Process

Three years ago, at the fifth National Forum of the NCCA, in Adelaide, a very significant step was taken when the Multi-dimensional Covenanting Document was endorsed, signed and celebrated. It was the product of eight years of reflection and consultation. It was a renewed expression of the commitment churches had made to one another through their membership of the NCCA, specifying that commitment in particular undertakings.

But the event in Adelaide, momentous though it was, was always understood to be part of a process that would continue. This Commission has played a motivating role in that process, and during the years since the last National Forum has sought to remind the churches of the consequences of the commitment made. The purpose of this role has recently been articulated in the WCC Assembly statement, "Called to be the One Church", in which each church is reminded of the call to 'mutual accountability'.

Therefore, through the NCCA Executive, the Commission has brought before the member Churches the need to be accountable to one another about the seriousness with which they are taking the commitment expressed to each other in the Covenanting Document. To this end, the Commission welcomes the special session on 'Covenanting' that is to be presented during this Forum. In particular, to assist the churches in their mutual accountability and to continue the process, the Commission has presented the following five questions:

1. What steps have been taken to educate the people in your church about the Covenanting Document?
2. What steps have been taken by your church to implement those dimensions of the Covenant signed by your church?
3. What targets have been set by your church for the implementation of the endorsed dimensions of the Document?
4. What dimensions of the Document are the most difficult for your church to implement?
5. How have relationships between your church and other churches developed since July 2004?

Bilateral Dialogues

Another role of the Commission in assisting the theological task is to facilitate the means by which those involved in bilateral dialogues in Australia can meet together and the product of their work collated.

Through a series of consultations, representatives of the many national bilateral dialogue groups have come together for mutual reporting and further reflection of their work. The fourth of these consultations has been planned as a pre-Forum event on Friday, 13th July offering another opportunity for this purpose to be achieved. As well as the reporting on the current work of the dialogue groups, two speakers will address the gathering: Monsignor Don Bolen from the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the Reverend Dr Robert Gribben, Professor of Liturgy and Mission, Uniting Church Theological College, Melbourne.

At the last consultation, in 2003, two requests were made to the Faith and Unity Commission. One was to produce a second volume of “Stages on the Way” to bring together the agreed documents that have come from the bilateral dialogues since 1994 (when the first volume was published). The other request was to prepare a glossary of terms commonly used in those documents and to include it in the proposed second volume. Another feature of the consultation on 13th July will be the launch of that volume. It is therefore very pleasing to report that the Commission has successfully responded to those requests and is now able to offer this new volume of documents and glossary as a resource to the churches for their ecumenical journey together.

Baptism

The signing of the Covenanting Document, in one of its dimensions, re-affirmed and extended the mutual recognition of Baptism that had been achieved between churches in Australia. The 2004 National Forum consequently raised questions about the implications of this recognition, especially regarding the use of the common Certificate of Baptism and the possibility of common ceremonies of Baptism and the preparation of guidelines for such services. These matters were referred to the Faith and Unity Commission.

❖ Common Certificate:

The original certificate had been prepared and produced by the Australian Consultation on Liturgy, and conversations resulted in ACOL expressing a willingness to hand over responsibility for the certificate to the NCCA, with the recommendation that there not be a ‘common’ certificate but that each church have its own certificate which contains the agreed common wording, with the list of the churches that have agreed to the mutual recognition of Baptism also listed on the certificate. This recommendation was adopted by the NCCA Executive.

Consequently, the member Churches are asked that appropriate steps be taken to ensure that all Certificates of Baptism

- contain the agreed common wording: “N. was baptised with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”; and
- contain the list of churches that have agreed to the mutual recognition of Baptism, expressed as follows: “The following churches have agreed that a certificate stating that a person ‘was baptised with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ is evidence of Christian Baptism: the Anglican Church of Australia, the Antiochian Orthodox Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Congregational Federation of Australia, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, the Lutheran Church of Australia, the Roman Catholic Church of Australia, the Romanian

Orthodox Church, the Uniting Church in Australia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia”.

The Presbyterian Church of Australia, not being a member Church of the NCCA, is not a signatory to the Covenanting Document, but was part of the earlier agreements about the mutual recognition of Baptism and therefore included on the common certificates produced at that time. It has now been confirmed by the Moderator-General that the name of his church may continue to be included on certificates of Baptism to indicate that mutual agreement.

❖ Guidelines:

In taking up this matter from the Forum, the Commission believed that two questions emerged: to what extent can we celebrate baptism together, and in what ways? how does our mutual recognition of baptism shape or inform the degree of unity that we share? The Commission therefore undertook to prepare the following:

- (i) a statement on the theology of baptism, especially the understanding of baptism as incorporation into Christ and its meaning for the whole life of the baptised;
- (ii) a summary of the international material currently being produced; and
- (iii) statements from members regarding their respective churches’ response to the question, “is there a way of celebrating baptism together, and if so, to what extent?”

That work has now been concluded. It has been brought together in a paper which is attached to this report as an addendum and offered to the churches both as a resource and as an example of the theological work being done by this Commission.

Ecclesiology

Over the last several years, the Commission has given significant time at its meetings to a discussion of several issues that relate to ecclesiology, such as Ministry, Ordination, and Authority. In part, the Commission has engaged in these discussions in the light of issues that have emerged from the consultations on bilateral dialogues, thereby placing those issues in a multilateral context. The discussions within the Commission have been extensive and wide-ranging, and now these discussions are being drawn to a close in a way that the Commission hopes will provide a resource to offer back to the churches and to their bilateral dialogue groups, especially those in which these issues are central to the dialogue. The resource will be available at the Forum and then placed on the NCCA website.

However, such issues will continue to be on the Commission’s agenda as it studies two recent texts from the World Council of Churches. One is the revised draft of the convergence document, “The Nature and Purpose of the Church” (Faith and Order Paper 198). The initial consideration of this booklet found it to be very carefully and beautifully written, and with great honesty, and the Commission has determined a process by which to study it in detail. The other text is the statement on unity that came from the Ninth Assembly of the WCC, “Called to be the One Church”. The Commission has noted the priority given in the statement to the visible unity of the church as the goal of the ecumenical endeavour, and the way in which the statement speaks of mutual encouragement, mutual responsibility and mutual accountability in the journey to unity. The Commission wishes to reflect on the meaning of those expressions, and strongly encourages the churches to discuss the statement and its questions together, especially with the dialogue groups.

Reception

The process by which the churches 'receive' agreed statements from bilateral dialogues and other agreed documents – an important example of which is the Covenanting Document – is a crucial matter in the entire ecumenical endeavour. For that reason, 'Reception' has been given a prominent place in the work of the Commission. Prior to the 2004 National Forum, a seminar was held and since then the Commission has continued to work on the understanding and practice of the 'reception' of ecumenical texts. This work has involved the presentation of papers, offering a theological reflection on the nature of reception, and case studies from the churches offering examples of the process.

This work has now been concluded, and the various papers and case studies are being prepared as another publication in time for the Forum to be offered also as a resource for the churches and placed on the NCCA website.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

In the period since the last National Forum, each year the Commission has worked closely with NATSIEC for the production of the resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This has been done because of the overlap or at least the close proximity between the WPCU (eight days leading to and concluding with Pentecost) and the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation (27th May – 3rd June). The basic resource for the WPCU is prepared internationally, through the WCC and the Vatican Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and is then adapted for local use. In Australia, that adaptation has essentially been the inclusion of reflections and prayers relating to Sorry Day and reconciliation in this country.

However, there has been discussion about whether it would be beneficial for the two observances if the WPCU was moved away from the Feast of Pentecost. Indeed, after such a discussion within the Commission, a recommendation was taken to the NCCA Executive that steps be taken to initiate a conversation amongst the churches on this matter. Ultimately, the Executive resolved to keep the present timing of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, noting the significance of Pentecost as a time of prayer for the church's unity. Consequently, again this year the WPCU resources were prepared in close consultation with NATSIEC.

The Commission is also aware – and wants it widely known and recognised in the churches – that 2008 will be the centenary of the first observance of an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity. It is hoped that the anticipation of that centenary year might be a stimulus to renewed interest in and stronger observance of this time of prayer for unity, and the Commission has expressed a willingness to participate in broader discussions and planning for that purpose.

Anthropology

Early in this last period, the Commission concluded the study it was doing on Anthropology. The end product consists of a collection of papers with an introduction, and it has been placed on the NCCA website, with copies being made available and circulated, including a copy to the WCC Faith and Order Commission, which has also concluded its own study on the same topic.

Membership of the Commission

❖ In Memory

In mid-2006, the Commission was deeply saddened by the death of the Reverend Dr Peter Cross. Peter had been a representative of the Roman Catholic Church on the Commission since the formation of the NCCA in 1994 and an observer on behalf of his church on the former ACC Faith and Order Commission since the early 1980s. He had also been a longstanding member of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Dialogue as well as of the comparatively new body, the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission. He was a pastor, scholar, teacher and faithful ecumenist. He is remembered as a friend and colleague, with gratitude and affection.

❖ In Appreciation

Other long serving members have moved, retired or concluded their term. From the Salvation Army, Major Jim Weymouth went to an appointment in Hong Kong in 2005 and Major Graham Roberts is now concluding his term. Late in 2006, the Reverend Peter Kriewaldt, who had represented the Lutheran Church since 1998, retired and he has been replaced by the Reverend Cecil Schalkuche.

The Reverend Dr Dorothy Lee (Uniting Church) and Dr Frances Baker rsm (Roman Catholic Church) were appointed in 2004, but both have indicated that they will not be continuing on the Commission.

The Reverend Dr Christiaan Mostert has served two terms as Chairperson of the Commission and he has indicated that he will not be available in that role in the new term of the Commission. Members have expressed their deep appreciation to him for his leadership, for the way he has kept the Commission focussed on the task, for his own dedication to it, and for the great scholarship he has brought to it.

❖ Attendance

At times it has been disappointing that meetings have not been well attended, and there has been concern at the lack of representation from some churches. Therefore, the Commission hopes that the member Churches, in nominating their representatives to the Commission, will have in mind appropriate people who are able and willing to attend meetings.

To indicate the situation by way of this report, the Commission asked that it contain a record of the extent to which each church that nominated members in 2004 has been represented. The following sets out the number of possible attendances (i.e. the number of meetings [6] times the number of members nominated) and the actual attendances:

Anglican	18	17	Coptic	6	1
Assyrian	6	1	Greek	6	0
Churches of Christ	6	6	Lutheran	6	5
Friends	6	5	Syrian	6	0
Roman Catholic	18	11	Uniting	18	11
Salvation Army	12	8			

❖ Personal

In concluding this report, I am aware that I first wrote a Commission report for a General Meeting of the Australian Council of Churches in 1986, and now this is to be my final one. I want to express my gratitude to the churches, to the Executive and to the General Secretary for the opportunity to serve the ecumenical endeavour in this way for so long. It has been a very great privilege to do so, to be part of the journey for these two decades and to witness the many special achievements that have been celebrated, most notably the formation of the NCCA and the signing of the Covenanting Document.

I pray that the work of the Faith and Unity Commission will continue creatively and challengingly in serving the churches in this crucial way as they seek to express more visibly the unity of the church.

Ray Williamson

Secretary

11 June 2007

ADDENDUM

Faith and Unity Commission of the NCCA Shared Baptism and Common Baptismal Rites.

1. Preamble

At the 2004 National Council of Churches (NCCA) Forum, the question was asked whether there might be a way of churches celebrating baptism together. This question was conveyed by the NCCA Executive to the Faith and Unity Commission for its consideration and response. The World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission articulated a challenge which is related to this question, namely that churches should visibly manifest their fellowship and could consider developing a common baptismal rite. This question and challenge are being articulated at a significant time in the life of the ecumenical movement, as the 25th anniversary of the publication *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)* will be celebrated in July, 2007.

The following is a summary of the Faith and Unity Commission's response to the question, "Is there a way of celebrating baptism together, and if so, to what extent?" It also responds in some measure to the challenge that a common baptismal rite be developed.

2. Papers considered by the Commission

2.1 The following were papers for background reading:

- i. Dorothy Lee: "Some Brief Notes on the New Testament Theology of Baptism";
- ii. Richard Treloar: A summary of relevant points from the WCC Faith and Order paper "One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition";
- iii. Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC: "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism (2005) - hereafter "JWG";
- iv. An extract from The Salvation Army International Spiritual life Commission (March, 1998).

2.2 The following were the papers which directly addressed the above question:

- i. Gerard Kelly: "A Roman Catholic Response";
- ii. Merryl Blair: "A Churches of Christ Response";
- iii. Stephen Fogarty: "An Assemblies of God Response";
- iv. Peter Kriewald: "A Lutheran Response".

2.3 Two verbal contributions were made:

- i. Graham Perry: "A Uniting Church Response";
- ii. Cathy Thomson: "An Anglican Church Response".

3. Introduction:

3.1 The contribution made by individuals on the Commission generally re-affirmed those basic principles underlying a shared understanding of the

meaning of baptism that were formalised in the BEM statement of 1982, that are rehearsed in the WCC Faith and Order paper “One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition,” and that are re-iterated in the Joint Working Group paper, “Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism.” These are that baptism means:

- i. incorporation into Christ and through Christ into the life of God the Trinity;
- ii. a new identity for the baptised person who is understood to be united with Christ in his death and resurrection;
- iii. incorporation into Christ’s Body the Church;
- iv. cleansing from sin;
- v. transfiguration and renewal (which encapsulate ethical imperatives and actions).

3.2 A few of the papers referred to the generally accepted principles that:

- i. baptism is about more than just the event. Thus the baptismal life consists of pattern/*ordo* of formation/catechesis, the baptismal event and the growth in the understanding of the faith and the life of discipleship. (JWG, WCC Faith & Order)
- ii. baptismal liturgies, essentially, should contain the elements of water rite and Trinitarian formula.

4. Helpful principles established by papers for background reading:

4.1 Dorothy Lee: “Some Brief Notes on the New Testament Theology of Baptism”.

- i. In presenting a New Testament theology of baptism, Dorothy Lee provided a comprehensive scriptural basis for the understanding of baptism expressed in BEM (as above).
- ii. Some distinctive elements in this paper were that the placing in the four gospels of the baptism of Jesus very close to the calling of the first disciples underlines the relationship between baptism and the establishment of the Christian community. (This in turn calls attention to the centrality of baptism for the life of the Christian community, and suggests the importance of continuing dialogue which develops new understanding).
- iii. This paper establishes that conversion (*metanoia*) and cleansing from sin prepare a person to enter into a new relationship with God, and commit them to an ongoing life of purification. (This paper explores the patristic Christological concept of recapitulation with respect to the transformation of the baptised person, but recognises that this also embraces the redemption of the history of humanity and of the cosmos).
- iv. The paper also reflects on the link between baptism, transfiguration and renewal, and suggests that these ultimately lead towards deification.

4.2 Richard Treloar: A summary of relevant points from the WCC Faith and Order paper “One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition”.

- i. This paper articulates the challenge to the churches to manifest visibly their fellowship.

- ii. It affirms elements of the BEM statement about baptism (as above), and accepts that recognition of another's baptism is contingent upon discernment of apostolicity within the rite used by them and the wider pattern of "baptismal life" displayed in their tradition. (It also suggests that consideration of the whole baptismal life is a better way forward towards mutual recognition than comparisons of water rites in isolation from their ecclesial contexts).
 - iii. This paper also expresses clearly the challenge to the churches to develop together a common baptismal rite (I.B14; V.C.82)
 - iv. However it also acknowledges the existence of considerations prior to the development of a common rite: ecclesial recognition; consistency in the theology, symbols and practice of baptism, (often absent when churches differ in their way of celebrating different stages of initiation such as admission to communion and confirmation); and a resolution to the issue of the "segmentation" of the rite in some churches which complicates the relationship between baptism and "full membership".
- 4.3 Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC: "Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism (2005)
- i. This paper recognises the growing ecumenical convergence on baptism as one of the great strengths of the modern ecumenical movement.
 - ii It attempts to establish some ecclesiological and ecumenical implications of a common understanding of baptism for the goal of unity.
 - iii. The ecumenical implications of the growing convergence are that agreements about baptism serve the development of agreements about wider ecumenical issues. (JWG, p.51)
 - iv. The ecclesiological implications are that questions are raised about the nature of the church and of the apostolic faith.
 - v. The paper points up some issues that require ongoing development. These are that the churches have different views of how their rite(s) of baptism relate to their understanding of "membership"; that the integrity of the rite with respect to its relationship with chrismation and confirmation requires further discussion; and that there remain divergent views with respect to whether baptism is a sacrament through which grace is actualised, or an ordinance of Christ offered in obedience to an actualisation of grace (effectively, incorporation into the body of Christ) which has already taken place.
 - vi. The paper also points up the issue of divergent practices within the accepted idea of a water rite, as well as that of differing understanding of what completes initiation in the various rites.
 - vii. The Joint Working Group recommends (clause 104) that churches send and receive ecumenical representatives when the rite of baptism is to be celebrated; that they pray regularly for the baptism candidates and the newly baptised of other church communities; that they consider sharing aspects of catechumenal and catechetical training; that they together reclaim major festivals such as Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany as common times of baptismal celebration.
 - viii. The recommendations envisage neither the development of a common baptismal rite nor the sharing of common celebrations of baptism.
- 4.4 An extract from The Salvation Army International Spiritual life Commission (March, 1998)

- i. Members of the Salvation Army affirm the truths that all who are in Christ are baptised into one body by the Holy Spirit, and that “there is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:5-6).
 - ii. The swearing in of a soldier of the Salvation Army beneath the Trinitarian sign of the army’s flag acknowledges these truths. Further, this is a public response and witness to a life-changing encounter with Christ which has already taken place, as is the water baptism practised by other Christians.
 - iii. The Salvation Army acknowledges that there are many worthy ways of publicly witnessing to having been baptised into Christ’s body by the Holy Spirit
 - iv. Baptism is linked to a life time of obedient faith in Christ.
5. Papers which directly addressed the question: “is there a way of celebrating baptism together, and if so, to what extent?”

5.1 Gerard Kelly: “A Roman Catholic Response”

- i. That there is a paradoxical reality in much ecumenical dialogue; that there is a “real but imperfect communion” between the churches
- ii. One of the basic principles of the Roman Catholic Church is that the sharing of spiritual activities must reflect this double fact, and not exceed its reality.
- iii. There is a concern in the Roman Catholic Church about the integrity of baptismal liturgical rites. (It is noted that it has never been deemed necessary, in order to display the full communion of the church, that baptism be celebrated in a single ceremony).
- iv. Unity in diversity is a sign of the catholicity of the church.
- v. This paper reiterates the recommendations of the Joint Working Group (above 3.3.vii) and does not exceed these recommendations (3.3.viii)

5.2 Meryll Blair: “A Churches of Christ Response”

- i. Baptism is the “dramatic portrayal of the candidate’s identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.”
- ii. It implies a renunciation of the old way of life and acceptance of the new
- iii. Only baptism by immersion can express this adequately
- iv. The Churches of Christ practice believer’s baptism rather than infant baptism, with personal repentance and declaration of faith in Christ being essential prerequisites
- v. Most Churches of Christ congregations accept baptised Christians into their fold, but some insist on re-baptising those who have been baptised as infants.
- vi. Most Australian Churches of Christ congregations would have no objection to a common celebration of baptism if it was “believer’s baptism” by full immersion.

5.3 Stephen Fogarty: “An Assemblies of God Response”

- i. Baptism is a symbol of a person’s identification with Christ, carried out in obedience to Christ’s command.

- ii. It is not regarded as a function of the church's right to confer a sacrament, or as a means of impartation of grace within the sacrament.
- iii. Believer's baptism usually under-girds participation in the life of the AOG community.
- iv. Re-baptism could be offered for someone baptised as an infant, though it is generally considered unnecessary for those baptised as adults.
- v. An AOG pastor would have no objection in principle to participation in a joint baptism celebration, if there was a strong, healthy relationship between the churches participating in the rite; if believer's baptism was practised, and if an evangelistic statement to the community were included in the rite.

5.4 Peter Kriewald: "A Lutheran Response"

- i. Lutheran Churches affirm the Christological and Trinitarian significance of baptism, and recognise that forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are derived from our being incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection.
- ii. The theology and practice of baptism has been agreed by the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches
- iii. Lutherans accept as valid those baptisms enacted in the church where the candidate is baptised with water in the name of the Triune God: Father, Son and Spirit
- iv. The mode of baptism (by sprinkling, pouring, immersion or submersion) is an open question for Lutherans.
- v. Baptism is always a believer's baptism, even for infants.
- vi. Infant baptism is supported by the Lutheran Church
- vii. Lutherans could only celebrate baptism together with other churches if visible unity based on the word and sacraments is assured. Therefore, even if Lutherans were in agreement with another church's understanding of baptism, a joint celebration would only be possible if there were unanimity also with respect to the gospel and the Lord's Supper.

6. Two verbal contributions were offered:

6.1 Graham Perry: A Uniting Church Response"

- i. UCA practice comes out of the conviction that unity is a given and is to be expressed, therefore joint action can be taken first, then reflected upon.
- ii. There would therefore be a readiness within the UCA to celebrate baptism with other churches.
- iii. An example was given of a baptism being celebrated jointly by UCA and Anglican congregations. The celebration took place on the beach with both clergy presiding, and the rite was then concluded in one of the churches. (The impetus for this came from the desire to minister to young people).

6.2 Cathy Thomson: "An Anglican Church Response"

- i. Anglicans would be open to a common celebration of baptism provided the bishop were satisfied that there was sufficient common doctrinal understanding of the parties concerned, and that the rite had integrity according to the principles enshrined in the Prayer Book and reflected in BEM.

- ii. There would have to be provision for the local Anglican community of faith to be present, satisfactory formation of the parents and godparents, and inclusion in the rite of a statement of the intention to ‘bring the baptised person for confirmation’ (that is, a commitment to a process of formation in the faith).
7. Conclusions of the Faith and Unity Commission with respect to shared baptismal rites:
- 7.1 The Commission acknowledges the challenge of the WCC Faith and Order Commission that the churches visibly manifest their fellowship in part by developing a common baptismal rite.
 - 7.2 The Commission notes that the paper of the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the WCC acknowledges the importance of the growing ecumenical convergence on baptism, but recognises that there are still areas of significant difference between churches with respect to baptismal understanding and ritual expression.
 - 7.3 The Commission supports the recommendations of the Joint Working Group as follows: that churches be encouraged to send and receive ecumenical representatives when the rite of baptism is to be celebrated; that they pray regularly for the baptism candidates and the newly baptised of other church communities; that they consider sharing aspects of catechumenal and catechetical training; that they together reclaim major festivals such as Easter, Pentecost and Epiphany as common times of baptismal celebration.
 - 7.4 The Commission suggests that the issues of a common baptismal rite and of common celebration of baptism be taken up in three ways:
 - i. that local church groups for whom common celebration seems an appropriate expression of their ecumenism be encouraged to take this matter to their own ecclesial authorities in order to better understand what is possible
 - ii. that, where churches have covenants in place which allow for a developed level of mutual recognition (ie Anglican/Lutheran Churches in Australia), their bi-lateral national groups be requested to explore the issue of common baptismal rites and joint celebration.
 - iii. that, where churches seem to have a shared understanding of how baptism is to be conducted (i.e. if there is some convergence around the form of the water rite, and the issues of believers/infant baptism, and of what constitutes “membership”), their bi-lateral national groups be asked to explore the issue of common baptismal rites and joint celebration.

Cathy Thomson
22.01.07

Gender Commission Report

This report is being written in April 2007 and in it we will present three perspectives of the life of the Gender Commission over the period 2004 – 2007: Our Present Situation, What Has Been Achieved and Our Future Vision.

Our Present Situation 2007

On February, 24th and 25th 2007, ten members of the Gender Commission gathered at Mount St Benedict's Conference Centre in Pennant Hills to review the work we have undertaken and to plan for the future. Jan Barnett, a Josephite Sister, facilitated our meeting, which ran from Friday evening until Saturday evening.

The first question we explored was, 'What is the sacredness of the place in which we find ourselves now?' Our major focus was to consider the outcomes of the fourteen *Audacity to Hope Workshops* which we have organised in all States and Territories of Australia during 2005 – 2007. The discussion and shared reflection of those 10 hours at Pennant Hills was both challenging and energising.

As we concluded our last session on Saturday we considered the question, 'To what is our journey calling us as we contemplate the future?'

On Saturday 5th May the Gender Commission will meet together to prepare for our participation in the National Forum, July 2007, and to formalise our future plans as a Commission.

What Has Been Achieved 2004 – 2007

Major achievements of the Gender Commission in the past triennium include initiating the 'Safe As Churches' concern, which has become its own separate working group, and in giving life to the Mandate which was accepted at the last Forum. This Mandate impels us to seek to embody Christ in the world, and to 'work to develop and promote effective inclusive models of Christian life.' Our achievements in this triennium, and our Recommendations for our future, reflect our Mandate.

The Gender Commission has met four times each year, normally 10am – 3pm on Saturdays. These meetings have included information sharing, reflections on our diverse religious traditions and simultaneous unity in Christ, and also organising at least one public event each year in order to engage with groups beyond the Commission and to enable its concerns to be voiced in an open forum.

These very significant events have included:

- ❖ November, 2004: 'Women's Interfaith Conversations – A Public Forum'. This event was held at the NCCA offices in Sydney. Four Muslim women spoke on their faith to a largely Christian audience of women and men, and we learned that true Islam does not condone inequality. Some Islamic countries still practice centuries-old patriarchal traditions which are cultural, not religious, or which are believed to be religious only

because there is a lack of education. Educated Muslims read the Quran with a different understanding.

- ❖ September, 2005: ‘Another Tourism is Possible – Supporting the Campaign Against Sex Tourism’. Speaker: Shirley Susan from the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, based in Hong Kong. This major event was held at NSW Parliament House. Shirley delivered a starkly compelling presentation on global tourism: ‘who benefits? and who doesn’t?’ and concluded with suggestions for a theological response which leads to action. ‘And what does God ask of us?’ she concluded. ‘To love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God.’
- ❖ September, 2006: at NSW Parliament House, ‘Many Voices Sharing a Common Hope’ (Interfaith Dialogue). A panel of women from different faiths – Judaism, Hinduism Baha’i, and Christian - spoke with sincerity and passion about what it’s like being a woman within their own faith tradition.

Much of our time and energy in 2005-07 has also been committed to the organisation and presentation of the Ecumenical Workshop, *The Audacity to Hope – Women Dreaming Together of a Future Church*. A Glenburnie Foundation Grant (\$6,000) obtained in November 2005 enabled us to work with all the state and territory Councils of Churches to contact grassroots ecumenical groups. Through these fourteen Workshop days, which involved some three hundred people, we have been able to make the Gender Commission take on a truly national reality even though our Commission membership is at present mainly Sydney based.

Audacity To Hope Workshop Programme	
June 05	Workshop piloted in Newcastle
2005	Further pilots in Gosford, Lismore, and Casino NSW
<i>Glenburnie funding received (\$6,000)</i>	
6 th May 06	Canberra National Catholic University
13 th May 06	Sydney at St Scholastica’s Conference Centre in Glebe
27 th May 06	Ballarat, Victoria
10 th June 06	Adelaide. Organised by Geraldine Hawkes, South Australian Council of Churches
29 th July 06	Hobart at the Salvation Army Centre. Organised by Jenny Rodham, Tasmanian Council of Churches
26 th August 06	<i>The scheduled Brisbane workshop unfortunately had to be cancelled</i>
28 th October 06	Werribee. Organised by Maureen Postma, Victorian Council of Churches, and Eileen Grichting
25 th /26 th November 06	Bunbury and Perth. Organised by Eira Clapton, Council of Churches of Western Australia
22 nd February 07	Melbourne at St John’s Lutheran Church. Organised by Eileen Grichting
24 th March 07	Darwin at the Uniting Church. Organised by Kath Fraser, Northern Territory Council of Churches

More information about the Gender Commission and our work is available on the NCCA webpage at http://ncca.org.au/departments/gender_commission. Reviewing our Web presence and message has also been a focus as we reach out to the world.

Our Future – Our Vision 2007 and Beyond

The Gender Commission has been greatly enriched and energised through its grassroots engagement with state and territory ecumenical groups all around Australia. The concerns, hopes and dreams of these committed people have been gathered and recorded. Their commitment to action, networking and ongoing dialogue emerged strongly over and over again. All of which has pointed us in the direction of ongoing engagement as a strategic necessity.

So, in answer to the question posed to us at our last meeting, ‘To what is our journey calling us as we contemplate the future?’ our response is clear. We are committed to giving the time and energy to continuing this engagement with the grassroots and we are committed to finding the necessary resources to enable this journey to continue.

Our goal as the NCCA Gender Commission is *transformative change* – to enable us to be Christ in our world, fully and together, and to work through truth for reconciliation.

Alicia Simpfendorfer and Bernice Moore
Co-Convenors.

Social Justice Network Report

According to its Objectives (Constitution, Article 4), the NCCA is committed:

- (b) to encourage and enable the member Churches in the light of the Gospel to give prophetic leadership to each other and to the community by
 - i) developing a deeper understanding of evangelism/evangelisation in Australia's cultural context;
 - ii) addressing moral issues;
 - iii) speaking out on behalf of oppressed people;
 - iv) acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people;
 - v) responding to human need and acting on issues of justice, peace and creation.

The work of the Social Justice Network is to assist the churches in carrying out these objects, especially in relation to issues of social justice. To this end it is mandated to

- to provide a means by which member Churches inform each other of work done, work under way and work in prospect, and help each other to a deeper understanding of the methodologies they use in seeking to explicate the implications of the gospel for the concern for social justice in Australia;
- to facilitate co-operation between the churches, and where appropriate their joint action, as they seek to give prophetic leadership to each other and the Australian community through their commitment to promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation;
- to advise the NCCA on actions which might appropriately be taken by the Council and/or severally by the member Churches?

The Network is not a full Commission of the NCCA, which means its place in the structure of the NCCA is a little looser and less connected than that of full Commissions.

Context

In recent years changes have become apparent in the climate for social justice in Australia. From a Christian point of view, it might be suggested that in many ways our society is moving away from a concept of 'life together' and towards greater individualism, away from interdependence and diversity, and towards independent, economic survival of individuals and nuclear families. There is a danger that for Australia 'life together' will be expressed in an increasingly economically segmented society, rather than expressed in building a cohesive society, build on a commitment to acceptance, inclusion and community.

We have seen the increasing adoption of 'Public Choice' theory in policy making and the making of legislation. Examples include the 'Welfare to Work' legislation, especially the entitlements of single parents and people with disabilities; and what was formerly called the 'Work Choices' legislation. Many groups have also been concerned about official developments in the 'war on terror' and the resulting body of legislation that could undermine human rights in this country and elsewhere.

A democratic, just and human society must protect the basic human rights of the most vulnerable people. Australia has ratified a number of human rights conventions that guarantee certain civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. These rights are regarded as universal (apply to everyone), indivisible (we may not choose to grant some rights and neglect others) and inalienable (we do not have the right to take away any human rights). A successful democracy requires public scrutiny by which the electorate can hold governments accountable for their actions, including and especially the protection of these rights. Currently there is a troubling trend towards foreshortened debates, overly quick inquiries, and the making of major decisions without adequate checks and balances. A side effect of 'Public Choice' theory has also been the attempt to 'de-legitimise' the voices of non government organisations, including churches, thus ruling them out of public debate.

Indigenous life expectancy, health, education, and employment continue to be below that of other Australians. This has been exacerbated by the demise of ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) leaving Indigenous people without an adequate voice to the Australian government. The basic human rights of Indigenous people continue to be breached.

Environmental issues have come to the fore, particularly global warming, the management of water systems such as the Murray-Darling, and our inefficient use of water and energy. Sustainability has become a key concept that is honoured more in the breach than the observance. It would take several planets to sustain a world population at the current levels of consumption of food, water, energy, and goods, and the accompanying waste production, of the average Australian. Our ecological "footprint" is far too big.

Further issues about Australia arise when we consider our national responsibilities as a global citizen, in relation to human rights, military operations and so on.

In terms of the Christian community, the past three years has seen the growth in a number of comparatively new voices claiming to represent the Christian view in Australian society – for example the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) and the Centre for an Ethical Society (CES). ACL largely represents the Pentecostal viewpoint; the CES is an independent think tank about social justice from a Christian viewpoint. These new voices make it all the more important that the NCCA be heard in the public arena to balance perceptions of what might form the 'Christian' view.

Response by the SJN

The SJN has a minimal budget of only \$1000 per annum. This amount is grossly inadequate for the task placed before the group and does not allow for active staff support. Nevertheless over the last years the SJN has undertaken the following projects.

2004		
<p><i>Security at all costs: a Christian reflection on where to draw the line</i> Social Justice Sunday resource funded by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Catholic Church ❖ Uniting Church (including project manager/editor) ❖ Anglican Church ❖ Glenburnie Board <p>First Social Justice Sunday resource issued in name of NCCA</p>	<p>Print and website. Glenburnie grant allowed copies to be provided to churches who have not previously observed Social Justice Sunday</p>	<p>Includes statement by NCCA Theological reflections Worship resources Information and critical analysis Suggestions for action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Contribution to Decade to Overcome Violence – Mercy, Community, Justice and Truth themes ❖ Ideological critique – “security” ❖ 7 levels of violence and security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal (clothes) ○ Family (consumption) ○ Communal (law and order) ○ Environmental (houses) ○ Religious (reasons for faith) ○ National (asylum seekers) ○ International (weapons in space)
<p>Pre-election briefing kit – contributions from relevant NCCA units and from Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Church agencies</p>	<p>Website</p>	<p>Built on previous NCCA public statements and provides information, analysis and reflection on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ International order ❖ International debt ❖ Refugees and asylum seekers ❖ Community harmony ❖ Indigenous Australia ❖ Environment ❖ Poverty ❖ Unemployment ❖ Housing

2005		
<p>Industrial Relations briefing paper for June Executive meeting (Executive also invited Sharon Burrow, President of ACTU to address them)</p>	<p>Website</p>	<p>Used NCCA 1999 <i>A covenant for employment</i> as framework to critique Australian government proposals on Industrial Relations Ideological reflection on industrial relations. The NCCA Executive decided to wait until the legislation was released before issuing a statement. The legislation was released on 2 November, with the final date for submissions to the parliamentary inquiry being 11 November and hearings held in week beginning 14 November. This meant that there was no time to develop an NCCA response.</p>

2005 continued...

<p>After the tsunami: building justice and peace Social Justice Sunday resource prepared by NCCA departments. Uniting Church project manager/editor. Funding: ❖ Anglican ❖ Uniting</p>	<p>Print and website</p>	<p>Includes statement by NCCA Theological reflections, Worship resources Information and critical analysis Suggestions for action Disaster is looked at in terms of ❖ Uprooted people ❖ People trafficking ❖ Conflict ❖ Debt ❖ Australian aid Ideological reflection on disaster relief</p>
<p>SJN represented at meeting of NCCA with Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) regarding industrial relations legislation</p>	<p>Meeting.</p>	
<p>Changing climate – changing creation Brochure jointly published by NCCA, Catholic Earthcare, Uniting Justice and Australian Conservation Foundation</p>	<p>Print and website</p>	<p>Builds on the NCCA executive statement of 2003. Alerts church members that climate change is a Christian concern</p>

2006

<p>Summaries prepared on behalf of SJN of church agency contributions to parliamentary inquiries (late 2005) into Workchoices, Welfare to Work and Anti-Terrorism legislation</p>	<p>Summary of Welfare to Work submissions on website.</p>	
<p>Upgrading of website to provide NCCA and some member Church statements and resources – used budget to do this</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ NCCA statements ❖ SJN resources ❖ Issues (member Churches can notify links to their material about each issue) ❖ Member Church links ❖ Ecumenical links <p>Needs further updating and more links</p>

2006 continued...

<p>Make Indigenous Poverty History Social Justice Sunday resource prepared by NATSIEC. Funded by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Anglican? ❖ Catholic ❖ Uniting ❖ NATSIEC ❖ Sales of CD 	<p>Available on CD. Social Justice Sunday liturgical and theological resources available on website.</p>	<p>Includes statement by NCCA Theological reflections Worship resources Information and critical analysis Suggestions for action Relates the Millennium Development Goals to the situation of Australia's Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Material prepared as a general education resource with some add-ins for Social Justice Sunday.</p>
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2007 Work in progress

<p>Island nation: Australia's role as a global citizen (title not finalized) Social Justice Sunday resource Funded by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Anglican (including project manager) ❖ Catholic ❖ Uniting 	<p>Not yet available. Will be print and website Website will have additional resources</p>	<p>Will include statement by NCCA Theological reflections Worship resources Information and critical analysis Suggestions for action Areas to be covered are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Role of the Nation State in a Globalised World ❖ Australia and Human Rights ❖ Australia and Economic Justice ❖ Australia and the World's Environment ❖ Australia at War and Peace <p>This resource is still being written and edited. Information here is indicative only.</p>
<p>Pre-election briefings John Henderson as project manager</p>	<p>Web resources will be developed</p>	<p>Will be based on work of the NCCA, drawing on past statements updated to reflect current policy concerns. Proposed issues include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Indigenous health and other Indigenous issues; Make Indigenous Poverty History ❖ Responsibility to protect ❖ Aid, trade, debt – Make Poverty History ❖ Overcoming Violence ❖ Democracy ❖ Race ❖ People of other faiths ❖ Climate change and environment ❖ Australia as a global citizen ❖ Security ❖ Industrial relations ❖ Welfare to Work ❖ Poverty ❖ Security

The past three years have seen significant cooperation between the NCCA and some wider coalitions. It is a participating body in the Australian Collaboration, which is commissioning some excellent research and publications on significant policy issues and conducting an audit of Australian democracy. Together with some member Churches it has participated in the Civil Society Dialogue in 2006. A second forum is being planned for this year. The NCCA also cooperated with the Australian Conservation Foundation in the publication of a brochure on climate change.

Theological reflections

The SJN's various publications offer significant biblical and theological reflections on the importance of social justice and peace as fundamental aspects of Christian faith and discipleship. The God of the Bible, the God of the prophets, the God revealed in Jesus Christ, the God who works in the world as the Holy Spirit, is a God of peace and justice. God cares about human life, and about all life on this planet. Our Trinitarian God is intimately involved in overcoming evil and transforming human beings and human communities. The whole biosphere depends on the life and healing that God's presence brings.

Through God, new life, new relationships, healing of conflicts and reconciliation between peoples become possible. Jesus Christ is the life of the world, the head of all creation, the Saviour of the world, not of just a select few individuals. The Holy Spirit renews and transforms life and calls human beings to transform the world. Poverty, injustice and war are not God's way. God's reign sees a world without poverty, war, racism, chauvinism and other forms of violence and injustice.

In the light of this Kingdom Churches cannot remain silent about poverty, injustice, and violence. We speak publicly about our understanding of God's will for the world, and let it form the basis for our action for change, as well as shaping our worship, prayers, and pastoral work.

The work of the NCCA's Social Justice Network is essentially a form of 'public theology'. Public theology is not practiced at the academy, or among priests, but in the public space as a contribution to wisdom, life and society. Its audience is the public – Christians in their everyday lives, and others whom Christians want to influence. Apart from theology, it is involved with a range of disciplines such as law, economics, public policy, and sociology.

The recognition of public theology is valuable, not only because it empowers people to act justly, but also it shapes our thinking on social justice issues. Through it churches can see that materials that use very little religious language can nevertheless be profoundly Christian in their meaning and impact.

The SJN hopes that its documents and resources are a worthwhile contribution to Australian public theology. There remains the question of what use the churches individually, and the NCCA as the churches together, make of these materials. Will the member Churches use them as a means of making the Christian voice on issues known in our own congregations? Will the member Churches be willing for this material to be used more explicitly in the public arena?

Future directions

The voice of the NCCA has been comparatively muted on many major issues in Australian society. To some extent this is due to the diversity of views among member Churches, but it can also be due to a structure and resources which limit our ability to respond quickly and remain consultative. This can mean that we lose our voice to other groups who are not as accountable but who claim to speak in the name of Christianity.

The question is: will public comment on social justice issues come from the NCCA as a unified voice, drawing on the rich and profound traditions of the member Churches and the ecumenical movement, or will it come from elsewhere? Other organizations which claim the name 'Christian' are much more ready to fund public advocacy and make it a priority. How will the NCCA make sure its voice is heard?

The NCCA might usefully give some thought to the barriers that prevent it speaking more clearly, more confidently, more appropriately and more often on the significant issues that face our life together as Australia. We here suggest two matters that could be given some attention in the next three years. The first is the nature of public theology, which has been outlined above. The second is the theology of church and state.

Most theologies of church and state are inadequate for our life together as Australians because they date from other times and places, relying on earlier concepts of the state that no longer apply. In this area of theology, if no other, theology must be updated to reflect the realities. The NCCA is unlikely to make the fullest possible use of the potential of the Social Justice Network and public theology until and unless it does some substantial work on the appropriate form of church-state interactions in Australia as a robust democracy, in an era of the nation-state, internationally recognized human rights and other international law.

To this end, closer cooperation between the NCCA's Social Justice Network the Faith and Unity Commission may be helpful.

Issues for discussion and reflection

- ❖ What are the key social justice issues (including environment and peace) that the NCCA should address through the Social Justice Network in the next three years?
- ❖ Are you comfortable with the materials provided by the SJN, and how can we better understand your tradition so as to better incorporate its wisdom into our work?
- ❖ Do you agree that ecumenical work exploring the nature of public theology and an updated theology of church and state for the Australian context would be helpful?
- ❖ How should the NCCA make its views on social justice known to the public and to decision makers over the next three years?
- ❖ How will your church contribute to the work of the Social Justice Network over the next three years?

(Rev. Dr.) Ann Wansbrough
Chairperson.

Youth Network Report

Past Achievements, Future Possibilities

Introduction:

This report is to present the past achievements and future possibilities for the NCCA Youth Network. Since the 2004 Forum in Adelaide, the Youth Network has been busy and has been able to achieve much. More over, the future of the Network is exciting and has generated significant amounts of interest and support from the NCCA community.

Recent Achievements

Since the 2004 Forum, the Youth Network has either solely organized or has partnered with other Youth organizations to facilitate the following ecumenical activities:

❖ Youth Ministry Expo: 3rd July 2004

The Youth Network worked with the Australian Network of Diocesan Youth Ministry Coordinators – ANDYMC (Roman Catholic) to develop and host a “Youth Expo”. The “Youth Expo” aimed to bring together youth ministers/pastors/workers/professionals and youth for the sharing of resources, ideas and stories. The plenary, with guest lecturer- Dr. Charlotte McCorquodale, was very well received, and the workshops and expo tables were a success. The expo was held in Waitara, Sydney. More than 30 delegates attended the Expo.

❖ Mary Mary: 24th -27th September 2004

The Youth Network joined the Gender Commission in hosting a gathering of Young Christian Women held in Melbourne. This gathering aimed at bringing together young Christian women, from many different traditions, for the purpose of dialogue, sharing and ecumenical leadership formation. Funding was sought from the CCA to sponsor young rural women to attend the gathering- thus making the gathering more accessible and inclusive. The weekend was a great success with 22 women from around Australia attending.

❖ Youth Website: March 2005

In 2005, a project was undertaken to incorporate into the existing NCCA website, a collection of youth resources created by young people on topics under the heading of Ecumenical Youth. These resources included writing articles, drawings and other creative pieces. The Youth Network section of the website also hosts general information about the youth network and promotes some of the major national youth events.

❖ Blackstump Youth Festival Interviews: October 2005

The Black Stump festival in NSW provided an opportunity for a small film crew led by the some of the Network members, to explore the thoughts young people have about church in the future. This event was a success, with many young people engaging with the interviewing team and questioning deeply their thoughts and dreams of the future and the church. We will create a short film that will be available on our website as a resource to encourage ecumenical passion in young people today. Delays in posting on the website have been experienced due to incorporation issues with the current NCCA website.

❖ Exposure: Living at the Margins: 10th -14th July 2005

The Youth Network joined with the Australian Student Christian Movement for the ASCM National Conference. The Network helped organise a 5-day event in Sydney to give participants an opportunity to spend time in a marginalised community. It was called “EXPOSURE: living @ the margins”, and it was a great success with 35 delegates from across Australia and New Zealand. Delegates spent their first night in an inner city hostel then and spent the next day in a different community who face marginalization in different ways. Delegates were exposed to such communities as Villawood Detention Centre (asylum seekers), Cabramatta (recent and mostly Asian migrants), Redfern (Aboriginal people), Loaves & Fishes Restaurant (homeless people), Minto (public housing tenants). Following their exposures, delegates then went to The Tops Conference Centre (Stanwell Tops) for the remainder of their time to debrief on their experiences and engage in bible study, prayer pertaining to issues of the marginalized.

2006: A New Direction

Despite the success of previous Youth Ministry initiatives, Youth Network members were unanimous in their desire to raise the profile of the Network and provide a service which benefits youth ministry in regions other than in major metropolitan areas. A clarification of the Network’s intent was needed for the benefit of both the Network members and those the Network was attempting to serve. Greater clarification of the Network’s intent would also generate more purpose in the Network and hopefully greater impact in their ecumenical youth relationships and activities.

In early 2006, the Youth Network embarked on a journey to (re)define itself as a national resource for ecumenical Youth Ministry. Resulting from this exercise the Youth Network now exists to fulfil the following:

Vision Statement

The vision for the NCCA Youth Network is:

For the Youth Network to be widely recognized in the Christian community as being a truly national, truly unifying and truly empowering resource for the benefit all people involved in youth ministry.

Mission Statement

The Youth Network seeks to become the central and primary information hub for all youth related events, programs and training that are ecumenical* in nature across Australia.

The Youth Network defines ‘ecumenical’ events, programs and activities as those that are:

- ❖ Interdenominational
- ❖ Denominational which welcome other denominational/movement participants.
- ❖ Non-denominational

Operational Intent

The operational intent of the Youth Network is to encourage denominations to work together by sharing youth ministry information and resources.

The Youth Network will be comprised of representatives from, but not limited to, each of the member Churches and movements of the NCCA. Each of the Youth Network members shall be a national youth representative for their respective denomination. Each Network member will utilize existing or create new youth networks within their denomination so as to receive information from these networks regarding the planned youth activities for their denomination, whether it is at national or local level.

The Youth Network member will then pass this information onto the NCCA who will then promote these activities within the NCCA and wider Christian community. This youth activity information will be centrally located on the NCCA youth website and distributed to youth leaders in a regular electronic newsletter.

What The Network Will Do:

In the progressive fulfilment of the Network's vision, the youth network will:

1. Host a central youth ministry website:

1.1 This website will compile and present relevant information relating to youth ministry activities and resources from across Australia from all NCCA member Churches and movements. To promote unity in the wider church, NCCA non-member youth ministry activities will also be able to be promoted through the network on this website.

1.2 Information posted on the website and e-letter is for those activities that other denominations are welcome to participate in even though they are hosted by a particular church or denomination.

1.3 This information will be arranged based on geographical region so that users can identify the resources available in their "local" area.

1.4 This information will include, but not limited to, the following categories:

- ❖ Youth Programs
- ❖ Youth Events
- ❖ Youth Training
- ❖ Youth Speakers
- ❖ Youth Ministry Jobs

1.5 The Network will not be responsible for hosting or coordinating these promoted events but will simply provide information so any interested party can make contact with the appropriate activity/resource representative.

2. Distribute A Regular Youth E-letter

A regular E-letter will be sent out from the NCCA Ecumenical Youth Officer (EYO) to regional youth leaders and local church youth leader subscribers advising of upcoming youth activities in their geographical area based on the information compiled on the website. This E-letter will be distributed to subscribers bi-monthly and will be customised to each subscriber according to their geographical area.

3. Provide Additional Youth Event Support

The Youth Network may also provide additional assistance to specific youth ministry activities being organized by NCCA member Churches.

What Each Network Member Shall Do:

To fulfil this intent and produce the above mentioned outputs, the responsibilities and expectations of each Youth Network member are:

1. To embrace their role on the network as a '*national information coordinator*' for their respective denomination/movement. That is, each network member is to become a central information point for youth ministry activities for their denomination. (The Youth Network member may be a regional information coordinator if multiple regional representatives are provided for the network by a specific denomination).
2. Utilise existing, or create new, youth networks with national, state, territory, diocesan or regional youth representatives from within the network member's denomination for the purpose of:
 - ❖ The network member receiving information relating to local and regional youth ministry activities and resources from across Australia that could be promoted throughout the wider church.
 - ❖ The network member promoting ecumenism through communicating how information sharing amongst denominations can benefit local youth ministries and the wider church. For youth ministry, the benefit is in an expansion of the resources and support available to local youth leaders and for the wider church, the benefit is in a growing sense of Unity.
3. Forward received Youth Ministry information onto the NCCA Ecumenical Youth Officer (EYO) for posting on the NCCA Youth Network website.
4. Be active in promoting the ecumenical work and intent of the Youth Network, and the member's role in it, within their denomination. This may include, but not limited to, promotion within denominational publications or communications, existing or future denominational youth networks, speaking opportunities, personal contact with youth leaders.
5. Be prepared to work together with other Christian denominations and movements for the glory of God and the support of youth ministry across Australia.
6. Attend regular Youth Network meetings.
7. Provide additional assistance or NCCA Youth Network representation, when needed, at specific youth activities.
8. Work with the Network member's denominational body to find suitable replacements if the member is retiring from the Network.

The Ecumenical Youth Officer's Activities in 2006:

The primary activities of the EYO and the Youth Network, in 2006 have been:

- ❖ Development of Network's vision, which includes production of documents to clarify and promote the Network's intent both within the Network and to each of the NCCA member Churches.

- ❖ To personally meet with as many of the church heads of the NCCA as possible to promote the Network's vision and to seek support for the vision, including philosophical and financial support. This also includes general communication with the NCCA Executive.
- ❖ Development of a youth leader contact list for NCCA member's for each state, region and diocese across Australia and have subsequently advised these representatives of the Network's vision and future support of their youth ministry endeavours. Contact details for over 150 national, state and diocesan/regional youth leaders have currently been compiled.
- ❖ Development of a functional description for the proposed new youth website and e-letter.
- ❖ Maintaining contact with current youth network members regarding progress towards the vision and coordinating quarterly youth network meetings. Hosting youth Network meetings.
- ❖ Maintenance of the Youth Network section of NCCA website.

The Ecumenical Officer's Future Activities:

To realise the vision of the Youth Network in the short and medium term, the EYO will be required to:

- ❖ Secure additional funding to support the development of the new website and e-letter.
- ❖ Work with NCCA website "super users" to develop suitable communications options which both support the vision of the Youth Network and which are consistent with the wider NCCA communication objectives and methods.
- ❖ Project manage the development and implementation of the new website and e-letter.
- ❖ Develop and encourage Network member's own denominational networks to receive information to post on the youth website.
- ❖ Manage the information received from youth network members and post it on the website. The EYO may need to do this personally, or supervise others in this process. The EYO is required to be the primary editor to evaluate the received information for ecumenical content and suitability.
- ❖ Manage the subscribers the bi-monthly e-letter to ensure they receive their desired and specifically related form of the e-letter.
- ❖ Secure youth network representatives from those member Churches that currently do not have representation.
- ❖ Establish & develop networks with NCCA non-members to encourage promotion of their youth ministry activities on the Youth Network website.

Current Status of the network:

The network currently has representation from:

- ❖ Anglican Church – Sue Sneddon
- ❖ Uniting Church – Nicole Fleming
- ❖ Religious Society of Friends – Tom Dundas
- ❖ Churches of Christ – Brook Stewart
- ❖ ASCM – Bronislava Lee
- ❖ Lutheran Church – Dion Jaeschke

NCCA Members Currently Without Representation

- Antiochian Orthodox
- Armenian Apostolic
- Assyrian Church of the East
- Congregational Federation
- Coptic Orthodox
- Greek Orthodox
- Roman Catholic Church
- Romanian Orthodox
- Salvation Army
- Syrian Orthodox

Conclusion

In closing, the current vision of the Youth Network is compelling and has been widely received as something which could be of real benefit to both ecumenism and youth ministry in Australia. Building upon a foundation of impact, the future of the Network will be assured with adequate levels of funding for the project and for ongoing support of the Network.

Troy Blair

Ecumenical Youth officer

National Council of Churches

8th March 2007

Communications Desk

The NCCA established a Communications Desk in December 2004. Debra Porter was hired in the position of Communications Officer on the basis of 7 hours per week. In December 2006 the NCCA increased the position to 14 hours per week.

Policy & Procedure:

A draft document *Policy and Procedure on Public Statements & the Media* was adopted in principle as a working document by the Executive at its meeting in June 2005. This has proven to be a valuable tool in exercising an appropriate NCCA voice on a number of issues. (Appendix C1)

Media Releases:

Since July 2004 the NCCA has distributed 67 media releases to newspapers, radio, television and Christian media contacts.

At Easter 2006 the NCCA coordinated the release of an Easter message compiled of short messages from heads of our member Churches. We repeated this method for a Christmas message release. In 2007, responding to requests from some of our observer Churches and the general public we widened this process to include observer Churches.

NCCA releases have covered areas such as industrial relations, interfaith issues, e.g. fanaticism and terrorism (in cooperation with the NCCA's interfaith partners), refugees, Zimbabwe, the South East Asia Tsunami and Earthquake, Church Aid, Make Indigenous Poverty History, drought, and more. See Appendix C2 for a list of titles.

To view the full text of NCCA media releases online at any time visit:

http://www.ncca.org.au/media_releases.

Building Contacts with the Media:

Relationships with media contacts are vital to the ecumenical movement. It is a way of sending the ecumenical message ever wider. The Communications Officer and the General Secretary continue working to develop positive relationships with journalists, radio producers and other representatives of the general as well as the Christian media. Contacts with Christian media are through the media departments of NCCA member Churches and observer Churches, as well as through the Australasian Religious Press Association (see below).

We appreciate receiving the many media releases and publications that come from our member Churches and observer Churches. They are important to the NCCA's knowledge and understanding of what is happening in the churches.

Several NCCA releases and relationships built by the NCCA have resulted in requests from media for quotes and interviews with the General Secretary, including an appearance on Four Corners during the lead up to the Federal industrial relations legislation in 2005, terrorism, community harmony, cartoons first published in the Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*, RU486 and the WCC 9th Assembly. Last year we responded to a request for assistance in securing a Christmas morning message from Bethlehem for a Sydney radio station. Interviews are also arranged from time to time for other members of the NCCA Executive staff concerning issues specific to their areas of responsibility.

Our media contacts, especially those within the churches, often express their appreciation at receiving media releases from the NCCA.

Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA):

ARPA is an organisation of members from Christian religious media located in Australia and New Zealand. The NCCA is a member of ARPA. We are represented by two staff members, Debra Porter (NCCA Communications Officer) and Colleen Hodge (NCCA Christian World Service, Manager of Communications & Education).

Relationships within the Christian media help it develop a wider understanding of the ecumenical movement. ARPA is a critical part of maintaining and developing these relationships. Through email and personal contact we have an ever increasing ability to keep in touch with what the churches are doing and saying. Our representatives attend many events organised by ARPA, including the annual ARPA Conventions held in Perth (2004), Melbourne (2005) and Adelaide (2006). The 2007 Convention will be held in Auckland.

Banners, Brochures, Business Cards & the new NCCA Logo:

Last year we introduced a new NCCA Logo. It's on the cover of the Forum Working Papers, on the banners you will see at the Forum, on new business cards, brochures, the website, and in a variety of other places.

We are grateful for the visible identity the original NCCA logo brought to the Council. The new logo is in three colours and brighter in appearance. With the increasing use of online publishing and electronic distribution it is now more economic than it was in 1994 to utilise colour. We are hopeful that the new logo will serve identification of the Council into the future as well as the original logo did in the past.

The NCCA banners and the mantle⁸ are available to be borrowed by church groups for ecumenical events. Request may be made to secretariat@ncca.org.au or call (02) 9299 2215.

***InUnity*:**

InUnity was published in hard copy from 1953 until the end of 2004. Over the years it took on a variety of sizes and formats. It is an important ecumenical information and marketing service to thousands of interested readers.

InUnity is published and distributed free to subscribers. The cost to the NCCA of publication and distribution combined with the increased usage of the Internet lead to the decision to evolve *InUnity* from a hard copy based magazine to a web based e-zine (electronic magazine). We continued throughout 2005 and 2006 to send a photocopy version of *InUnity* to approximately 450 non-Internet users.

Throughout 2005 and 2006 we have been aware of the overlap between the content of the e-zine and the stories and information located in the NCCA website. Publication and distribution of *InUnity* is currently being reviewed. The current discussion is looking toward a briefer newsletter pointing readers to online stories and information located on the NCCA website and elsewhere on the Internet.

⁸ The NCCA Mantle was designed and first viewed at the inaugural NCCA Forum in 1994. View information on the Mantle at http://www.ncca.org.au/about_us/ncca_story/mantle.

We are not abandoning our non-Internet users and will be contacting them in an effort to discover the best, most economic way to continue to keep them informed about the activities of the NCCA and our partners.

Questions and comments about *InUnity* can be sent to inunity@ncca.org.au.

NB. Prior to *InUnity* becoming a web based e-zine *In Focus* was published as a part of *InUnity*. *In Focus* is a publication of the NCCA Christian World Service. *In Focus* continues to be published separately and distributed in hard copy.

NCCA Website (www.ncca.org.au):

Although the NCCA does not have any dedicated web authoring staff the website is constantly updated in an effort to give our supporters and other interested people the latest information. Three 'superusers' (currently - Emily Anderson, Debra Porter and Samson Yip) are responsible for the majority of our web authoring. These superusers are members of the NCCA staff who take on web authoring as an additional duty. The superusers, with the approval of the General Secretary, oversee the content. The Communications Desk is grateful for the time and effort of the superusers and the General Secretary in maintaining the website.

The structure and appearance of the website is constantly under review. Changes have recently been made to the design of several pages including the homepage. We are in the process of redesigning the banner at the top of the homepage to make it more colourful and to include the new NCCA logo. We hope to incorporate the new banner into the website by the time of the Forum.

Traffic on the NCCA website has been steadily increasing over the past 3 years, with peaks occurring at time of the Christmas Bowl launch, inclusion on the website of church responses to *The DaVinci Code* and the Gnostic Gospel of Judas, and more recently with the launch of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and Prayer for Reconciliation resources and the uploading of the 6th National Forum information.

The Communications Desk wants to recognise the contribution and dedication of three past superusers. Eleanor Trinchera made a valuable contribution as a superuser for over 12 months, and continues to work occasionally on the website. Jennifer O'Hanlon and Alicia Dundas have both left the NCCA since July 2004 to pursue other goals. Their expertise is missed. We wish them every blessing in their new endeavours.

The superusers rely on all users to help us maintain the integrity of the website. Questions and comments about the NCCA website are gratefully received at superusers@ncca.org.au.

Debra Porter

Communications Officer

May 2007

Appendices:

C1. Policy and Procedure on Public Statements & the Media

C2. Media Releases

Appendix C1



National Council of Churches in Australia

Policy and Procedure on Public Statements & the Media

Adopted in Principle as a Working Document by the NCCA Executive – June 2005

General Principles

1. The NCCA is a privileged instrument of the movement for Christian unity, and in making any public comment it will uphold the principles of Christian unity that undergird the life and purpose of the Council (see the NCCA Constitution Article 4 – Objectives).
2. The National Forum and the Executive, through the General Secretary, have oversight of all matters relating to Public Statements and media comment by the Council.
3. Public or media comment made by the NCCA must fall within the provisions of the NCCA Constitution and any relevant resolutions of the National Forum and Executive.
4. NCCA statements and media releases dealing with Indigenous issues should be prepared in partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission. A draft copy of any proposed documents should be presented to the NATSIEC for endorsement, in accordance with the 2005 Memorandum of Understanding.

Public Statements

❖ **Guidelines**

5. NCCA statements should focus on the general directions of social policy-making, and the values the churches want to see reflected in such policies. They should avoid the finer details of policy work where there is legitimate variance over matters of fact, judgement, and interpretation.
6. NCCA statements should encourage the free interplay of debate and opinion in the spirit of ecumenical dialogue and an open and democratic society.
7. NCCA Commissions, Networks, task based groups, and committees have a role in advising the Council on public issues within their areas of expertise. In framing their advice they should focus on identifying and developing goals and principles the churches can affirm together and agree on.

❖ **Statements developed at meetings of the National Forum and Executive**

8. During meetings of the National Forum and Executive, any proposal for a public statement shall be dealt with, first, by ascertaining whether a substantial measure of agreement exists among the member Churches on the issue in question and, if such agreement is found, by deciding whether to make a public statement and/or take some other appropriate action.
9. When the National Forum or Executive has decided to make a public statement, the National Forum or Executive shall approve the public statement and attach the

names of all member Churches which are represented at that meeting, except where the representatives of any member Church have indicated otherwise.

❖ **Statements developed outside or between meetings**

10. At any time the head of any member Church, the President or General Secretary may initiate a public statement by:
 - a. securing the support of the head of at least one other member Church, the President or General Secretary; and
 - b. providing the General Secretary with the proposed text and if necessary a rationale for the stance suggested.
11. If, after having received the draft public statement of a new policy, a head of Church does not respond within seven days the name of his/her Church shall not be associated with the statement.

Media Comment

❖ **General Secretary**

12. The General Secretary or his/her official designate is authorised to make comment to the media as he/she considers appropriate always respecting the views of member Churches on the matter concerned.

❖ **Other Executive Officers**

13. Other Executive Officers and senior members of staff, with consent and delegation from the General Secretary, may represent their respective Commission or department in media comment on matters directly relating to their area of work.

❖ **Emergencies and disasters**

14. In the event an emergency situation and of the General Secretary being unable to be contacted for more than 24 hours, and there being no other delegated person contactable, NCCA managers should contact the President of the NCCA who may grant permission for comment to be made within the guidelines of this policy.
15. The Secretariat must receive a copy of all written media comment and a report on all verbal media comment made from any source within the NCCA.

Media Releases

❖ **Content**

16. Media releases may contain the following types of material
 - a. Public Statements of the NCCA, released on behalf of all member Churches, in full or in summary.
 - b. Comment by the President, heads of Churches, General Secretary, or authorised staff members explaining or applying an existing statement and/or policy of the NCCA in a timely manner.
 - c. Information about specific campaigns, programmes, appeals or events being organised by the NCCA, or in which the NCCA is a participant.
 - d. Information disseminated on behalf of member Churches at their request.
 - e. Relevant information prepared by ecumenical partner organisations, e.g. State Ecumenical Bodies, the Christian Conference of Asia, and the World Council of Churches.

17. Media releases made on behalf of the NCCA may not contain viewpoints or offer comments that go beyond or contradict the policies of the Council as established by the National Forum and the Executive.

❖ **Authorisation**

18. The General Secretary, or his/her delegate according to this policy, is responsible for authorising all media releases from any NCCA source for distribution.
19. The General Secretary may delegate this authority to the following people:
 - a. **Executive Officers:** Executive Officers may be delegated to authorise media releases from their department/s that are part of an ongoing policy, campaign, or initiative, and that fall within established and accepted guidelines.
 - b. **Communications Officer:** If the General Secretary has appointed a Communications Officer, that person may, in the event of the General Secretary being unable to be contacted for more than 24 hours, and with the consent of the Acting General Secretary (*who shall be one of the Executive Officers appointed by the General Secretary for the period of his/her absence*) or the President, authorise a release falling within established policies or practices of the NCCA.
 - c. **Acting General Secretary:** If there is no Communications Officer, or he/she is out of contact, the Acting General Secretary (if appointed) may, with the consent of the President, authorise media releases falling within established policies or practices of the NCCA.

❖ **Emergency situations**

20. In the event an emergency situation (e.g. the South Asia Tsunami of December 2004) and of the General Secretary or relevant delegated persons being unable to be contacted for more than 24 hours, the Communications Officer (if appointed) or the Acting General Secretary, should contact the President who may authorise a release within the guidelines of this policy if he/she deems the matter to be urgent. If both the Communications Officer and the Acting General Secretary are unavailable the available unit managers of the NCCA should meet and may take the matter to the President.

❖ **Distribution**

21. No NCCA media release may be distributed until it has been authorised according to the provisions of this policy.
22. A central, up to date database of organisations and persons to whom media releases are to be sent is to be maintained in the Secretariat and Business Services department. The relevant data on this list is to be used each time a release is distributed.
23. The Secretariat, the President, and members of the Executive must receive a copy of all media releases from any source within the NCCA at the time of their release.

❖ **'Signing on' to statements by other organisations**

24. At the discretion of the General Secretary, the NCCA may add its name to statements or activities of compatible organisations when what they say or do fits within established statements and practices of the NCCA. In making such a decision, the General Secretary will use his/her knowledge of the views of member Churches on the subject.

Appendix C2

Media Releases of the NCCA – July 2004 through May 2007

2007

May

NATSIEC Stand In Solidarity With Zimbabwe Churches
"Does Anyone Really Care About Australia's Indigenous?"

April

Easter 2007 Messages from Australian Church Leaders

2006

December

Christmas Messages from Australian Church Leaders
Justice System Fails Aborigines
Building Respect Between Faith Communities is Essential [APRO]

November

Compassion, Not Incarceration, is a Better Way for Refugees
Church Leaders Promote National Day of Prayer in Time of Drought

September

Churches Call For Urgent Re-Commitment To Indigenous Australia
Social Justice Sunday: Make Indigenous Poverty History

August

Christmas Bowl Called To Act Beyond The Emergencies
Grateful for Withdrawal of Refugee Bill - National Council of Churches
Churches Hold the Line Against Refugee Bill

July

Australia's Humanitarian Agencies Call for Permanent Ceasefire in Middle East
Australian Church Aid Agencies Provide Humanitarian Assistance in the Middle East

June

Anglican Bishop Elected President of National Church Body
Church Heads Urge Government to Revise Extended Pacific Solution for Refugees

May

Give to the Indonesia Earthquake and East Timor Appeals

April

Simply Sharing the Solomon Islands Story
Easter Messages from Australian Church Leaders

2005

December

A Time for Healing

November

Maintaining the Islamic Community's Stakeholder Place in Australia

October

South Asia Earthquake Appeal – Afghanistan, India and Pakistan

Council of Churches says Nauru Asylum Seeker Decision is a Welcome First Step

Sunday, 16 October 2005, is World Food Day

Peak Australian Interfaith Body Condemns Terrorism and Fanaticism

September

Sexual Abuse a Critical Issue for Australia's Churches

Make Indigenous Poverty History

Church Agencies Urge a Generous Response to African Emergencies

July

Mounting Concern over the Situation in Zimbabwe

Christian, Muslim and Jewish Leaders: "No Room for 'Hate Literature' in Australia

Tribute to Sir Ronald Wilson

Refugee and Migrant Sunday

Australia-wide call for prayer in the face of drought

June

Churches Seek Meeting with Prime Minister on Workplace Changes

Church Leaders react to events in Zimbabwe

Appointment of Alistair Gee as Director of Christian World Service

Churches and conservationists join forces to tackle climate change

Human Trafficking and Slavery in Australia

Call to respect Indonesia and its people

May

Reconciliation Week is a Call to Action

Churches call for support for new detention Bill

National Day of Healing

April

National Day of Healing a step in the right direction

Pope John Paul II - a Man of Hope for Indigenous Christians

Solidarity with Australian Catholics, says National Council of Churches

NCCA mourns the death of Pope John Paul II

March

Christmas Bowl Support for Nias and Simeuleu Islands

Church advocates disappointed over detention decision

February

Grave Christian Concern over Increasing the Australian Military Presence in Iraq

January

Tragedy that Touched the World

South Asia Tsunami Christmas Bowl and partners "in for the long haul"

Faith Communities Cooperate in Tsunami Relief

2004

December

NCCA-CWS supports victims of typhoons in the Philippines
Keep the flame burning say Indigenous Christians
We should be alert and we should be alarmed

August

Australians Shocked by refugee's conditions
National Council of Churches (in Australia) expresses solidarity with Christian
community in Iraq
Appeal for Sudan

July

Landmark covenant signed
CWS Incorporation
TPV changes not enough
We're locked away without committing a crime
Self determination is under threat
Indigenous People are going through a crisis
Australia must stop detaining Asylum Seekers
Sam Kobia issues challenges to Australian Christians

The Safe Church Project

An ecumenical conversation about sexual abuse and misconduct in Australian churches

The name of this project is a result of the sad reality that our churches have not always been safe and nurturing places for many people.

Concern taken to NCCA Executive by Gender Commission

During 2002 the NCCA Gender Commission had many conversations about sexual abuse in our churches. The members were concerned that the NCCA was not able to contribute to the public debate that was emerging. There were constant reports in the media about events that involved abuse of children, women and men in churches and church institutions and the churches had no way of offering comment on these events because they were not talking to each other. Many churches had begun to develop protocols to deal with the complaints but they were not offering each other support and not sharing their journeys. Each denomination was going through this incredibly difficult process on its own.

The Gender Commission wrote a statement of concern that was delivered to the Executive and asking for the formation of a Working Group of key people to bring those working on this issue together to share information and for mutual support.

***'Safe as Churches?'* Working Group established**

The Working Group has now run 3 national Consultations. These have been held in Canberra at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. 60 people attended the first one in March 2004 and the next two in September 2005 and March 2007 each had approximately 100 attendees.

Participants have come from all over Australia, and some from New Zealand. At the first Consultation Churches shared their journey of recognising and addressing issues of sexual abuse and misconduct. The next two Consultations have been professional development events for church personnel working in the field. One of the key features has been to attract participants from both member Churches and churches who are not members of the NCCA.

There are very few examples elsewhere in the world where such work is being attempted ecumenically. A possible example is the British 'Churches' Agency for Safeguarding' (CAS) – an ecumenical umbrella body initially set up by 10 denominations. (See <http://www.churchsafe.org.uk/page1.htm>.)

In South Australia the need to respond to changes in Child Protection Legislation has resulted in the drawing together of an energetic group of people who want to implement training together and support each other as they respond to allegations of abuse in church communities. Outcomes from this group include support and encouragement and shared training events in rural and remote areas. The group provides prayerful encouragement to each other as they work in this challenging area.

Emerging concern – Ecumenical Safe Place training

At the 2005 Consultation a number of people discussed the possibility of developing national ecumenical Safe Church training and the idea was endorsed by the NCCA Executive. For the past 18 months a special Task Force has been exploring this idea and running workshops on Reciprocal Recognition of Safe Place Training. It is currently preparing a business case for a Safe Church Training Unit to take it to the next level. The Task Force is approaching Church Insurers and developing a fee for service model to develop its financial base. We have been especially appreciative of support from the Baptist Union to get this initiative up and running.

Will there be a fourth ‘Safe as Churches?’ Consultation?

Where to from here? The Working Group is committed to ongoing collaborative work on these issues but is still working on the details. The brokenness of the church in Australia has brought people together to work in this area in new ways that transcend our divergent theologies.

❖ Issue 1

There is a lot of support for the ‘Safe as Churches?’ Consultations and the Working Group intends to plan for a fourth one. Organising these Consultations is time consuming and challenging. Each one must be professionally oriented and offer something to each denomination. So far we have depended on a huge amount of volunteer time from very busy people.

Those who have attended have been very clear about the need to learn from each other. This is one area where ecumenism is unhampered by theology and where we can work together for the common good. A significant outcome of the ‘Safe as Churches?’ gatherings has been the relationships that have formed and strengthened and the sharing of things learned across denominations and across the country.

Successful future events will need the commitment and backing of the NCCA and an improved organisational model. The Working Group intends to create a number of smaller task groups. The work also needs a solid financial base – the current Working Group has not had the time to seek funding from other sources, although it does have a small surplus from the three Consultations so far.

❖ Issue 2

What is the future of this work? The work so far has focussed on planning and running the Consultations but the Working Group is also aware that there are many other underlying issues that could be addressed ecumenically. The importance of ensuring the protection of all those who attend our churches is an ongoing issue for us all. Many aspects of this work could be handled by an ecumenical body, such as police checks for church workers, developing an Australian ecumenical Code of Practice, training, development of resources, professional support/supervision of workers, counselling, prevention work, and support of those who have been abused and those who have abused.

A number of other issues have also been raised and the Safe Church Project has the potential for sharing of knowledge about such matters as:

- ❖ bullying within the church;
- ❖ resource development;
- ❖ learning about forgiveness; and
- ❖ sharing wisdom about including perpetrators of sexual abuse who wish to be part of a worship community.

The ongoing Safe Church Project Working Group

The title ‘Safe Church Project’ was adopted by the Working Group in April 2007 to allow the expansion of the work beyond the original ‘Safe as Churches?’ Consultations.

Current membership of the Working Group is drawn from NCCA member and observer Churches: Audrey Babio (*Hillsong AOG*), Peter Barnett (*Baptist Church*), Garth Blake (*Anglican Church*), Ronis Chapman (*Religious Society of Friends*), Daphne Cox (*Salvation Army*), Colleen Fitzpatrick (*Lutheran Church*), Meg Herbert (*Uniting Church*), Elizabeth McClean (*Presbyterian Church*), Phil Mulhall, (*Catholic Church ,Convener*), Jenni Woodhouse (*Anglican Church*), and John Henderson NCCA General Secretary.

Those who have recently retired from the Working Group are:

Angela Ryan (*Catholic Church*), Donna Crouch (*Hillsong AOG*), Sue Foley (*Hillsong AOG*), Anne Norman (*SDA*)

The Working Group would like to give special thanks to Sr Angela Ryan for her leadership of the Group as Convener for the last 2 Consultations. She remains involved in the work for ecumenical Safe Place Training.

Ronis Chapman

and

Members of the Safe Church Project

7th May 2007

Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund

The Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership fund (formerly the Ecumenical Leadership Fund) exists “*to provide financial assistance to help young Australians who have shown leadership within a church in Australia to develop their leadership skills in an ecumenical environment for the benefit of their churches and the ecumenical movement generally.*”

The Fund was established in 1989 by the Australian Council of Churches using \$100,000 donated for the purpose by Sir Ronald Wilson. The identity of the donor was originally withheld at his request. After his death in 2005 the Committee sought and received permission from his wife, Lady Leila Wilson, to honour Sir Ron by incorporating his name in the name of the Fund. The NCCA Executive voted to change the name of the Fund to the Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund. Sir Ron was a leading ecumenical figure for many years, and a prominent Australian. The balance of the Fund as at 30 March 2007 stood at \$195,378.51

The current membership of the Fund Committee is Dr R L Walker (Chair), Revd Canon Bruce McAteer, Sr Trish Madigan, Mary Pollard, Revd Yangrae Son, and the General Secretary ex officio. Since August 2005 the Ecumenical Youth Officer has been a permanent Special Advisor to the Fund.

Since the 2004 Forum the following grants have been made:

- Ms Natalie L’Huillier from Brisbane, to study at the Irish School of Ecumenics (\$14,850)

Current circumstances, particularly rising costs, have resulted in applications to the Fund generally being for larger amounts than it was set up to handle. For many years grants were in the range of \$1,500 - \$2000, but now they are commonly in excess of \$10,000. This reduces the number and type of grants that the Fund has been able to make according to its rules. The Committee has agreed to be flexible in this regard and consider applications on their merit.

The Fund was heavily promoted at the National Christian Youth Convention in 2005, which exhausted our stocks of promotional brochures for the time being. Although these are being replaced, interest in the Fund since that time has come via word of mouth or the NCCA website, http://www.ncca.org.au/about_us/ec_funds/RWELF.

Dr R L Walker
Chair
8th June 2007

Appendices

Appendix A

Australian Churches Covenanting Together

A Preamble

The invitation to the churches in Australia to engage in a process of covenanting together at the national level has been grounded in the conviction that ecumenical renewal is fundamental to the integrity of the church's mission.

'Covenant' in the Ecumenical Movement

While the language of 'covenanting' is not the language familiar in some traditions, it has been found to be helpful and used widely in an ecumenical context.

Referring to the formation of the World Council of Churches, the Second Assembly (Evanston, 1954) said "our churches entered into a covenant to form this Council, and affirmed their intention to stay together"¹. A conference on Faith and Order (Nottingham, 1964) invited churches "to covenant together to work and pray for the inauguration of union ... so that all in each place may act together forthwith in mission and service to the world".

The Seventh Assembly of the WCC (Canberra, 1991) spoke of the ecumenical movement "as a reconciling and renewing movement towards full visible unity"², and described the unity of the church as "a *koinonia* given and expressed in the common confession of the apostolic faith; a common sacramental life entered by the one baptism and celebrated together in one eucharistic fellowship; a common life in which members and ministries are mutually recognised and reconciled; and a common mission witnessing to the gospel of God's grace to all people and serving the whole of creation"³. But while acknowledging, with gratitude to God, "a certain degree of communion already existing between them", the Assembly noted that "churches have failed to draw the consequences for their life from the degree of communion they have already experienced and the agreements already achieved"⁴.

Covenanting in Australia

In Australia, the formation of the National Council of Churches in 1994 was an expression of the churches covenanting together, seeking to draw some of the consequences for their own life. Now, their response to the invitation to engage in a covenanting process is another act of commitment to one another as a further stage on the way to visible unity.

The nature of the current covenanting proposal – set out on the following pages ("A Commitment to Covenanting") - is multi-dimensional. This is because it is recognised that the possibilities for co-operation and commitment between the churches are many and varied. In other words, the nature of the covenant / agreement into which a church will enter with each of the other churches will have different dimensions that express the extent of the co-operation and commitment that is possible between them at this stage of the ecumenical journey.

The process since 1996 has been an invitation to the churches, at the national level, to take specific steps towards a more visible expression of unity, to move towards a deeper experience of communion (*koinonia*).

Covenanting together at the national level will also give a lead; it will be ‘permission-giving’! The nature of the agreement between any two churches nationally will open possibilities, provide guidelines, and give encouragement to their congregations to covenant together locally. Above all, any agreement between two or more churches will be a sign that we are being called into that unity of the church, which is Christ’s future for the church.

Biblical Basis of Covenant

The motif of covenanting permeates the story of the people of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition. God covenants with people, and people make covenants with each other, under God’s oversight. The idea of a covenant implies a significant commitment. It is a reliable and lasting relationship, which includes both promises and obligations. Biblically, the relationship is usually sealed with a ritual action.

The covenants God makes with the people stem from the sovereign, gracious, free initiative of God, and have their basis in this God, who is holy, righteous and extravagantly merciful. One style of covenant includes those made with Noah, signifying God’s everlasting promise to the whole creation, and with Abraham and David, which emphasise God’s promises to individuals, and through them to the whole people of God. Another style of covenant is that made with Moses and the people of the Exodus. Here, the stress is on God’s merciful delivery of oppressed peoples and, in turn, on the obligations that flow to the people as a result of the covenant. The Bible witnesses not only to the need for obedience on the part of the people, but also to the possibility of the covenant being threatened when the people fail to live up to its obligations.

A highly significant development arose with the prophets who, aware of the people’s failure to live up to the covenant, restlessly began to seek and hope for a different and better covenant, a true faithfulness. Jeremiah discerned God’s purpose to establish a new covenant, written on the heart, in which everyone, being forgiven, would know God and walk with God in a relationship of responsible faithfulness.

Covenants between people are seen as being under God’s oversight, or enacted in the sight of God. But they follow different patterns. There are covenants between equal nations, between conquering kings and their subject kings, between a king and his people, and between two individuals.

This web of understandings of covenant, which is woven through the Old Testament, is developed in the New Testament, where the covenant imagery persists. The most significant way that this theological motif is taken up is the understanding that Jesus embodies a ‘new covenant’, seals it through his life, death and resurrection, and signifies it in his Last Supper, calling people to a radical change of mind and style of living.

The old covenant is fulfilled in the new. The new covenant is opened to all; it is made accessible through the action of the Spirit, who draws the covenanted people into communion (*koinonia*). They are thus rightly seen as a covenanting community.

1 Evanston Speaks: Reports from the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1954, SCM Press, London, p.10

2 “The Unity of the Church as *Koinonia*: Gift and Calling” (3.2), Signs of the Spirit: Official Report of the Seventh Assembly, edited by Michael Kinnamon, 1991, WCC, Geneva, pp. 172-4.

3 Ibid., (2.1)

4 Ibid., (1.3)

Implications of Covenant

A biblical theology of covenant enables an ecclesiology of covenanting. We make covenant with one another in grateful response to God's initiative in making covenant with us.

The covenant theme thus has important implications for the church: it offers an alternative understanding of how things are and how things could be. Because of the divine initiative and because God is totally committed to all humankind, a new beginning is possible for the church and for the whole human community. Therefore, the covenant requires a constant, solid commitment in the circumstances of life. Within the one faith community – the Body of Christ - there is a mutual responsibility and solidarity with one another for the fulfilment of this commitment.

With these implications in mind, and grounded in the conviction that ecumenical renewal is integral to the church's mission, the challenge of this covenanting process for the NCCA member Churches is to explore, and to be open to, "what is possible if we go to the limits of what is permissible".

A COMMITMENT TO A COVENANTING PROCESS

The Basis of the National Council of Churches in Australia:

The NCCA gathers together in pilgrimage those churches and Christian communities, which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and commit themselves

- [i] to deepen their relationship with each other in order to express more visibly the unity willed by Christ for his Church, and*
- [ii] to work together towards the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service, to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

Given the commitment we have made to each other by becoming members of the National Council of Churches in Australia, we are prepared to renew our commitment through this act of covenanting.

It is noted that some member Churches belong to the NCCA subject to clause 5.02 of the constitution. It is noted that the use of the word 'covenanting' in this document may differ from, but does not diminish the special significance of, the use of the word 'covenant' by some member Churches.

THE COVENANTING DOCUMENT

Part A - DECLARATION OF INTENT

As member Churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia,

We RE-AFFIRM our commitment to one another as partners on the ecumenical journey;

We BELIEVE that we are being blessed in our generation to witness the action of the Spirit in drawing the Churches in a common search for a fuller expression of unity;

We REJOICE in all we have in common and GIVE THANKS for the richness of our diversity, though recognising that our disunity is a hindrance to the Church's mission;

We RECOGNISE ONE ANOTHER as Communities of Faith, Hope and Love, committed to following Christ and pledged to serve God's kingdom;

We therefore MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER to engage in an ongoing process of growing together (covenanting), not knowing what visible form unity, which is God's will and gift, may take, but believing that, by taking the steps to which we now commit ourselves, we shall be led to grow ever more deeply into that unity.

Anglican Church of Australia
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Assyrian Church of the East
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
Romanian Orthodox Church
The Salvation Army
Syrian Orthodox Church
Uniting Church in Australia

Part B - THE PROPOSED COMMITMENT

a. Dimension One: General

We AGREE together

- ❖ To join in common prayer with one another
- ❖ To intercede and care for one another
- ❖ To explore with one another our Christian convictions and their present application

Anglican Church of Australia
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Assyrian Church of the East
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
Romanian Orthodox Church

The Salvation Army
Syrian Orthodox Church
Uniting Church in Australia

b. Dimension Two: Shared Use of Physical Resources

We AGREE together

- ❖ To support initiatives for sharing physical resources, such as buildings, and to encourage consultation between the appropriate governing bodies of our churches before new major developments are undertaken

Anglican Church of Australia
Assyrian Church of the East
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
The Salvation Army
Uniting Church in Australia

c. Dimension Three: Common Mission and Ministry

We AGREE together

- ❖ To explore with one another issues and strategies for mission, so that the possibility of common mission is recognised as a priority, information is shared, issues of mission are discussed, and strategies for evangelisation are planned in consultation
- ❖ To seek to develop clear and sensitive guidelines dealing with how our churches together can best meet to needs of people in local (especially rural) situations:

Anglican Church of Australia
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Lutheran Church of Australia
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
The Salvation Army
Uniting Church in Australia

d. Dimension Four: Common Sacraments

i. We AGREE together

- ❖ To recognise the Sacrament of Baptism administered in each other's church, and to promote the use of the common Certificate of Baptism.

Anglican Church of Australia
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Congregational Federation of Australia
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia⁵
Lutheran Church of Australia

Roman Catholic Church in Australia
Romanian Orthodox Church
Uniting Church in Australia

ii. We AGREE together

- ❖ To invite and welcome members of each other's church to share in the Eucharist according to pastoral need

Churches of Christ in Australia with Uniting Church in Australia

5 While acknowledging the Certificate of Baptism (© 1988, Australian Consultation on Liturgy) is evidence of Christian Baptism, the Archdiocese uses a baptismal certificate that specifies that the Sacrament was performed "according to the rites of the Eastern Orthodox Church".

e. Dimension Five: Shared Ordained Ministries

We AGREE together

- ❖ To continue to work towards the goal of sharing with each other a mutually recognised ordained ministry

Anglican Church of Australia with Lutheran Church of Australia
Anglican Church of Australia with Uniting Church in Australia
Churches of Christ in Australia with Uniting Church in Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia with Uniting Church in Australia

Part C - THE FUTURE PLEDGE

We PLEDGE ourselves

- ❖ To continue to discuss and articulate within our churches the meaning and significance of our involvement in the quest for a more visible expression of unity and the possibilities for further engagement in ecumenical partnership
- ❖ To explore such further steps as will be necessary to make more clearly visible the unity of all Christian people in this country

Anglican Church of Australia
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Assyrian Church of the East
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
Romanian Orthodox Church
The Salvation Army
Syrian Orthodox Church
Uniting Church in Australia

AFFIRMATION OF COMMITMENT

On behalf of our churches, we affirm our commitment to this covenanting process. At this point in our journey towards visible unity, we confirm those places in this document where the name of our own church appears, as a sign of what we can covenant to do together.

Anglican Church of Australia
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Assyrian Church of the East
Churches of Christ in Australia
Congregational Federation of Australia
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
Lutheran Church of Australia
Religious Society of Friends
Roman Catholic Church in Australia
Romanian Orthodox Church
The Salvation Army
Syrian Orthodox Church
Uniting Church in Australia

Appendix C

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA CONSTITUTION

[as amended 15 July 1996]

1. NAME

1.01 The name of this organisation shall be the "National Council of Churches in Australia" [hereinafter referred to as "NCCA"].

2. BASIS

2.01 The NCCA gathers together in pilgrimage those churches and Christian communities which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and commit themselves

[i] to deepen their relationship with each other in order to express more visibly the unity willed by Christ for his Church, and

[ii] to work together towards the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service, to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. THE CHURCH, THE CHURCHES AND THE NCCA

3.01 The NCCA is not a church. Rather, by bringing its member churches into a living contact with each other it desires to give expression to the significant bonds which already exist between them: what they share with each other as Christians because of their union with God in Christ Jesus through the Holy Spirit [often called communion or koinonia]. It recognises that each member church brings to the NCCA its own understanding of the nature of the Church.

3.02 No member church is being asked to forsake or compromise its own ecclesiology. However, the NCCA provides a framework within which member churches are encouraged to enter into dialogue, at all levels, about the understanding of "Church" which each church holds.

3.03 While some member churches may not be able to recognise each other as churches in the full and true sense, they nevertheless acknowledge in each other important elements of both doctrine and practice that belong to the Church which Christ founded. It is hoped that through further dialogue the member churches will broaden their knowledge of each other, extend their recognition of each other, find ways of giving greater expression to what they hold in common, and move towards a more visible expression of the unity Christ has given to his Church.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.01 The objectives of the NCCA are:

[a] to encourage and enable the member churches to develop their existing relationships by

i] raising awareness among their people of Christ's gift of unity and of his call to express that unity through prayer, dialogue and shared engagement in mission; and

ii] coming to know each other better in all respects, including the areas of spirituality, liturgy, theology, history, sociology and culture;

[b] to encourage and enable the member churches in the light of the Gospel to give prophetic leadership to each other and the community by

i] developing a deeper understanding of evangelism/ evangelisation in Australia's cultural context;

- ii] addressing moral issues;
 - iii] speaking out on behalf of oppressed people;
 - iv] acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people; and
 - v] responding to human need and acting on issues of justice, peace and creation;
- [c] to promote relationships
- i] with non-member churches, state ecumenical bodies within Australia, regional and national ecumenical bodies in Asia and the Pacific, and the World Council of Churches; and
 - ii] with people of other living faiths; and
- [d] to undertake joint initiatives as determined from time to time by the National Forum at the request of member churches.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.01 Membership is open to those churches and Christian communities which accept the Basis, have a spread of groups in at least two Australian States/Territories, and have their own national organisation and ecclesial identity. Election to membership shall be by resolution passed by a majority of not less than three quarters of the members present and voting at a meeting of the National Forum following consultation with all member churches.

5.02 A church or Christian community which does not have credal statements within its tradition and therefore finds it difficult to subscribe formally to what appears to it to be a written credal statement in the Basis may apply for and be elected to membership provided that the church or Christian community demonstrates by its life and conduct that it upholds the spirit of the Basis.

5.03 A member church may resign from membership by giving not less than three [3] calendar months written notice of resignation to the General Secretary. The notice will take effect at the expiry of the period of notice unless it is withdrawn in the meantime.

6. STRUCTURE

6.01 The NCCA is part of a nationwide ecumenical movement of prayer, reflection and growth in association with local efforts, regional collaboration, state ecumenical bodies, meetings of heads of churches and inter-church dialogues. Its structure is designed to reflect this nationwide partnership.

6.02 The components of this structure are:

- ❖ General Church Consultations
- ❖ the National Forum
- ❖ the Executive of the NCCA
- ❖ Specific Consultations
- ❖ Commissions, Working Groups and Networks
- ❖ staff of the NCCA

7. GENERAL CHURCH CONSULTATIONS

7.01 From time to time the NCCA will convene General Church Consultations which bring together a broad range of ecumenically involved people, on either a national or regional basis, to enable the member churches to celebrate and to share their life and witness, and when appropriate, to make comment and recommendations to the NCCA, and to listen to and act on the insights offered by the NCCA.

8. THE NATIONAL FORUM

8.01 The National Forum is the general meeting of representatives of member churches of the NCCA together with representatives of state ecumenical bodies and representatives of a

national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body. The National Forum's responsibility is to enable member churches to establish and review the overall policies and programmes of the NCCA.

8.02 The membership of the National Forum will comprise:

- [a] national heads of member churches
- [b] representatives appointed by member churches
- [c] one representative appointed by each state ecumenical body
- [d] four representatives appointed by a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body.
- [e] the President and General Secretary and Treasurer in any case where the office holder is not otherwise a member.

Each member shall have the right to attend and vote at a meeting of the National Forum.

8.03 The Executive shall from time to time determine for the purpose of Clause 8.02 [b] the number of representatives which each member church may appoint to attend a meeting of the National Forum, provided that each member church shall be entitled to appoint not less than two representatives. In making its determination, the Executive shall have regard to numerical strength and parish units of the member church and such other criteria as the Executive may consider relevant.

8.04 If the national head of a member church is unable to attend a meeting or part of a meeting of the National Forum, the national head may appoint an alternate to attend and vote on behalf of the national head at the meeting of the National Forum or that part of the meeting as the case may be.

8.05 The membership of the National Forum will not exceed one hundred unless the Executive shall determine otherwise.

9. MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL FORUM

9.01

- [a] The National Forum shall hold an ordinary meeting at least once every two years for the first four [4] years after the first meeting of the National Forum and thereafter at least once every three [3] years on such date[s] and at such place as the National Forum [or the Executive] may determine.
- [b] The National Forum may hold special meetings at such other times and for such purposes as the National Forum determines.
- [c] The Executive may whenever it thinks fit convene a special meeting of the National Forum.
- [d] The Executive shall on the requisition in writing of not less than one third of the member churches convene a special meeting of the National Forum.
- [e] Not less than 3 months notice of a meeting of the National Forum shall be given to the member churches.

9.02 In addition to any other business which may be transacted at a meeting of the National Forum the business of the ordinary meeting shall be:

- [a] to receive from the Executive reports upon the activities of the NCCA since the last ordinary meeting;
- [b] to receive and consider financial statements;
- [c] to elect not more than six [6] members of the Executive whose nominations for election have been endorsed by their member churches; and
- [d] to determine policy.

9.03 At a meeting of the National Forum:

- [a] the President shall preside; or

[b] if the President is absent, unable or unwilling to act, the members present at a meeting of the National Forum may choose another member of the Executive to preside at the meeting.

9.04 The General Secretary of the NCCA will be the executive officer of the National Forum.

9.05 [a] No business shall be transacted at any meeting of the National Forum unless a quorum of members is present at the time when the meeting proceeds to business nor shall a meeting proceed if the chairperson determines by a count that a quorum is not present.

[b] A quorum shall consist of not less than one-half of the membership of the National Forum, present in person or by alternate appointed pursuant to Clause 8.04.

9.06 Subject to this Constitution, questions arising at a meeting of the National Forum shall be decided by a majority of votes of those present and voting.

9.07 The Executive may invite appropriate people who are not members of the National Forum to attend a meeting of the National Forum. Such persons may be given the right to speak but not to vote. Categories of persons who will be invited include: observers from non-member churches, and one executive staff person from each state ecumenical body.

10. THE EXECUTIVE

10.01 [a] The Executive will be responsible for implementing the policies of the NCCA, monitoring its work, and making policy recommendations to the National Forum.

[b] The Executive will act on behalf of the NCCA between meetings of the National Forum in respect of any of the responsibilities of the NCCA and may determine policy which is not inconsistent with policy determined or directions given by the National Forum and act on any matter which does not require a resolution to be passed by more than a simple majority of those present and voting at a meeting of the National Forum.

10.02 The Executive will consist of:

[a] the national heads of the member churches;

[b] one other person appointed by each member church;

[c] not more than six [6] members elected by the National Forum pursuant to Clause 9.02 [c];

[d] two members appointed by a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body

[e] the General Secretary and the Treasurer of the NCCA [ex officio]; and

[f] the President in any case where the person elected as President is not otherwise a member of the Executive.

10.03 A national head of a member church who is unable to attend a meeting of the Executive may appoint an alternate to attend and vote on his/her behalf at the meeting.

10.04 In the event of a casual vacancy occurring in the elected membership of the Executive, the Executive may fill the vacancy.

10.05 At a meeting of the Executive

[a] the President shall preside, or

[b] if the President is absent, unable or unwilling to act, such one of the remaining members of the Executive as may be chosen by the members present, shall preside.

10.06 Subject to this Constitution the Executive may meet and adjourn or otherwise regulate its meetings as it thinks fit.

10.07 The Executive shall meet not less frequently than three [3] times in each calendar year.

10.08 The President may at any time, and the General Secretary shall on the requisition of not less than ten [10] members of the Executive, convene a meeting of the Executive.

10.09 Questions arising at a meeting of the Executive shall be decided by a majority of votes of members present and voting.

10.10 A quorum shall consist of not less than one-half of the members.

10.11 [a] The Executive may decide to meet by telephone conference or in such other manner as it shall think fit.

[b] The Executive may make decisions in other manner than by attendance of members at a meeting.

10.12 The Executive may appoint committees and delegate to Commissions and committees such matters as will facilitate the business of the NCCA.

11. OFFICE BEARERS

11.01 The office bearers of the NCCA shall be:

[a] the President

[b] the General Secretary

[c] the Treasurer

11.02 The President of the NCCA will be elected by the Executive for a term not exceeding three [3] years and will be eligible for re-election.

11.03 The Treasurer shall be appointed by the Executive and will hold office until the conclusion of the first meeting of the Executive following the next ordinary meeting of the National Forum after the Treasurer's appointment.

12. SPECIFIC CONSULTATIONS

12.01 Specific Consultations may be convened to enable the member churches to listen to one another and plan action, separately or jointly, on specific issues or on general areas of responsibility of the NCCA.

12.02 Specific Consultations will be convened on a regional or national basis by the National Forum or the Executive as and when required.

12.03 Specific Consultations will report to the Executive unless the convening body otherwise determines.

13. COMMISSIONS

13.01 The National Forum may establish Commissions to conduct ongoing programmes of the NCCA.

13.02 The National Forum may constitute whatever Commissions it deems necessary to assist it to carry out the objectives of the NCCA.

13.03 The mandate, size and membership of Commissions will be determined by the National Forum.

13.04 Members of Commissions will be appointed by the National Forum on the nomination of member churches. The Executive may fill casual vacancies.

13.05 Commissions will be responsible to the National Forum through the Executive of the NCCA.

14. WORKING GROUPS

14.01 The Executive may establish Working Groups to undertake specific short-term tasks.

14.02 The Executive may constitute whatever Working Groups it deems necessary to assist it in carrying out the objectives of the NCCA.

14.03 Working Groups will be responsible to the Executive through the General Secretary.

15. NETWORKS

15.01 The National Forum or the Executive may develop Networks of people with common responsibilities within member churches to foster particular concerns.

15.02 The National Forum or the Executive may establish whatever Networks are deemed desirable to further the objectives of the NCCA.

16. STAFF

16.01 The staff of NCCA will be headed by a General Secretary who will have ex officio membership of the National Forum, the Executive, Commissions, Working Groups, Networks and Committees.

16.02 The General Secretary will normally be appointed by the National Forum on the recommendation of the Executive, which will bring one name to the National Forum. In the event that an unexpected vacancy in the position of General Secretary occurs between meetings of the National Forum, the Executive may act to appoint the General Secretary. The General Secretary is accountable through the Executive to the National Forum.

16.03 Other executive staff will be appointed by the Executive in consultation with the General Secretary and will be accountable to the Executive through the General Secretary.

17. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

17.01 In furthering its objectives, the NCCA will seek to resource member churches to help them, together or separately, speak publicly on significant issues facing the community.

17.02 In order that the voice of the churches may have a greater impact on issues of public importance, member churches may authorise the NCCA to make public statements on their behalf. Where a majority of member churches agree but unanimity is not reached, the names of member churches supporting the statement should be attached and the NCCA may offer its facilities to issue the statement on their behalf.

17.03 Publishing such statements may not be held to imply that the NCCA has, or can have, any authority over the member churches.

17.04 The NCCA will be advised by such Commissions, Committees and Working Groups as it may establish, and at times that advice may take the form of recommendations regarding public statements. While Commissions, Committees and Working Groups may not themselves make public statements without the authority of the Executive, they may in the course of their work publish research, educational and promotional material.

18. RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATIONAL HEADS OF CHURCHES

18.01 The NCCA will maintain a close liaison with the national heads of churches group through periodic consultations, and through the General Secretary.

19. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE ECUMENICAL BODIES

19.01 In this constitution the expression "state ecumenical body" refers to those bodies, whether corporate or unincorporated, which the NCCA, through the National Forum or its Executive, recognises from time to time as state ecumenical bodies. Recognition may be withdrawn at any time.

19.02 While recognising that state ecumenical bodies are autonomous, the NCCA invites their participation in the NCCA through the appointment of voting representatives to the National Forum.

20. RELATIONSHIPS WITH A NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER ECUMENICAL BODY

20.01 In this constitution the expression a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body refers to that body, whether corporate or unincorporated, which the NCCA, through the National Forum or the Executive, recognises from time to time as a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body. Recognition may be withdrawn at any time.

20.02 While recognising that a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body is autonomous, the NCCA invites its participation in the NCCA through the appointment of voting representatives to the National Forum and voting members of the Executive.

21. THE NATURE OF REPRESENTATION

21.01 Representatives of member churches on NCCA bodies will have a dual responsibility - to the church and to the NCCA. Within the NCCA they are responsible for representing the views of their church and for contributing to the life and work of the NCCA, and within their church they have a responsibility to represent the life and work of the NCCA.

22. FINANCE

22.01 The member churches will have responsibility for ensuring that normal running costs of the NCCA are adequately funded.

22.02 Each member church shall make financial contributions to the NCCA according to guidelines approved by the Executive.

22.03 The NCCA may obtain and raise funds by donations, bequests and sale of publications and in such other manner as the Executive may from time to time determine.

22.04 The Executive may authorise the borrowing of funds for the purposes of the NCCA.

22.05 All money received by the NCCA shall be deposited as soon as practicable to the credit of the NCCA in a bank or building society or with such other financial institutions as may from time to time be approved by the Executive.

22.06 All cheques, drafts, bills of exchange, promissory notes and other negotiable instruments shall be signed by any two members of the Executive or employees of the NCCA being members or employees authorised to do so by the Executive.

22.07 The NCCA shall have power to establish trust funds.

22.08 The General Secretary shall have power to authorise accounts to be established and operated with any bank, building society or other financial institution approved by the Executive for the purposes of any Commission or any activity of or associated with the NCCA.

22.09 A financial report shall be prepared for presentation to each meeting of the Executive and the annual financial statements duly audited shall be presented annually either to the Executive or to an ordinary meeting of the National Forum.

22.10 The Executive shall supervise the investment of the funds of the NCCA and may make grants, donations, loans, arrange conferences and consultations, employ or engage persons for specific projects or activities and do all other things within or outside Australia which it may consider in accordance with the objectives of the NCCA and the policies from time to time determined by the National Forum.

22.11 The Executive shall appoint the auditor[s] of the NCCA. The auditor shall not be a member of the Executive nor of any Commission, Committee, Working Group or other body whose accounts are to be audited. An auditor may be appointed to audit the accounts of a particular body or bodies within or related to the NCCA.

23. CORPORATE ENTITY

23.01 The Executive shall have power from time to time to incorporate, secure and maintain a corporate entity or, where it thinks fit, more than one such entity, for the purposes of the NCCA.

23.02 Whenever the Executive considers it desirable

[a] property funds and investments shall be held in the name of the corporate entity;

[b] activities shall be conducted on behalf of the NCCA by the corporate entity;

[c] the corporate entity shall employ persons or enter into contracts on behalf of the NCCA; and

[d] the corporate entity shall undertake any trusts which the NCCA desires it to undertake.

23.03 For this purpose the Executive shall have power to adopt or approve the memorandum and articles of association or the objectives, constitution and rules of the association and to appoint members and if appropriate, the governing body of the corporate entity from time to time and to give such directions to the corporate entity or its governing body as the Executive may consider appropriate from time to time.

24. AMENDMENTS

24.01 This Constitution may be amended at a meeting of the National Forum by a resolution passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds [2/3] of the members present and voting.

24.02 Notice of a proposed amendment shall be given to the General Secretary not less than three [3] weeks before the date of the meeting and shall be proposed by not less than three [3] member churches.

24.03 An amendment to the Basis or Objectives shall not take effect unless and until it is approved or ratified by all member churches.

25. DISSOLUTION

25.01 The NCCA shall be dissolved in the event that the number of member churches is less than four [4] or upon a resolution of a meeting of the National Forum passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds [2/3] of the members present and voting at a special meeting convened to consider the question provided that the resolution is approved or ratified by not less than two-thirds [2/3] of the member churches.

25.02 Upon dissolution, all surplus property remaining after payment of all expenses and satisfaction of all liabilities shall be transferred, paid or distributed in such manner as may be determined by a resolution passed at a special meeting of the National Forum or at a meeting of the members of the last preceding meeting of the National Forum which in either case is convened to consider the dissolution and/or the manner of distribution.

26. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS

26.01 The NCCA shall comply with the requirements of taxation law and laws relating to charities insofar as they are applicable.

Appendix D



Looking for a company that:

- ✓ conducts its business with integrity and genuine care for our community?
- ✓ offers expertise in understanding and managing risk?
- ✓ has competitive rates for individuals, families, businesses, faith organisations, educational facilities, community groups and not for profit organisations?
- ✓ allocates 10% of its profit* to Community Education Programs that enhance and enrich the lives of young Australians?

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