



**SHAPING OUR
ECUMENICAL
FOOTPRINT**

**7th Forum
National Council of Churches in Australia**

**Rydges Capital Hill
Canberra ACT**

9th - 13th July 2010

Working Papers

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LET US PRAY . . .

God of life, unity and peace,
you have called us to be your people.

Bring us to closer unity with you
within the household of your Church.

Direct our steps as we journey in the
National Council of Churches in Australia,
that we may become
what you have called us to be;

and that together
we may walk in newness of life;
new and old, east and west,
indigenous and
all who have gathered in this land
from the corners of the earth.

We ask this in the name of Jesus
and through the grace
and communion of the Holy Spirit

Amen.

a prayer for the
National Council of Churches in Australia
from the Inaugural Forum 1994

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Proposed Forum Program

**7th NCCA National Forum
Daily Schedule effect 19 May 2010**

Date	Day 1 Discovering Our Ecumenical Footprint Together	Day 2 Considering Our Ecumenical Footprint	Day 3 Identifying Aspects of Our Ecumenical Footprint	Day 4 Shaping Our Ecumenical Footprint	Day 5 The Future Ecumenical Footprint
Time	Friday July 9	Saturday July 10	Sunday July 11	Monday July 12	Tuesday July 13
7.00- 8.30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8.30 – 9.30		Worship & Bible Study	Worship in	Worship & Bible Study	Worship & Bible Study
9.30 – 10.30		Civic Greetings (30) Presidents Address(30)	Local Churches	Business NATSIEC F&U Safe Churches	Business + Affirming the Future Directions
10.30 – 11.00		Morning Tea		Morning Tea	Morning Tea
11.00 – 12.00		Gen Sec Address (30)		Future Directions Feedback 1	Business/Decision
12.00 – 1.00		Business + Presentation of President's Search Committee.		Business/Decision	Closing Worship New Executive
1.00 – 3.30	Arrival and Registration	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
3.30 – 4.00		Challenges of our Culture Panel /Input Conversation Table Groups F&U NATSIEC CWS	Programme Reporting 1. NATSIEC 2. CWS 3. F&U 4. SJN 5. Secretariat 3x45mins 2x10 to move	Focus Sessions + The Churches on the Road Business/Decision	
4.00 – 5.30	4.45 – 6.00 Opening Actions 16:45 Welcome to Country 17:00 Opening Worship 17:20 Purpose of the Forum 17:30 Introductions/Prelim Actions 17:40 New Member Church	Afternoon Tea Report Finance Resourcing the NCCA 5.00 Prayer 5.10 Denominational Meetings 5.30 Free Time	Afternoon Tea Future Directions 1 1. Faith and Order 2. Mission 3. Social/Public Issues Denominational 5.30 Free Time	Afternoon Tea Beginning to Shape the Future - Future Directions Feedback 2 5.30 Free Time	
6.00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
7.30 -9.00	The Church, Our Nation and Social Inclusion Sen. Ursula Stephens	Free Evening	Ecumenical Worship	Public Lecture A New Ecumenical Wave – Fr G Kelly	
9.00 – 9.10	Evening Prayer			Evening Prayer	

Proposed Forum Program- Annotated

This program is subject to change. Please view the online Proposed Program for the latest updates at <http://www.ncca.org.au/forums/7th-national-forum/512-draft>.

<u>When</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Where</u>
❖ <u>Friday 9th July</u>	Stepping Out Together	
3.00 p.m.	Registrations	
4.45 pm	Welcome to Country	Plenary Room
5.00 pm	Opening Worship	Plenary Room
5:20 pm	Purpose of the Forum	Plenary Room
5:30 pm	Introductions / Preliminary Actions	Plenary Room
5:40 pm	New Member Churches	Plenary Room
6.00 p.m.	Evening Meal	Dining Room
7.30 p.m.	The Church, Our Nation and Social Inclusion Sen Ursula Stephens	Plenary Room
9.00 p.m.	Closing Prayer	Plenary Room
❖ <u>Saturday 10th July</u>	Considering Our Ecumenical Footprint	
7.00 a.m.	Breakfast *	Own Arrangements
8.30 a.m.	Worship	Plenary Room
8.45 a.m.	Bible Study: John Gibaut	Plenary Room
9.30 a.m.	Civic and other greetings	Plenary Room
10.00 a.m.	Address: The President of NCCA	Plenary Room
10.15 a.m.	Table Discussion: Reflection on the President's address	Plenary Room
10.30 a.m.	Morning Tea	
11.00 a.m.	Address: The General Secretary of NCCA	Plenary Room
11.15 a.m.	Table Discussion: Reflection on the General Secretaries' address	Plenary Room
11.30 a.m.	Business Session + Presentation of President's Search Committee. + Reception of Written Reports	
12.00 noon	Lunch	Dining Room
1.00 pm	Challenges of our Culture Panel /Input Conversation	Plenary Room Table Groups

<u>When</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Where</u>
2.00 pm	Focus Session: + Faith and Unity + NATSIEC + CWS	
3.30 p.m.	Afternoon Tea	
4.00 p.m.	Reporting Finance Committee	Plenary Room
4.30 pm	Resourcing the NCCA	Plenary Room
5.00 p.m.	Closing Prayer	Plenary Room
5.10 p.m.	Denominational Meetings	Various Places
5.30 pm	Free Time	
6.00 p.m.	Evening Meal	Dining Room
	Evening Free	
❖ <u>Sunday 11th July</u> Identifying Aspects of Our Ecumenical Footprint		
7.00 a.m.	Breakfast *	Own Arrangements
	Unscheduled time Worship in Local Churches	
12.00 p.m.	Lunch	Dining Room
2.00 p.m.	Reporting Sessions: 1. Faith & Unity 2. CWS 3. NATSIEC 4. Social Justice 5. Secretariat	Various Places
3.30 p.m.	Afternoon Tea	
4.00 p.m.	Future Directions 1 1. Faith and Order 2. Mission 3. Social/Public Issues	Various Places
5.00 p.m.	Denominational Meeting	Various Places
5.30 pm	Free Time	
6.00 p.m.	Evening Meal	Dining Room
7.30 p.m.	Ecumenical Worship	Wesley Uniting
❖ <u>Monday 12th July</u> Shaping Our Ecumenical Footprint		
7.00 a.m.	Breakfast *	Own Arrangements
8.30 a.m.	Worship	Plenary Room
8.45 a.m.	Bible Study: John Gibaut	Plenary Room

SHAPING OUR ECUMENICAL FOOTPRINT

<u>When</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Where</u>
9.30 a.m.	Business Session + NATSIEC + Faith and Unity Broadening the Theological Dialogue. + Safe Churches Network formalized.	Plenary Room
10.30 a.m.	Morning Tea	
11.00 a.m.	Future Directions Feedback 1 overview from the previous day + Faith and Order + Mission + Social/Public Issues	Plenary Room
11.30 a.m.	Business Session: + Proposals Arising	Plenary Room
12.00 noon	Lunch	Dining Room
1.00 p.m.	Focus Sessions + The Churches on the Road	Plenary Room
2.00 p.m.	Business Session + Nominations Committee	Plenary Room
3.30 p.m.	Afternoon Tea	
4.00 p.m.	Beginning to Shape the Future + Future Directions Feedback 2	Plenary / Table Groups
5.30 pm	Free Time	
6.00 p.m.	Evening Meal	Dining Room
7.30 p.m.	Public Lecture: A New Ecumenical Wave Fr Gerard Kelly	Plenary Room
9.00 p.m.	Evening Prayer	Plenary Room
❖ <u>Tuesday 13th July</u> The Future Ecumenical Footprint		
7.00 a.m.	Breakfast *	Own Arrangements
8.30 a.m.	Prayers	Plenary Room
8.45a.m.	Bible Study: John Gibaut	Plenary Room
9.30 a.m.	Business Session: + Affirming the Future Directions	Plenary Room
10.30 a.m.	Morning Tea	
11.00 a.m.	Business Session	Plenary Room
11.30 am	Closing Worship	Plenary Room
12.00 noon	Lunch	Dining Room

* Note: Breakfast is provided according to each participants own arrangements. All other meals for all participants are provided for at Rydges Capital Hill, Canberra, for the duration of the Forum.

Recommendations

Opening Actions

★ Appointment of Committees

1. the following persons be appointed as a Steering Committee for this National Forum: (Names will be recommended at the Forum.)
2. the Steering Committee be asked to make any proposals it deems necessary regarding the ordering of business;
3. the following persons be appointed as a Nominations Committee for his National Forum: (Names will be recommended at the Forum.)
4. the Nominations Committee be asked to bring recommendations for membership of the commissions, committees and networks based on the recommendations of member Churches.

★ Business to be considered

It is recommended that

5. the deadline for recommendations moved and seconded by member Churches be submitted in writing to the Chairperson no later than noon on Sunday, July 11, 2010.
6. comment be sought from the Finance Committee representative prior to action being taken on any recommendation or motion that has financial implications, with the mover of any such recommendation asked to indicate what the practical implications are likely to be.

★ Minutes

7. it is recommended that the Executive be authorised to approve the Minutes of the 7th National Forum.

★ Program / Timetable

8. it is recommended that the proposed timetable and procedures be adopted, subject to such variations as may be approved in the course of this National Forum.

Acceptance of the New Member Churches

It is recommended that

9. the Serbian Orthodox Church be accepted and embraced into the National Council of Churches in Australia by the delegates of this National Forum.
10. the Indian Orthodox Church be accepted and embraced into the National Council of Churches in Australia by the delegates of this National Forum.

Report Recommendations

It is recommended that

General Secretary and Executive (*see pages 23 - 32*)

11. the General Secretary and Executive report be received.
12. the Safe Church Working Group be reformed from this 7th Forum the Safe Church Network.
13. the mandate of the Safe Church Network as per the Addendum of the Safe Church Working Group Report (*see page 77*) be approved.

Finance Committee Report (*see pages 33 - 36*)

14. the Finance Committee report be received.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) (*see pages 37 - 49*)

15. the NATSIEC report be received.
16. Churches represented on the NATSIEC Commission explore ways that they can contribute financially to the cost of participation.
17. NATSIEC and the Churches continue to work together to ensure that Indigenous issues and concerns are kept at the forefront of their attention and not subsumed under a broader justice issue in Australia and within the wider International ecumenical movement.
18. the 7th Forum accepts the amendments to the *Memorandum of Understanding between the NATSIEC and the NCCA*. (*see pages 43-49*)

Christian World Service Commission (CWSC) (*see pages 51 - 56*)

19. the CWSC report be received.

Faith and Unity Commission (*see pages 57 - 69*)

20. the Faith and Unity Commission report be received.
21.
 - a. the resource document 'Further Study on Australian Churches Covenanting Together' be noted and received as an addendum to the Faith and Unity Commission report.
 - b. the recommendations in the resource document be adopted by the NCCA to guide its work in promoting the Australian Churches Covenanting process.

22.
 - a. the resource document on 'Broadening the Theological Dialogue' be noted and received as an addendum to the Faith and Unity Commission report.
 - b. the principles in the resource document be adopted by the NCCA to guide its work in 'Broadening the Theological Dialogue'.
23. That the Forum endorse the Faith and Unity Commission's intention to undertake further study of the WCC texts *Nature and Mission of the Church* and *Called to be the One Church*, mutual accountability, and receptive ecumenism.
24. That, in the light of the ending of secretarial support, the Forum provide the Faith and Unity Commission with a very clear indication of the core tasks for its work for the next three years.

ADDENDUM 1 (Faith and Unity Commission) (see pages 64 - 67)

At the 2007 Forum of the NCCA new members were invited to sign *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* in those places where they were able.

25. the accepted practice for new member Churches of the NCCA is that each Church be invited to sign the *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* document.

In this way, *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* becomes for the NCCA an instrument by which it assists the churches to enter into deeper relationships with each other. For the churches, the multilateral act of covenanting concretises their commitment to each other and to the unity of the church.

Australian Churches Covenanting Together was always intended to be a dynamic document that reflected the growth in unity among the churches. National heads of churches signed it on behalf of their church.

26. the churches be encouraged to regularly evaluate their ecumenical relationships at all levels of church life in the light of their commitment to each other at a national level.
27. the Faith and Unity Commission be asked to monitor international agreements between churches with a view to helping Australian churches commit to equivalent agreements at the local level.
28. the various dimensions of *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* be reviewed at each Forum of the NCCA, with a view to broadening them when member churches can recognise new developments in their relationships.

There are many instances across the country where local congregations join each other for such things as prayer, bible study, and support for the poor and marginalised. There are instances where they share buildings and other resources.

29. the churches invite those at parish level to acknowledge what they are already doing and to bring this before God in a solemn act of covenanting.
30. local covenants or local agreements be renewed annually, perhaps at a time of the year that is significant for all the churches involved, or else during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Most of the stories we have heard of covenanting have involved bilateral relationships.

31. covenanting be a topic for consideration at the next Forum on Bilateral Dialogues. The aim of such a consideration would be to help the churches recognise the agreements that have been reached with their dialogue partners and to prompt them to look for ways to bring the unity they already share to concrete expression.

Gender Commission (*see pages 71 - 74*)

32. the Gender Commission report be received.

Safe Church Project (*see pages 75 - 77*)

33. the Safe Church Project Working Group report be received.

Social Justice Network (*see pages 79 - 81*)

34. the Social Justice Network report be received.

Communications Desk (*see pages 83 - 84*)

35. the Communications Desk report be received.

Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund (*see pages 85 - 86*)

36. the Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund report be received.

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)
(*see pages 87 - 90*)

37. the NCCA EAPPI Desk report be received.

Reports

General Secretary and Executive Report

1. EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

1.1 The NCCA Executive has met 9 times in the last triennium. Meetings were initially held Thursday and Friday morning, this pattern was evaluated in March 2008 and changed to commence Wednesday evening with a light meal and conversation that informed key issues on the agenda. A formal meeting was then held on the Thursday concluding with a fellowship meal together for all who were able to attend.

1.2 The venues for meetings have been:

Date	Location	Voting Attendance
17 July 07	Alexander Headlands Qld (following the Forum)	16
8-9 Nov07	Uniting Church Assembly Offices, Sydney	27
6-7 March 08	St Stephen's Uniting Church, Sydney	28
25-26 June 08	NSW Leagues Club Phillip St, Sydney	16 *
5 – 6 Nov 08	Nineveh Club, Edensor Park NSW	24
11-12 March 09	St Patrick's Church, Church Hill, Sydney	27
24-25 June 09	The Salvation Army Territorial HQ, Sydney	28
4-5 Nov 09	St Patrick's Church, Church Hill, Sydney	24
3-4 March 10	St Stephen's Uniting Church, Sydney	26

* a quorum for the Executive is 22 voting members. In the absence of a quorum an electronic / telephone vote was conducted.

1.3 The NCCA very much appreciates the hospitality of the churches that have made their premises available for Executive meetings.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

2.1 The NCCA Executive comprises the head of church, and a designated member from the 17 member churches. In addition each church identifies an alternate to head of church for the occasion when they are unable to attend meetings. The alternate is able to participate in discussion but only votes when the head of church is absent.

2.2 In addition Executive meetings include representatives from four observer churches these are the Australian Christian Churches, the Baptist Church, Presbyterian Church, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, their contribution in discussion is always valued.

3. NCCA OFFICERS

3.1 President

The 6th Forum amended the NCCA constitution so that the President is now elected by the Forum for three years. Bishop Richard Appleby's three year term concluded in July 2009. Bishop Richard was not in a position to serve longer so the Executive elected Bishop Michael Putney to be President until the conclusion of the 7th

Forum. The President's search committee will bring a recommendation to the Forum for the election of President.

3.2 Treasurer

After some difficulty in filling the office of Treasurer and approaches to the churches for nominations of appropriate people, Richard Menteith was elected in February 2008.

4. NCCA STAFFING

4.1 Executive Staff

In August 2008 John Henderson submitted his resignation as General Secretary accepting a call as Principal of the Australian Lutheran College in Adelaide. The Executive approved the process for finding a suitable replacement. The search committee brought a recommendation to the March 2009 meeting which approved the appointment for five years of Tara Curlewis commencing May 2009.

During the period since the 6th Forum the Executive has approved contract renewals for the NCCA Executive staff Paul Ryan and Graeme Mundine in November 2007 and Alistair Gee 2008.

4.2 Youth Officer and Network

The Youth Officer concluded with the NCCA just prior to the 6th Forum, due to budgetary constraints the position was unable to be replaced. After a discussion with members of the Youth Network the recommendation to discontinue the Network was approved by the Executive. Consideration is being given to the participation of youth in the life of the NCCA.

4.3 Faith and Unity Secretary

This term of the Faith and Unity Commission has been resourced by Rev'd Dr. Jonathan Inkipin as the secretary. Unfortunately due to financial restraints at this time remuneration for the position of secretary is not available for the next term of the commission. The Executive agreed that as soon as funds are available that the paid role of Faith and Unity Secretary be reinstated.

5. REPORTING AGAINST THE NCCA OBJECTIVES

The four objectives as identified in the NCCA constitution have guided the work of the Executive. This report attempts to highlight how the NCCA objectives have been fulfilled since the 6th Forum.

OBJECTIVE ONE

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;

6. PARTICIPATION IN MEMBER CHURCH GATHERINGS

6.1 World Youth Day / Visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI

The NCCA was pleased to be able to participate in a number of the special occasions during World Youth Day, including the ecumenical reception with His Holiness in the Crypt of St Marys Cathedral.

6.2 Anglican General Synod

The NCCA provides a brief written report for publication with the working papers for the General Synod meeting held every three years and attends the opening worship for the synod.

6.3 Uniting Church Assembly

In 2009 the General Secretary attended the Uniting Church Assembly service of installation for the President and the dinner for ecumenical guests along with representatives from other NCCA member churches.

6.4 UCA Christian Unity Working Group

This working group of the Uniting Church holds a national conference annually to which they invite the NCCA to participate. On several occasions the General Secretary has provided a summary and listeners overview for the meeting.

OBJECTIVE TWO

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;

7. GROWING CHURCHES IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

7.1 Convocations have been held in Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Canberra. Kingsley Knowell from The Salvation Army facilitated the convocations examining the questions 'what it means to be a healthy church in the Australian context'; and what does a growing church look like in the Australian context?' The working group is assessing the next steps to be taken.

[ii.] addressing moral issues;

8. MORAL ISSUES

8.1 The NCCA has not focussed on this objective, since the Churches are in debate on these issues among themselves, so joint action becomes difficult. Our current working structures do not have a Commission, Network, or Project with the responsibility for addressing moral issues.

[iii.] speaking out on behalf of oppressed people

9. AUSTRALIAN CHURCH LEADERS VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST

9.1 During December 2007 Archbishop Philip Aspinall; Archbishop Francis Carroll; Rev Gregor Henderson; Rev Terence Corkin; Lyndsay Farrall; Merrill Kitchen; Mr Kevin Bray; Rev John Henderson; and Rev Rod Benson participated in a visit to Palestine / Israel.

9.2 The purpose of the visit was to;

- express our solidarity with Palestinian Christians,
- equip ourselves to undertake more advocacy and education in Australia in support of
- peace and justice for the people of Palestine,
- meet with:
 - ◆ church leaders in Jerusalem,
 - ◆ Jewish and Muslim faith leaders in Jerusalem,
 - ◆ Palestinian and Israeli political leaders,
- learn about the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) and the work of the MECC Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSRP).

9.3 On 12th December from Bethlehem the Australian Church leaders issued a statement in which they asked Australian Churches to:

- pray for a just and lasting peace for Jerusalem and the Holy Land;

- encourage the Australian Government to take more action to support a just and lasting peace for Israel and Palestine;
- hear the stories of the suffering and oppression, perseverance and hope of the people of the Holy Land;
- sponsor aid and development projects in the West Bank and Gaza;
- support the status of Jerusalem as an open city for all faiths and peoples;
- encourage Australian Christians to visit the Holy Land and foster relationships with Palestinian Christians;
- build stronger relationships with Jewish and Muslim communities in Australia.

9.4 Three Faith Visit to the Middle East

Exploratory conversations continue to make very slow progress concerning a three faiths visit to the Middle East. The NCCA, Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) have each identified three representatives for the conversation.

10. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

10.1 Kosovo

The March 2008 Executive heard the concerns of the Serbian Orthodox Church's dissatisfaction with Australia's recognition of the unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo. Serbians consider this region sovereign territory and part of their homeland. A letter was sent to the Federal Government in support of the concerns of the Serbian Orthodox Church along with a supportive letter to the Serbian Patriarch.

10.2 Assyrian Christians

A statement was issued after the 2007 federal election regarding the situation of Christians in Iraq.

10.3 Coptic Christians in Egypt

On several occasions the NCCA sent requests for churches to pray for the situation of Coptic Christians in Egypt. Letters have also been sent to Bishop Daniel and Bishop Suriel expressing our support and to the Egyptian ambassador and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs expressing concern. This year, after violence resulting in the deaths of six young Coptic Christians the NCCA walked with the Coptic Church as they held peaceful marches and rallies in our capitol cities.

10.4 Indian State of Orissa

A letter of solidarity was sent to Indian Christians in Orissa during their turbulent and violent experiences in 2008.

10.5 International Students in Australia

Acts of violence and mistreatment of International Students greatly concerned the Executive, as a result of raising this matter with member churches and all state ecumenical councils. Activities to build relationships with international students have been organised by several churches.

11. SAFE CHURCHES

11.1 Safe Church Working Group

After considering need for ongoing work in the area of Safe Churches the Executive resolved that steps be taken for the working group to be recognised as a Network at the 7th Forum.

11.2 Safe Church Training Agreement

The Safe Church Training Agreement (NCCA-SCTA) aims to make the Australian church a safer place for ministry by: resourcing, facilitating, sustainable, quality, accessible Safe Church Training. One of the key objectives is to make Australian Churches safer places by providing National Standards for Safe Church programs. In November 2007 the Executive approved conducting two pilots programmes to be run in 2008. These were conducted in NSW and Western Australia. The NCCA-SCTA now has twenty partners signed onto the agreement in four states and one territory. This program continues to grow and is financially self sufficient.

12. SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS

12.1 Cluster Munitions

At the March 2008 meeting the Executive gave consideration to the matter of cluster munitions. Following discussion the Executive noted the WCC Central Committee statement on cluster munitions, including the Christian basis for standing against the production and use of cluster munitions. The Executive also resolved that the NCCA condemns the use of cluster munitions and supports the development of a treaty to ban cluster munitions; and the NCCA urged the Australian Government to actively support the development of an international treaty.

[iv.] acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people;

13. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

13.1 The NCCA Executive has worked with NATSIEC using the following principles.

- Strong agreement with the need to stop abuse occurring, particularly of children, and deal with the societal factors that make such abuse more likely
- Solidarity with Indigenous leadership
- Empowerment of Indigenous voices, particularly Christians, on issues that directly concern their communities
- Working with Civil Society groups who are equally concerned about the well being of Australians, including Indigenous Australians

[v.] responding to human need and acting on issues of justice, peace and creation;

14. THE AUSTRALIAN COLLABORATION

14.1 The Australian Collaboration is a collaboration of national community organisations representing social, cultural and environmental constituencies and interests. The main activities of the Collaboration are to act as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information between its member bodies and to carry out research projects and publish books and reports on key issues. The organisations participating in the work of the Australian Collaboration are:

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF)
 The Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)
 The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)
 Choice (The Australian Consumers Association)
 The Federation of Ethnic Community Councils of Australia (FECCA)
 The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA)
 The Trust for Young Australians (TYA)

15. CLIMATE ISSUES

- 15.1 Issues pertaining to concerns around climate were identified, the Executive resolved to conduct an audit of individuals and groups among the member churches unfortunately the responses were few and unable to be utilised further.
- 15.2 It was also hoped that a summit on a Christian response to Climate change would be convened. Changes in NCCA staff and the inability to form a working group with a shared vision and commitment to a summit the organisation of such a gathering has not been possible. The importance of identifying a Christian response to these issues is still very real and the possibility of holding an e-conference is being explored in conjunction with staff from the Australian Catholic University.
- 15.3 In addition the Executive approached three people to form a drafting team for a Joint Churches Statement on Climate Change, for a variety of reasons progress on this statement has also been slow.

16. NATIONAL CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

- 16.1 The National Civil Society Dialogue is a collaboration between the ACTU, the Australian Council of Social Services, the Australian Conservation Foundation, and the NCCA. Elenie Poulos and the General Secretary have represented the NCCA. The dialogue is an attempt by the so-called third sector (non government, not for profit organisations) to create a sector awareness and legitimacy as contributors to public policy debate. In 2008 the third Civil Society Dialogue was held in Canberra with the focus on Climate Change and the environment, and participants prepared a statement on Climate Action.

17. FEDERAL ELECTION 2007

- 17.1 As in 2004 the NCCA prepared a Pre-Election Kit for the 2007 federal election. The office experienced difficulty organising the NCCA member church contributions. This was partly due to the workload in the office, and the Social Justice Network's scarcity of resources. The Executive is grateful for the willingness of CWS staff in assisting with the production of the kit.

OBJECTIVE THREE

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;

18. APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

- 18.1 The Serbian Orthodox Church and the Indian Orthodox Church have both applied for membership of the NCCA. The Executive brings a recommendation to the 7th Forum that these applications for membership be received.

19. CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA (CCA)

- 19.1 Paul Ryan represented the NCCA General Secretary at the 2008 Asian meeting of General Secretaries in Dhaka, this proved to make a valuable contribution to his ecumenical formation.
- 19.2 In April 2010 the NCCA sent four delegates to the CCA 13th General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur and along with delegates from the other Australian member churches began a conversation of exploration around the possibility of hosting the 2015 CCA Assembly in Australia. When CCA establishes a process for planning the next Assembly it is hoped that an invitation from Australia will be considered.

20. WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (WCC)

- 20.1 The NCCA is an associated council of the WCC and remains active in WCC activities. The Executive has encouraged the General Secretary to attend the Central Committee meetings held every 18 months. At the August 2009 Central Committee meeting Catherine Inkpin attended as a part of the youth steward's program.
- 20.2 Graeme Mundine has participated in a number of programs and continues to offer support and encouragement to the WCC Indigenous Desk. Recently the WCC has accepted an invitation for a Living Letters Team to visit with Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory and to meet with Federal Government representatives about the NT Emergency Response. This visit is planned for September 2010.

21. NATIONAL COUNCILS OF CHURCHES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**21.1 National Council of Churches in India**

Graeme Mundine recently represented the NCCA at the national Assembly of the NCC India in Shillong, in the north of India. He combined this with the Indigenous peoples gathering prior to the Assembly.

21.2 Greetings to National Councils

Greetings from the NCCA were extended to the 37th National Assembly of NCC Japan, 60th Anniversary Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), General Assembly Council of Churches of Malaysia.

22. ECUMENICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN AUSTRALIA**22.1 Australian Ecumenical Officers Network (AEON)**

The AEON group continues to foster co-operation between States and between State and National Ecumenical Bodies. The network comprises the four executive staff of the NCCA and the General Secretaries of staffed States and the Presidents from unstaffed states. Meetings are approximately every six weeks via a one hour teleconference and an annual 'face-to-face' meeting is held in Sydney.

22.2 National State Relationships

Good Relationships with the State Ecumenical Councils is of utmost importance to the NCCA unfortunately these relationships have been under considerable strain for some time. Out of a deep concern for our ecumenical relationships the NCCA Executive invited each state council to participate in a consultation held in May 2009 at the Centre in Randwick. This consultation was an attempt to find a way forward at that time, but did not achieve all that had been hoped.

- 22.3 The NCCA Executive devoted much time over several meetings considering the continuing strain on our ecumenical relationships and discerning what might assist the process of reconciliation and healing to begin. This led to inviting each state council to participate in a facilitated conversation to develop a partnership agreement. The Conversations that have taken place have been most helpful in moving towards signed partnership agreements.

22.4 Working Group on Subsidiarity and Governance

Following the May 2009 State Ecumenical Council – NCCA consultation the Executive resolved to form a Working Group on Subsidiarity and Governance. People have been identified by each State Council to participate in this working group and the NCCA General Secretary is collating previous correspondence and actions for the groups consideration.

23. INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

23.1 The NCCA has welcomed a variety of international visitors during the last three years these include;

- Reverend Bill Brown Convener of the Church of Scotland
- Jack Dunford and Duncan Macarthur Thai Burma Border Consortium
- Delegation from Ethnic Nationalities Council of Burma
- Fe'iloatikau Kaho Tevi, General Secretary Pacific Conference of Churches
- Reverend Peter Tibi, General Secretary Sudan Council of Churches
- Ibu Lies Marantika from Ambon
- General Secretary and Treasurer Indonesian Communion of Churches
- Reverend Dr. Andre Karamaga, General Secretary of the All African Conference of Churches (AACC),

[ii.] with people of other living faiths;

24. AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL DIALOGUE OF CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND JEWS (ANDCMJ)

24.1 Each faith community is represented by a team from their respective National Organisations NCCA, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) and Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ). Each dialogue consists of sharing matters of significance to our faith at the time as well as a presentation and conversation on an agreed topic.

24.2 The topics discussed since 2007 are;

1. "Visions of Redemption" – a discussion of heaven and hell and who goes where from the perspective of the three religions.
2. "What Our Faith Community looks like in Australia."
3. "Women in Our Faith."

24.3 The uniqueness of the ANDCMJ, is its origin in the three national faith communities, it determines its agenda according to what is useful to those communities rather than conforming to a political or social agenda.

25. AUSTRALIAN PARTNERSHIP OF RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION (APRO)

25.1 The NCCA continues to be part of this partnership the organisations and communities represented in APRO are committed to promote;

- an Australia of ethnically and religiously diverse peoples that is their home;
- the practices and principles of social justice (this encompasses the equality of access to political and legal rights, the right to full social and economic participation through the reduction of material disadvantage);
- Australian Multiculturalism as a core value that defines what it means to be an Australian in the 21st century and that encompasses respect and celebration of our diversity;

25.2 Members of APRO include: National Council of Churches in Australia, Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Baha'i community, Australian Sangha Association, Sikh community, Hindu community, Buddhist community: Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, Australian Sangha Association. Several Multicultural and Ethnic groups are Associate Members and there are also Academic Advisors.

26. DFAT REGIONAL INTERFAITH DIALOGUES

- 26.1 The General Secretary attended the 3rd and 4th DFAT Regional Interfaith Dialogue meetings. Each held in a different country in our region the 3rd in Waitangi, New Zealand from 29-31 May 2007 and the 4th Dialogue meeting was held in April 2008 in Phnom Penh.
- 26.2 Occasionally the NCCA is asked to contribute to interfaith discussions with visiting delegations from Asian countries, organised by DFAT. These have included delegations from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia including senior journalists and religious leaders, and from southern Thailand a Buddhist/Muslim group.

27. RECEPTION WITH THE DALAI LAMA

During the 2008 visit to Australia of the Dalai Lama the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet arranged a private reception which John Henderson attended on behalf of the NCCA

OBJECTIVE FOUR

[d.] to undertake joint initiatives as determined from time to time by the National Forum at the request of member Churches.

28. ARISING FROM THE 6th FORUM

- 28.1 All resolutions of the 6th Forum where the Forum resolved to undertake certain action were put into effect. Those matters that were referred to the NCCA Executive for implementation are reported in the following section of the report.

28.2 Appropriate Ecumenical Response

This matter was a topic of discussion for the Executive, the Strategic Planning Group as well as at AEON meetings. A creative proposal to take stock of the ecumenical landscape was also considered. After the May 2009 Consultation with State Councils the Working Group on Subsidiarity and Governance was formed.

28.3 Communication, Collaboration and Cooperation

A paper was prepared for the Executive's consideration, arising from this working groups were formed to further consider Rules for the Conduct of Meetings and the need for a Self Review. This work is still in progress. An attempt to better communicate the activities of the NCCA Executive has been taken up by the production of the NCCA Executive Briefing which is distributed widely through a variety of networks.

28.4 Local Mission Developments

The Forum's suggestion of a report concerning local mission developments and the nature of consultation between member churches was unable to be completed due to insufficient information. The Executive was unable to give any further consideration to this matter.

28.5 Forum Workshop Reports

Materials and reports from the Workshop sessions of the 6th Forum were sent to the relevant Commissions, Networks, Working Groups or Department for comment and possible action. A large volume of data collected during the facilitated sessions was tabulated and passed onto the Executive. A Strategic Planning Working Group was formed to consider the material it identified four broad themes;

1. Interfaith Relations
2. Justice Issues
3. Indigenous People
4. Ecumenical Formation

The suggestion in the materials “to develop a model legal framework for shared ministry” with the limited resources of the NCCA this task was not achievable.

28.6 Indigenous Education

The NCCA had insufficient resources to be able to arrange the coordination of data concerning the number and nature of scholarships and assistance offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by schools of member Churches.

29. BUSINESS PASSED TO THE NEXT EXECUTIVE

29.1 Reshaping Executive Meetings

The March 2010 Executive Meeting identified the need to reshape Executive meetings around three key focus areas:

1. Faith and Order,
2. Mission
3. Public / Social Issues

The Executive will need to identify resource people for each area who then facilitate discussion on the current issues for the churches to consider. The working structures of the NCCA will then progress the issues as guided by the Executive.

29.2 Rules for the conduct of meetings

A paper on models of consensus decision making was received by the Executive. A working group is in the process of drafting rules for the conduct of meetings in order to formalize meeting procedures.

29.3 Self Review

The Executive identified a two stage self review process comprising questions to member Churches and observer Churches to be formulated by the NCCA Executive and a process for receiving and considering the responses. With limited resources this review is yet to be completed.

30. FUTURE MEETING DATES

The NCCA Executive will hold a brief first meeting immediately at the conclusion of the Forum. The second meeting will be in Sydney 3-4 November 2010.

Tara Curlewis
General Secretary
May 2010

Finance Committee Report

The Finance Committee is responsible, on behalf of the NCCA Executive, for the oversight of all financial matters pertaining to the operations of the NCCA and associated bodies, particularly the processes of budget development and control.

Introduction

After a number of years without a Treasurer, the appointment of Richard Menteith in February 2008 was welcome news. The Committee expresses its gratitude to Ron Brown and David Cohen who served as co-chairs prior to Richard's appointment.

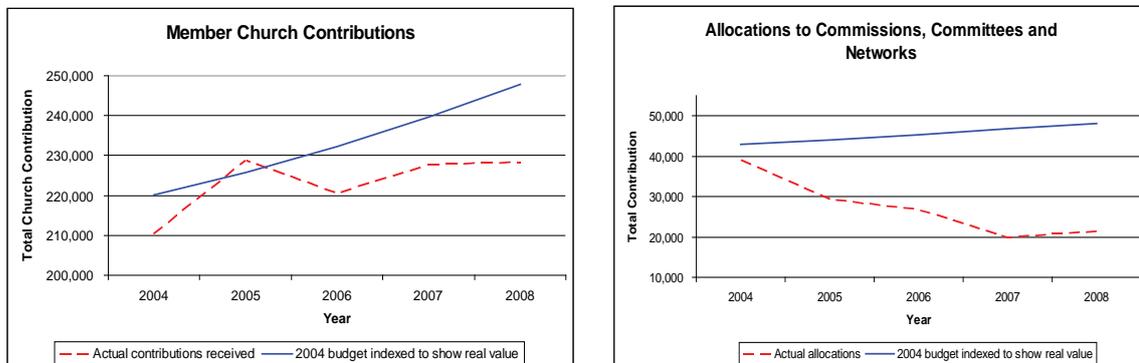
As well as carrying out its normal duties, the past three years have seen the Committee work on a number of projects, such as:

- Sale of Level 6, 379 Kent St Sydney
- Strathfield Home for the Aged operational transfer
- Change of year end from 31 December to 30 June
- Appointment of new internal and external auditors
- Implementation of a new donor database
- Handing over NSWEC accounting services to a new provider
- Managing the effects of the global financial crisis

Some of these matters are reported on more fully in the coming pages.

Budget Development

The Committee has for some time been concerned that the level of Church contributions is insufficient to cover the ongoing operations of the Council.



The last 3 years have seen significant reductions in programmatic spending – there is no longer funding for the Youth Network, and there are budgeted cuts for both the Gender Commission and Faith and Unity Commission for 2010/2011. These cuts have come purely from a lack of available funds, and not from any change in direction requested by the Churches. The Finance Committee is concerned that taking these decisions “on the fly” may in fact be contradicting the will the Churches have for the NCCA.

Systems

After an extensive search and tender process, a new fundraising database (Thank Q) was purchased in late 2008. This new system has yielded many benefits, the most significant being the interaction between the database and our bank - credit card gifts no longer need to be keyed into both an EFTPOS machine and then the database.

The Finance Committee had wanted to find an integrated fundraising database and accounting system, but nothing suitable was available. A review is currently underway for a new accounting system, with plans to switch over in July 2010.

SHAPING OUR ECUMENICAL FOOTPRINT

Financial Results

	<i>NCCA – excluding Act for Peace</i>	
	18 months to 30 June 09	12 months to 31 December 07
Income		
Church contributions	383,039	241,595
Donations and gifts	196,479	108,034
Grants	65,920	79,945
Support Service fees	690,045	451,261
Projects and events	153,580	116,874
Investment income	31,552	15,628
Act for Peace contribution	188,850	139,693
Other income	16,349	22,458
Total Income	<u>1,725,815</u>	<u>1,175,488</u>
Expenditure		
Staff costs	1,053,526	636,749
Travel and meetings	152,170	83,171
Occupancy	77,566	88,122
Office costs	194,656	151,852
NSWEC fee – F&U	10,002	4,500
Projects and events	276,454	199,201
State Friends rebates	5,805	2,664
Promotional expenses	14,649	-
Total Expenditure	<u>1,784,827</u>	<u>1,166,259</u>
Surplus / (deficit)	<u>(59,012)</u>	<u>9,299</u>

Notes:

- ⇒ The NCCA financial year was changed to 30 June to bring it in line with Act for Peace, which moved to a 30 June year end in 2008 (bringing Act for Peace's year end in line with AusAID reporting periods and allowing a more accurate cut-off of Christmas Bowl receipts.) The accounts above compare an 18 month period to a 12 month period.
- ⇒ There were adequate financial reserves to cover this deficit.

	<i>Act for Peace</i>	
	12 months to 30 June 09	12 months to 30 June 08
Revenue		
Donations and gifts	3,504,766	3,828,111
Legacies and bequests	120,380	26,625
Grants – AusAID	2,057,944	2,069,008
Investment income	166,100	112,852
Other income	1,056,563	1,120,666
Total Revenue	<u>6,905,753</u>	<u>7,157,262</u>
Disbursements		
Funds to overseas projects	4,677,450	4,321,039
Other project costs	422,868	367,853
Domestic projects	493,546	504,998
Fundraising costs	500,344	525,144
Community education	213,891	279,945
Administration	487,756	472,552
Total Disbursements	<u>6,795,855</u>	<u>6,471,230</u>
Surplus / (deficit)	<u>109,898</u>	<u>686,032</u>

Property

Level 7, 379 Kent St Sydney is the main NCCA office (shared with the NSW Ecumenical Council). It is the top floor of a commercial strata building.

2a Chester St Petersham is a block of 6 units that is used as housing for refugees and asylum seekers. 3 units are tenanted to cover the costs of providing the other 3 at no cost. The property is managed by LJ Hooker Balmain.

55 Homebush Rd Strathfield is leased to the Fraternity of the Holy Cross to use for aged care. This is the operation of what was Strathfield Home for the Aged.

Level 4, 306 Little Collins St Melbourne is the office for a number of Act for Peace staff. This office is shared with the Victorian Council of Churches (operating under an Memorandum of Understanding) and some surplus space is leased to another building occupant for storage. This is a mixed use building (commercial, retail and residential).

Level 6, 379 Kent St Sydney was sold in January 2008 for \$1,400,000. After deducting the various fees, legal costs and the expenses related to the new fit out of Level 7, the remaining funds of \$1,187,088 were placed in term deposits and have been apportioned to the 3 equity holders (NCCA Act for Peace, NCCA Secretariat and the NSW Ecumenical Council).

During one of the audit planning meetings the Finance Committee was asked to obtain updated independent valuations on the NCCA properties. KPMG were concerned that property values have fallen since 2007, particularly in Sydney, based on anecdotal evidence from other clients. Our policy has been to obtain these valuations every three years, so this meant going through this process one year earlier.

The table below shows the values returned (with 2007 comparisons) – and all are higher than those from 2007.

	2009	2007	Increase
Level 7 379 Kent St, Sydney	1,760,000	1,680,000	80,000
2a Chester St, Petersham	1,300,000	1,100,000	200,000
55 Homebush Rd, Strathfield	4,000,000	3,825,000	175,000
Level 4 306 Little Collins St, Melbourne	1,050,000	950,000	100,000
	8,110,000	7,555,000	555,000

The Finance Committee has dealt with a number of property related matters relating to the strata buildings in Sydney and Melbourne. Staff had been involved in:

- mechanical refurbishment of the Kent St elevators
- negotiations with Telstra and Vodafone regarding Kent St roof top antennae
- major safety works in order to comply with a Sydney City Council Fire Order
- potential litigation against the Kent St Body Corporate for allowing cigarette smoke to enter a tenanted lot
- lift car refurbishment for Little Collins St
- trying to get the Little Collins St Executive Committee to take its financial situation seriously

The Victorian Council of Churches renewed their occupancy agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) in November 2009. A Service Level Agreement covering occupancy and other matters with the NSW Ecumenical Council was finalized in May 2010.

Investment Policy

The NCCA invests its cash reserves in term deposit and cash management accounts. Funds are spread across a number of financial institutions in order to minimize risk. This low risk investment strategy has meant that the NCCA remained well insulated against investment market volatility that was seen in 2008-2009. We did see a fall off in passive income yields coming through in 2009.

Risk Management/Legal

Internal Audit

KS Black and Co were appointed as our internal auditor in May 2009. Their first review focused on adherence to the AusAID requirements and best practice within funding organisations. Several areas for improvement were identified, and a number of process improvements implemented.

External Audit

KPMG were appointed as our external auditor in November 2008.

Although the June 2009 audit took a long time to wrap up, there were no material audit adjustments. We were asked to make some balance sheet and notes classification / descriptor changes, none of which changed the substance of the report.

Having new auditors looking over our practices with more critical eyes highlighted areas in which we can improve, and these will be looked at over coming months. The planned implementation of a new accounting system and chart of accounts from 1 July 2010 should ensure that audits for periods after this will be easier.

Personnel

Operational Changes

At the time of the 2007 Forum, most staff were based in the Sydney office, with a handful working out of the Melbourne office. At the time of writing, we now also have staff in Brisbane (2), Canberra (2) and Vanuatu (1) - all Act for Peace.

Leadership

John Henderson – General Secretary to December 2008

Paul Ryan – Interim General Secretary December 2008 to April 2009

Tara Curlewis – General Secretary from May 2009

Service Milestones

5 Years

Debra Porter 2009

Paul Ryan 2009

Alistair Gee 2010

Gabrielle Russell-Mundine 2010

10 Years

Warwick Romanis 2009

20 Years

Kate Willard 2010

Richard Menteith

Treasurer

April 2010

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) Report



*The spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind;
to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come
when the Lord will save his people.*

Luke 3: v.18-19

What do these prophetic words mean to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the post Apology environment of Australia? What do these words mean to non-Indigenous Australians? How can these words give us inspiration as we set about doing the necessary work to set free our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers from the yoke of imperialism and colonialism? What are we doing to set ourselves and our non-Indigenous brothers and sisters free from the yoke of imperialism and colonialism? For when one suffers from the effects of these twin 'isms' we all suffer, as individuals and as a nation.

That is not to say that we must all become one people, we must understand and appreciate our differences but also work together to bring greater understanding and reconciliation. I am reminded of a story about the black and white cockatoos told by Pastor George Rosendale. I would like to congratulate Pastor George Rosendale, whose immense contribution as an Indigenous Pastor and Theologian was recently recognized by the Australian Lutheran College which awarded him a Doctorate. The story goes like this:

They were brothers. One day the white cockatoo found the black cockatoo sitting under a shady tree looking angry and upset.

'What is wrong, brother?' 'I'm angry with dad because he made me black. Why didn't he make me like you? I'm going to change myself'. He went to his uncle's country and asked him for honey and clay. 'Get as much as you want, there's plenty there'.

He got the clay and honey and went back home. He powdered the clay and rubbed honey all over himself and put the powdered clay on. He looked at himself and said, 'Now I look like my brother'. His grandpa got so angry with him that he called on the monsoon to bring rain. It washed all the clay off him.

This story reminds us that we must be who we were meant to be, we must be in touch with our God given essence, it is no good trying to be something else and it is no good trying to make people into something else. We were created as unique and very special people and we must be true to that. There is nothing wrong with difference; each of us brings unique gifts to our life and our ministries.

It is useful to be mindful of how we can work together as different peoples as we consider the call of Jesus to bring good news to the poor and to set captives free and to recover sight. Is this not the essence of Jesus' mission? It is no coincidence that these were Jesus' first words. They were words that guided him throughout his life. If you look at his life; he challenges the Pharisees and lawmen; he hung out with the sinners and spent his life healing those who were mentally, spiritually and physically sick. It says to us that we are to allow these people to be free from the things that bind them.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Christians we look to our Churches to walk with us as we throw off those things that oppress us. But often, we encounter imperialism and colonialism there too. It is not always our experience that Churches are truly opening eyes and hearts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and peoples.

During the NATSIEC Christ and Culture Conference last year we took some time to look at the experiences the participants had of mission. It was an interesting exercise. Some of the participants were non-Indigenous people who had been or still are missionaries. Other participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people who had been raised on missions or who were Stolen Generations or who had been educated by the Church. Many of the comments and stories we heard recognised the complexity of the mission experience. They recognised that missions saved many lives. They were places of protection from atrocities being perpetrated against Aboriginal people at the time. Other experiences were negative and the pain and hurt is still palpable. Hurt from being taken away from home; being treated as unpaid labour; being cut off from family and culture. While the missionaries educated and trained and were good Christian role models; many also perpetuated harsh, racist policies and their actions were far removed from those principles they preached. These are the legacies we bring into our interactions and relationships today.

In another context, the relationship between Church and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also came under the spotlight during discussions about the Northern Territory Intervention at a Forum organised by NATSIEC. As much as participants were keen to call on Governments to address certain issues they were also keen to remind Churches about their role as a prophetic voice for justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In particular, there were concerns raised that while there may be commendable agreements, Covenants, Memorandums of Understanding and other instruments setting out the policies and intentions of the Church to relate to Indigenous peoples at a national level; at the congregation level this was not always apparent. It was suggested that at the congregation level more work could be done to educate and encourage individuals about the issues facing Indigenous people. One phrase that found resonance during the Forum was for churches and their congregations to “put their money and their feet where their mouths are”. In other words to take action on, and properly resource, those things they are praying about.

There was also a call to better link and integrate all aspects of ministries and services within, and between, denominations to maximise the effectiveness of all arms of the Churches’ ministries and agencies. For example, where there are welfare programs, employment programs, and housing programs to make sure that each program is interlinked and better able to service the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Another area of discussion was the need to support and resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative Church bodies better, to enable them to continue to build their capacity and ability to respond to matters of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as well as to continue and strengthen their ability to bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples from all denominations together to work with a common purpose and voice.

This is, of course, an issue that NATSIEC particularly faces. In common with many Church agencies we are concerned about the sustainability of our future. In particular, we are concerned to ensure our ability to maintain the role of NATSIEC as a trusted voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. While we understand it is easier to justify funding for specific projects, particularly those which are deemed to be development projects, we urge the Churches not to forget that NATSIEC itself is a project. One area in particular which causes concern is the need to garner greater support from Churches to ensure that their nominated Commissioners can participate fully in NATSIEC. Unlike other commissions where Churches cover the cost of their representatives, NATSIEC Commission meetings are a large financial burden on NATSIEC and are not specifically funded by the Churches which our Commissioners represent. Often the Commissioners nominated by the Churches come

from remote and distant places and so travel costs to the meeting can mount up. We would like to encourage Churches to consider how they can contribute to the proper functioning of NATSIEC by contributing to the cost of enabling their representatives to participate in at least one Commission meeting a year.

NATSIEC Activities

Following is a summary of NATSIEC's activities since the last forum, grouped together as they pertain to our mandate.

Provide a forum for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to speak and take action on issues of faith, mission and evangelism; of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spirituality and theology; of social justice and land rights.

Through its work on Indigenous theology and by providing prayer resources NATSIEC aims:

- To lead the further development of the body of knowledge about Indigenous theology and spirituality;
- To give voice to leading Indigenous thinkers on theology;
- To develop and support emerging Indigenous theologians;
- To build stronger relationships and alliances with other Indigenous peoples, organizations and educational institutions working on theological issues in Australia and overseas.

In 2007 and 2009, NATSIEC held Christ and Culture Conferences. The first was the week prior to the 2007 Forum and the second was held in February 2009. Both events brought Indigenous and non-Indigenous people together to discuss Indigenous theology and spirituality. In 2009, we took a different approach and developed a more interactive participatory style of conference which was well received. In light of the *100 Years of Mission* conference, being held in Edinburgh this year, the Christ and Culture program allowed some time to consider what our experience of mission has been during the past 100 years, to look to the future and imagine the Community of Church in 100 years. The rich and diverse thoughts and experiences were captured in the Conference book and accompanying CD-Rom, which we have provided to all Forum participants.

NATSIEC held the second Munguddor Bi - Buya retreat in 2009, and published the outcomes in an occasional paper we have called "Illuminations".

NATSIEC has also regularly produced prayer material to support significant days and events such as for the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday. We are also experimenting with how we present material, particularly as so many of our contributors shy away from writing papers. We published a series of "conversations" between Graeme Mundine and Jonathan Inkipin on YouTube® and are looking at how we can best harness new media.

All NATSIEC's prayer resources are available free from our website.

Serve as a unified voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they relate to member churches and international ecumenical bodies.

NATSIEC consults widely with Indigenous peoples about issues that affect them as well as with relevant organizations and networks in order to develop appropriate responses and

resources. We provide sound advice to member churches; other ecumenical bodies and other relevant groups on Indigenous issues. NATSIEC aims to facilitate further dialogue about, and a deeper understanding of, issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the churches and in a wider community context and to build alliances and collaborations with non-member churches and international ecumenical bodies.

Develop and Maintain International Relationships

International relationships are important to the work of NATSIEC from the point of view that often we are forgotten on the International stage. It's easy to be overwhelmed with the injustices facing so many people around the world. Often, because we are in a developed country and have a relatively small population, the issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can slip away from International attention. It is important that we keep reminding the International Ecumenical community that we are here and that we also need to end discrimination and poverty here in Australia. It is also important that our International partners and networks are constantly reminded about Indigenous issues. As financial pressures cause rationalizations of resources Indigenous issues are often subsumed into much larger programs or aggregated with other "causes". The United Nations has recognized the unique place of Indigenous Peoples in the world and issues specific to us, through the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; we must ensure that the International ecumenical movement retains focus also.

In order to further develop our relationships we have attended several international events. In 2008, we attended the NCC India Assembly in Shillong, N.E. India. Importantly, we were also able to participate in the pre-assembly forum for Tribal and Indigenous peoples. That was a great opportunity to share with Indigenous people in India and to find common ground as Indigenous peoples. As a result of this gathering we were able to encourage two leading Indigenous theologians from India to be key note speakers at the 2009 Christ and Culture Conference.

Other connections we have continued to foster are through the World Council of Churches. In 2009, for example, we attended a conference on racism in the Netherlands. This was an extremely interesting gathering and it was important to remind the International community about the distinct issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, and other Indigenous peoples. The connections we made there were also invaluable, and we are pleased that a leading Black Theologian, Dr. Anthony Reddie, has accepted our invitation to be the keynote speaker at the 2011 Christ and Culture Conference.

I have also participated in the WCC's AGAPE program (Alternative Globalisation Addressing Peoples and Earth). This too has allowed NATSIEC the opportunity to ensure Indigenous issues are kept at the forefront of justice action within the International Ecumenical movement. This project encourages churches to explore and advocate for alternatives to economic globalization. It is an attempt to bring churches and ecumenical partners from North, South, East and West together to reflect and act together on finding new and creative ways to use global wealth to eradicate poverty. It encourages them to create new synergies between different standpoints on poverty, wealth, and ecology.

In 2010, NATSIEC funded three young Indigenous men to travel to the Philippines to attend the International Taizé gathering. In 2007, NATSIEC attended a gender consultation in Bangkok organized by CCA's Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) program of CCA, which also includes Indigenous issues. Since then we have continued to support the EGY program by producing a regular e-newsletter for them. We also participated in a pre-assembly forum prior to the CCA Assembly in April 2010.

Help rebuild self-esteem, pride and dignity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

NATSIEC continues to support communities and individuals develop projects through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development Fund. Projects funded have been varied in their range. For example, we have funded kitchen equipment for the Jubal Aboriginal Corporation. This was to enable the women to cater for the large school holiday camps the community runs for school age children. Another project funded was activity based camps for troubled youth in Alice Springs. The development of skills through music programs were another project and community arts projects have also received funding. The grants are given throughout Australia and tend to be small scale one off grants for activities and equipment that groups may find it hard to get grants for, especially when they are church based projects.

Promote harmony, justice and understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community. Provide a basis for further political action by church-related Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organizations and the member churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia.**Make Indigenous Poverty History (MIPH).**

The MIPH project is an education and advocacy project which seeks to highlight Indigenous disadvantage and exclusion, particularly in Australia, and influence dialogue and change to end Indigenous disadvantage and exclusion.

During the past three years since the last NCCA Forum, we have welcomed what appeared to be a sea change in the way in which the Federal Government approaches Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In 2007, we welcomed the wave of optimism that a new government committed to change brought with it. In February 2008, we watched, and cried with a mixture of joy and sorrow, when the Nation was moved by the words of our Prime Minister as he apologised to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Federal Government. A long overdue and a long desired action. Shortly after that historic event we applauded when the Prime Minister signed a statement of intent to “close the gap” in Indigenous health.

But all along, we have asked ourselves, what has changed? At the same time as all these noteworthy and commendable actions were being pushed forward the Government was also implementing its dramatic Northern Territory Emergency Response, or Intervention. We have seen in the NT that, despite the good intentions, despite the biggest commitment of resources and effort we have ever seen, the basics are still wrong. The Government has talked about “re-setting” the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and yet we still see fault lines in the relationship. There is still a failure to negotiate and consult and to ask Aboriginal people what they want and need. There is still that coloniser’s tendency to enforce a solution, to ignore the individual for the “greater good” and to decide what that “greater good” is for us. All this time we have been asking ourselves are we now creating a situation for which a future Prime Minister will have to apologise?

Northern Territory Intervention

The Intervention has obviously been a key focus of concern and advocacy during the past three years. We have made several statements and undertaken lobbying activities in Canberra. In particular, we joined with the Anglican Bishop of the NT Bishop Greg Thompson and spent time in Canberra talking to several Ministers and Shadow Ministers about problems with the Intervention and in particular how to build better relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The NCCA, NATSICA and NATSIEC also joined together and formed a task force to look at the NT Intervention and to look into the new National Indigenous Voice. The taskforce allowed us to focus on these particular issues and helped bring the different organizations together.

As previously mentioned, in 2009 NATSIEC hosted an Intervention Forum which brought representatives from NATSIEC member churches together with representatives with NATSICA. These Indigenous Church leaders spent several days in Sydney listening to people from the NT talk about the issues they are encountering at a personal and an organizational level. The participants then formulated a statement which called on Governments and Churches to take action, in particular to form better relationships with Indigenous peoples. This statement was used by several church and non-church groups to inform and inspire their lobbying efforts.

NATSICA

NATSIEC has also tried to develop relationships with those groups which are not member Churches of the NCCA. For the past several years we have participated in discussions around the formation of a new group NATSICA (the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Alliance). While some of NATSIEC's commissioners, and others, retain some reservations about the group and how we can best work together with out duplicating or competing for resources, a NATSIEC, NATSICA alliance does allow us to work together in some areas.

Graeme Mundine
Executive Secretary
April 2010

Memorandum of Understanding
between the
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Ecumenical Commission
and the
National Council of Churches in Australia

Originally Signed 3rd December 2005

By

President of the NCCA, Revd Professor James Haire

General Secretary of the NCCA, Revd John Henderson

Chairperson of the NATSIEC, Bishop James Leftwich

Executive Secretary of the NATSIEC, Graeme Mundine

And endorsed by the Executive of the NCCA and

All members of the NATSIEC

Amended (insert amended date).

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Preamble

1. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and its member Churches are aware of the importance of the First Peoples of this land: the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been custodians of this country for many thousands of years.

2. The NCCA endorses the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and particularly recognises, and is guided by, its principles of equality, non-discrimination, consultation and cooperation when pursuing harmonious and respectful relationships with the First Peoples of this land.

3. The NCCA and the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) acknowledge the importance of mutual respect and understanding by modelling reconciliation to its member Churches and to the wider Australian community; and the benefits of a close and informed relationship.

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National
Council of
Churches in
Australia
(...)

4. The NCCA is committed to furthering reconciliation and ensuring that the First Peoples of this nation are shown respect and are valued for their contribution to Australian church life.

5. The National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission is mandated to:

“Provide a basis for further political action by church-related Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the member churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia.”

6. The National Council of Churches in Australia is mandated to:

“Encourage and enable the member churches in the light of the Gospel to give prophetic leadership to each other and the community by

iv] acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and [Torres Strait] Islander people”

Intent

The intent of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to have in place an agreed procedure for the NCCA to act respectfully, appropriately, and in solidarity, with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, through NATSIEC.

Objectives

The objective of the MOU is to:

1. Put on record the key requirements of the consultation process for the National Council of Churches when making comment on Indigenous issues to the member Churches, the wider non-Indigenous community, and the Indigenous community.
2. Ensure that members of NATSIEC and through them, Indigenous communities around Australia, are consulted before statements are made to them and on their behalf by the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Principles

The following principles underpin the implementation of this MOU:

1. the NCCA is expected to consult with the NATSIEC in all matters relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia as a matter of respect;
2. as the Indigenous Ecumenical peak body in Australia, the NATSIEC has an important role to play in addressing the NCCA's involvement in Indigenous issues;
3. particular Member Churches have Indigenous members and/or Indigenous Church bodies¹ with whom they can consult about matters relating to them and NATSIEC encourages Member Churches to use those resources when involving themselves in Indigenous Issues.

Implementation: How to consult with the NATSIEC

1. Media Statements

In the event of a media statement made by the National Council of Churches in Australia (including its various Commissions and Networks) relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, the Council is expected to bring a draft copy of the statement to the NATSIEC² for endorsement.

2. Public Events

The NCCA, its Networks, Commissions and staff³ are requested to include a 'Welcome to Country' or an 'Acknowledgement of Country' at the start of any events in which they are involved, regardless of Indigenous content or involvement, as a sign of respect.

In the event that the President, General Secretary, an Executive member, a member of a Commission / Network or a staff member of the NCCA is to speak at a public

¹ Such as NATSIAC (Anglican), NATSICC (Catholic), UAICC (Uniting), ACCIM (Churches of Christ), Salvation Army Aboriginal Ministries (Southern Territory).

² The NATSIEC Executive and where possible the total membership of the NATSIEC will be involved in endorsing any press releases, speeches or articles produced by the NCCA relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues. Please see Appendix I for an appropriate formulation.

event involving Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, they are to involve the NATSIEC by including them in the preparation of speeches.

3. Articles for print

If the President, General Secretary, an Executive member, a member of a Commission / Network or a staff member of the NCCA is preparing an article for publication (for either a resource produced in-house or for an external body), involving Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, they are requested to involve the NATSIEC in the preparation of such articles by informing the NATSIEC⁴ of their intent and by producing a draft for endorsement by the NATSIEC **before** the article goes to print.

4. Projects

If a Commission or Network of the NCCA is planning a project that has any impact on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, they are to invite the NATSIEC into the planning phase of the project. They are also required to consult directly with the stakeholders of the project.⁵

Review and Amendment

The MOU will commence on the date it is signed by all parties, and, unless otherwise agreed between the Parties, continue until the next meeting of the NCCA National Forum. — — — — — Deleted: in 2007

The Parties will undertake a joint review of the consultation process outlined above before **each** meeting of the NCCA National Forum. Deleted: the Deleted: in 2007

This MOU may be amended at any time by an agreement in writing between the Parties.

⁴ See footnote no. 2

⁵ Where the project is targeting, or taking place within, a particular Indigenous community, consultation with NATSIEC **only** is **not** sufficient.

Signed on the 3rd December by:

President of the NCCA, Revd Professor James Haire

General Secretary of the NCCA, Revd John Henderson

Chairperson of the NATSIEC, Bishop James Leftwich

Executive Secretary of the NATSIEC, Graeme Mundine

And endorsed by:

The Executive of the NCCA and all members of the NATSIEC

Amended at the 7th National Forum of the NCCA 12th July 2010

President of the NCCA, _____

General Secretary of the NCCA, Revd Tara Curlewis

Chairperson of the NATSIEC, Bishop Saibo Mabo

Executive Secretary of the NATSIEC, Graeme Mundine

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Appendix to the MOU

Welcome to Country

What is a 'Welcome to Country'?

A 'Welcome to Country' is where the traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodians (usually the Elders) welcome people to their land. It always occurs in the opening ceremony of the event, preferably as the first item.

Adopting such practices enables the wider community to share in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ceremony and has been found to lead to better community relationships and therefore assists the reconciliation process.

Welcome to Country, also known as the Traditional Welcome, allows the Traditional Custodians of the region to give their blessing for the event to take place on their land. It must be done by a representative of the Traditional Custodians of the location at which the event is taking place. If it is not possible to arrange a Traditional Welcome by a local representative, a simple acknowledgment of Traditional Custodians by other speakers is appropriate (see Acknowledgement of Country).

Welcome to Country may consist of a single speech, or it may include some kind of ceremony (a song, dance, didgeridu solo, etc), or it may be a combination of these. It is important to remember that the Indigenous representative/s must feel comfortable with the arrangements. Rather than a gesture of tokenism and political correctness, Welcome to Country is a right of the local Indigenous Custodians and not a privilege.

Contact with the Traditional Custodians should be made as early as possible in the planning of the event. It is protocol that a gift be given to individuals or to an organisation for providing such a service. What form the gift takes should be negotiated between the Indigenous Custodians and the event organisers.

Acknowledgement of Country

As a sign of respect, it is appropriate for speakers at public events to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land at the beginning of their speeches.⁶

Acknowledgement of Country is a way that the wider community can show respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the ongoing relationship of the traditional Custodians of the area with that land, waters and seas. It is a significant and symbolic reconciliation gesture. Acknowledgement of Country may also occur when Traditional Custodians are not available to provide an official Welcome to Country.

Example 1: "I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place".

Example 2: "I acknowledge that we are standing on the land of the [Gadigal] people of the [Eora] nation who have been custodians of this area for thousands of years."

⁶ To find out the name of the traditional custodians of the area you are in, contact your local Aboriginal Land Council

Christian World Service Commission (CWSC) Report



Introduction

For 60 years the mission of the Christian World Service Commission ('CWSC') has been helping communities act for peace. In response to the teachings of Jesus Christ and through working with ecumenical partners, we seek to enable some of the world's most vulnerable communities to prevent conflict, protect the most marginalised, reduce poverty and manage disasters. We encourage Australian church members and others to support them through giving, prayer and other action for peace.

Peace, in the Christian understanding, is both gift and task. The risen Jesus gifts the anxious disciples with peace. *Peace be with you*, he says several times as they take in that violence, cruelty and death have not destroyed Jesus [John 20:19-29]. The peace of our risen Saviour Jesus is a *peace the world cannot give*. It is the *peace of God which passes all understanding*. With this Easter hope we therefore take up our call to be peacemakers. This is the task of Act for Peace, as we seek to be true to Jesus and his word to us: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God* [Matthew 5:9]. Peace, understood as gift and task, therefore inspires and compels us to act for peace.

In order to better fulfill the Mandate set by the member churches in 1996, the CWSC determined that a number of changes to our work were necessary. As well as the new operating name of 'Act for Peace' (introduced in 2008), other changes include:

- focusing our work on communities in countries at greatest risk of conflict and disaster (which included phasing out support to partners in other countries);
- setting and monitoring progress towards new five year Goals starting July 2009;
- offering a better service to overseas partners, including by increasing requested expertise and funding for conflict and disaster management;
- offering a better service to churches and other supporters in Australia, including the introduction of Act for Peace Representatives and Development Officers; and
- helping to form and joining the global ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance, launched in March 2010. ACT Alliance members are working on aid and development in 125 countries. \$2.8m more on overseas program work; and
- \$600,000 less on fundraising and administration costs

3 year period	Overseas program expenditure	Fundraising + Administration expenditure
2008 - 2010 ¹	\$15,284,995	\$2,941,138 (14% of total expenditure) ²
2004 - 2006	\$12,475,922	\$3,538,864 (20% of total expenditure)

Full financial details are provided in our Annual Reports, available at www.actforpeace.org.au. A copy of our latest Annual Report is provided in the papers for this Forum. Other Act for Peace resources will also be available.

Our overseas partners could not have achieved their goals in the past year without the assistance of those who fund them. Our thanks go to our member churches whose congregations have provided very generous support, and continue to do so year after year. Since we began in 1948, our supporters have given over \$200m to help communities act for peace.

We welcome all feedback from member churches and look forward to the opportunity to discuss at the Forum ways to improve our support and identify new opportunities.

Our Mandate - helping communities to act for peace

Our Mandate, set by the member churches in 1996, directs CWSC to:

- a. *Respond to human need by providing direct relief to alleviate poverty and suffering through development programs and emergency relief programs, in partnership with Christian churches and other bodies or networks in Australia and overseas.*
- b. *Take a lead role in fulfilling the stated objectives of the NCCA “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. *speaking out on behalf of oppressed people;*
 - ii. *acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people; and*
 - iii. *responding to human need and acting on issues of justice, peace and creation”*
- c. *Work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, particularly through supporting the work of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission.*
- d. *Stand in solidarity with uprooted people through educational programs, advocacy and networking, and supporting appropriate aspects of resettlement in Australia.*
- e. *Engage in education for justice, development, and peace programs to help raise the awareness of the Australian community regarding poverty, injustice, and ecological damage affecting the developing world, especially by addressing their root causes.*
- f. *Undertake analysis, develop policies, and facilitate advocacy within Australia and internationally in relation to human rights and international affairs.*
- g. *Consult regularly with the overseas aid and development agencies of NCCA member churches and act with or on behalf of those agencies in furtherance of these objects.*
- h. *Raise resources for the work of the CWSC through regular programs such as the Christmas Bowl and appeals.*
- i. *Other incidental work related to the objects of the CWSC.*

This Mandate can well be summarised as *helping communities act for peace* both overseas and in Australia.

Helping overseas communities at greatest risk of conflict and disaster

Our partners are currently assisting more than one million people in 15 of the world’s most war-torn areas. Of these areas, nine are ranked in the ten least peaceful countries according to the 2009 Global Peace Index: Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Palestine/Israel, Sudan, DR Congo, Chad, Pakistan and Zimbabwe. We also work with partners in six other highly conflict-affected countries: Ethiopia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Philippines (Mindanao), Indonesia (West Papua) and East Timor. We have worked with partners in many of these countries for over 20 years.

Two examples of our work in these countries are below. In the past year our ecumenical partners in Sudan (including the Sudan Council of Churches) have worked to empower communities to:

- protect and assist around 350,000 internally displaced people in Darfur;
- reduce poverty by building and running health clinics, schools and water programs; and
- resolve conflicts in the Sudanese areas of Kurdufan and Central Equatoria by coordinating successful peace processes.

In the past year our partners in and on the border of Burma have worked to empower communities to:

- protect and assist over 135,000 Burmese refugees in camps and 100,000 displaced people in the eastern Burmese mountains (where the UN and others are unable to reach); and
- conduct human rights training in Burma to help vulnerable groups maintain their rights.

We are also working with partners in Pacific communities at greatest risk of disaster. This year our disaster risk reduction program (which employs 25 people) will assist over 14,000 people through training in about 250 Pacific villages. We hope to soon be able to offer small grants to help many of these communities adapt to the growing impact of climate change and disasters.

Helping communities in Australia to act for peace

This work includes:

- supporting NATSIEC's work with and for Indigenous communities
- supporting refugee communities in Australia through a range of initiatives, such as the House of Welcome. All interest earned on the funds from the recent sale of Strathfield Home for the Aged will be spent on refugee assistance
- assisting churches and other groups in Australia to act for peace through:
 - ◆ giving (such as to the Christmas Bowl and emergencies)
 - ◆ prayer and reflection (each month and in each appeal we suggest prayer points and provide new stories), and
 - ◆ other action for peace (our new website has a range of actions that people can take – such as signing a petition to drop Haiti's debt)
- We will be greatly increasing the number of opportunities for supporters to act for peace in a range of ways this year and the Act for Peace Representative scheme and Development Officers are critical to ensuring that churches and other communities are receiving the sort of resources that they need and want to genuinely act for peace.

Details about the work we are involved in with partners in all countries are in our Annual Report and on our website: www.actforpeace.org.au.

Act for Peace five year goals (2010-2014)

Goal 1: *working with ecumenical partners and the ACT Alliance to help communities prevent further conflict, provide protection, reduce poverty and manage disasters through:*

1.1 disbursing over \$7.5m per year for this work according to need and impact

1.2 providing effective technical assistance on:

1.2.1 conflict and disaster management, including enhancing protection

1.2.2 capacity building with ecumenical councils in the Pacific

Summary of Goal 1 progress:

- We are currently disbursing about \$5m per year to partners for this work and hope to achieve \$7.5m by 2014. Over the past two years, we have increased the amount spent on these programs by 25%.
- Our technical assistance plans on community conflict and disaster management are in development and should be finalised by the time of the Forum. Our initial focus has been on disaster management in five Pacific countries. We have also led the

development of the global ACT humanitarian protection policy and have started training with our partners.

- Our largest capacity building program in the Pacific is the Vanuatu Church Partnership Program. With AusAID funding, this is a \$4m program over 3 years, of which we are halfway through the first year.

Goal 2: *assisting interested people, churches, ecumenical bodies and other groups in Australia to act for peace at Christmas, when conflicts occur and throughout the year through:*

1.1 giving over \$9m per year

1.2 regular prayer, reflection, speaking-out and other action for peace

Summary of Goal 2 progress:

- We hope to raise over \$7m this year and are improving our appeal and service systems to provide the platform to reach \$9m by 2014. Of the \$7m this year, around \$4m will come from the Christmas Bowl, regular giving and our emergency appeals. The remainder comes from AusAID, other funding bodies, bequests and interest.
- We have now begun the *Act for Peace Representative scheme* and expect to have over 150 Representatives by the time of the Forum. Our aim is to have at least one Representative in over 2,000 churches by 2014. These Representatives, working with their Ministers, are essential for encouraging congregations to act for peace. Copies of Representative Packs will be available at the Forum.
- *Partnerships with the State Ecumenical Councils (SECs):* we are keen to work in partnership with all SECs. As at the date of this report (mid May):
 - ♦ we have new, multi-year partnership agreements with 4 SECs: the Victorian Council of Churches, Queensland Churches Together, Tasmanian Council of Churches and Council of Churches of Western Australia
 - ♦ we have reached in principle agreement with representatives of the South Australian Council of Churches and hope to have signed a new partnership agreement with them by mid June 2010
 - ♦ the NSW Ecumenical Council has said it is unlikely to be in a position to contemplate any new partnership agreement until later this year.

Our decision to employ four Act for Peace Development Officers, which created varying degrees of concern among the State Councils, was only taken after years of seeking to improve arrangements which had been less than ideal for all involved, and as a result of earnest consideration about how we could best ensure that we achieve our five year Goals. We commit ourselves to working together with State Councils to ensure more effective and fruitful outcomes, recognizing our common purposes.

Goal 3: *ensuring high quality service and accountability to:*

1.1 our partners and communities we seek to assist, by demonstrating:

1.1.1 positive partner & community feedback and positive independent program reviews

1.1.2 on-going compliance with all relevant Codes of Conduct, including the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership principles

1.2 our members and supporters, shown by:

1.2.1 ensuring all of our work is faithful to our Mandate and Vision

1.2.2 high quality reporting to and governance by the Commission

1.2.3 positive supporter survey and other feedback

- 1.2.4 *on-going compliance with ACFID and other relevant Codes of Conduct*
- 1.2.5 *consulting regularly with Australian church overseas aid agencies and acting with them in furtherance of our Mandate*
- 1.2.6 *continuing to improve stewardship*

Summary of Goal 3 progress:

- *Service and accountability to partners & communities:* we are the first Australian agency to begin the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership certification process (a new global standard).
- An internal compliance audit was recently conducted and we were pleased with the findings, though acknowledge we have some more work to do.
- *Service and accountability to members & supporters:* survey results of supporters show a good level of interest and support in our work and we are keen to improve this.
- The CWSC has also worked to ensure it is providing good governance, for instance it has recently improved its assessment of performance and risk management issues. The CWSC has also recently developed a new ecumenical formation plan for staff.
- *Working with church agencies:* we have agreed on new arrangements of sharing information and meeting together. Current areas of collaboration with church agencies are:
 - ◆ ACT Australia New Zealand Forum, involving 5 agencies;
 - ◆ the Vanuatu Church Partnership Program, involving ourselves and 4 other Australian church agencies;
 - ◆ the Australian Church Agency Protection Working Group;
 - ◆ Make Poverty History (involving most church agencies), Micah Challenge, and a range of ACFID projects such as on rights-based approaches to development;
- the Simply Sharing Week education program, developed this year by Caritas; and
- joint emergency appeals, especially regarding Action by Churches Together appeals.

Commissioners, staff and volunteers

The Commissioners brought with them a wide and valuable range of experience from ecumenical knowledge to aid expertise to parish experience. Many of the Commissioners have served on this Commission for more than 6 years. Since the 2007 Forum, the Commission has included:

- The Reverend Elenie Poulos (Chair since 2009), Uniting Church in Australia
- Bishop Philip Huggins (Deputy Chair since 2009), Anglican Church of Australia
- The Reverend John Gilmore, (Standing Committee, Chair 2007-2009), Churches of Christ
- Lieutenant Colonel Ray Wilson (Standing Committee), The Salvation Army
- Archbishop Aghan Baliozian OAM, Armenian Apostolic Church
- Father Michael Delaney, Roman Catholic Church
- The Reverend Gregor Henderson, Uniting Church in Australia
- Simon Michail, Coptic Orthodox Church
- Father James Minchin, Anglican Church
- Jackie Perkins, The Religious Society of Friends
- Peter Schirmer, Lutheran Church of Australia
- The Reverend Tara Curlewis (NCCA General Secretary since 2009)
- The Reverend John Henderson (NCCA General Secretary to 2009)
- Alistair Gee (Executive Director)

SHAPING OUR ECUMENICAL FOOTPRINT

A list of the Commissioners along with further details of the other positions they hold is on the back page of our 2009 Annual Report. We know that at least two Commissioners are not available for re-nomination at this Forum: Gregor Henderson and Jackie Perkins. We are sad to farewell them and have been truly blessed to have had their service over many years.

We are also blessed to have very experienced and dedicated staff and partners. We now have staff based in Sydney (head office) Melbourne (4 staff), Canberra (2), Brisbane (2) and Port Vila (1).

Finally and perhaps most importantly, we have a wonderful and growing network of volunteers including Act for Peace Representatives, parish ministers, people who stuff envelopes all day and many others who seek to answer God's call to act for peace in whatever way they are able.

Alistair Gee
Executive Director
May 2010

Endnotes

- ¹ The 2010 financial year figures are projections as at April. As we switched to a Jul-Jun financial year in 2007, the six months of Jan-Jun 2007 is not included in these figures.
- ² This improvement has been achieved in part through better efficiencies and also through increased funding, especially AusAID.

Faith & Unity Commission Report

The Faith & Unity Commission has a critical and essential role for the National Council of Churches in Australia in addressing the challenge of ‘Shaping the Ecumenical Footprint’. For while it is important for the churches to work co-operatively 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. Indeed, over the last three years since the last NCCA Forum, a number of previously key theological aspects of the Australian ecumenical landscape have receded in vitality. These, however, have gradually been replaced by new themes and questions which both offer considerable scope for renewing ecumenical thinking and action but also present significant challenge to existing structures and resources, including those of the Faith and Unity Commission. This report therefore outlines some main features of what may continue to be part of the inherited Australian ecumenical footprint. It also indicates notable areas to which further attention should be given.

KEY MARKERS

1. The Commission’s Mandate

The mandate of the Commission on Faith and Unity 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.

Six key tasks flow from this, in summary:

1. 1. studying such questions as bear on the quest for unity, by reflecting on the issues of ecumenical theology and method, to develop a way of doing theology whereby divisions are healed and diversities embraced;
2. 2. sharing diverse theological and ecclesial insights, for mutual learning and renewal;
3. 3. assisting the churches to overcome divisive doctrinal differences, by freshly appreciating their common apostolic tradition, common faith and mission;
4. 4. interacting with NATSIEC in order that our reflection on our koinonia may be informed by a greater appreciation of our indigenous heritage;
5. 5. exploring the implications of local ecumenical developments and the broad acceptance by church members of an informal ecumenism; and
6. 6. networking with and encouraging state and local faith and order working groups in their localised tasks.

This is not a simple agenda (!) and, in the changing ecumenical landscape, each require fresh reflection on the milestones of our past and identification of new markers for the way ahead.

Since the 2007 NCCA Forum, the Commission has therefore given regular attention to its mandate. It has met twice a year for a day and a half. On each occasion it has reaffirmed the importance of each of its six tasks and sees each one bearing signs or potential for new fruit. It has seen and reflected upon the emergence of new methodologies such as receptive ecumenism, renewed emphasis on spiritual ecumenism, and the potential of recent WCC ecclesiological thinking. These suggest ways forward for tasks 1, 2 and 3 above, building on the substantial achievements of past decades. Earlier milestones such as the former energy of Australian bi-lateral conversations, and occasionally, to some extent, the Australian Covenanting process, may sometimes seem to be ‘stages

on the way' to the present rather than direction-markers for the future. Yet they also carry continued opportunities if they are grasped by the churches. They certainly require greater profile and communication across and throughout the churches. That is a task for the member Churches of the NCCA rather than the NCCA itself. The challenge of interaction with, and learning from, NATSIEC, State and local faith and order working groups and informal ecumenism (tasks 4, 5 and 6) have through this however, also become more important. The Faith & Unity Commission rejoices in these strong linkages required of it in its mandate and in the very encouraging leadership and networking offered by them: shown, not least in the work of State ecumenical bodies on these issues. It has been particularly good to see NATSIEC's further development of its ecumenical theology work and the Commission has made reporting on this a regular feature of its meetings.

2. The Covenanting Process

The major concern given to the Commission after the 2007 National Forum has been that of reflecting on the reception and development of the Australian Covenanting process and making suggestions as to the way forward. The results of this are provided in the agreed Commission paper attached to this report which the Commission would like to see widely distributed and discussed, beyond the National Forum itself.

Overall, it has been felt by the Commission that the Australian Covenanting process does move, albeit slowly. It therefore not only marks out some of the dimensions of the current Australian ecumenical footprint but also provides valuable impetus for new steps forward. Indeed it is in addition a model and gift for others overseas. The signing of diocesan-level covenants, as well as covenants between parishes/congregations has created a significant new level of engagement in the last three years. The Commission also commends the essential role of State and local ecumenical initiatives, such as that by the South Australian Council of Churches in taking up the baptismal element of the NCCA's Multi-Dimensional Covenant, signed by NCCA member Churches in 2004.

The Commission values the NCCA Executive's encouragement to be pro-active in identifying other ways in which member Churches can add to their Covenanting commitments, for example in relation to developments regarding Justification made by some Churches. It also seeks to respond to the challenge of offering guidance on the appropriate nature and levels of Covenants which can be taken up at different levels of church life and by different member Churches. This might helpfully include further identification of good stories to share, the right people to share them with others, and the appropriate timing and possible structures of reception in different member Churches. Few current local covenants for example extend beyond Anglican and/or Roman Catholic and/or Uniting Church agreements. Concern must be expressed, however, about the difficulty of planning nationally on Covenanting and the need for the Commission to look at the boundaries of its work, particularly in the light of its resources. A key outcome should certainly be for the Covenanting document process to be known at all levels of the life of churches so that the document might then take on a life of its own. To enable this it would be helpful for member Churches to enable coherent information about it to be placed constantly into relevant places and via different media, including church websites and prayer networks. The Commission began its post 2007 National Forum work by posing the questions to its members of 'what is it about our churches which makes the process of implementation of the Covenant difficult?' and 'what makes it work when it does happen?' These remain pertinent questions for all to consider. The Commission hopes that its discussion paper will assist.

3. Ecumenical Prayer and Spiritual Ecumenism

As we mark the 100th anniversary of the landmark International Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, it is apposite to recall the words of John Mott that 'the heart of Edinburgh

was not in its speeches, but in its times of prayer'. The last few years have seen a renewed emphasis upon the importance of this, aided by the focus of the 2008 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on marking the 100th anniversary of one of its forerunners, the Octave for Christian Unity founded in Graymoor, USA. It is also reflected in lively State and local initiatives, such as the continued value of Taizé-style worship and involvement of young people with similar initiatives, and in such recent work as the Pilgrimage of Resurrection encounters between western and Orthodox Christians, organised through the NSW Ecumenical Council.

Theologically such developments have been underpinned and facilitated by the importance given in Roman Catholic and other quarters to 'spiritual ecumenism', or, as others might term it, 'ecumenism of the heart'. The Commission has consequently given time to reflection upon these fresh currents and has found them fruitful, even to the suggestion that spiritual ecumenism is indeed a useful term for its own work. Whilst it is felt strongly that head and heart issues need to be held together, in forwarding ecumenism, this is a vital aspect of future hope. Another term, relating to the ingrained histories and cultures of Churches, such as 'political ecumenism' might be coined, to complement 'spiritual ecumenism' and to identify the political blockages in progressing. As experience of the Global Christian Forum, shared by Dr. Robert Gribben with the Commission, has shown, there are different methodologies to embody alternatives. Perhaps these might feature in such work as the bilateral dialogues, where real agreement can be reached but will not go forward if there is no heart for it.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The most visible expression of ecumenical prayer for which the Commission is responsible has been facilitating Australian resources for, and involvement in, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WPCU). The revived question of when this should be marked in Australia has now been settled with NCCA Executive agreement, on Commission advice, to remain with the eight days before and including Pentecost. Occasional overlap with Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week was not felt to be a significant problem and alternative periods were not found commonly congenial.

In the period since the last National Forum, the main change in the Commission's work has been to include a wider range of people in its WPCU working group. For whilst the basic resource for the WPCU is prepared internationally, through the WCC and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, it is intended to be adapted for local use. This work has been facilitated by the Commission Secretary for many years, working in conjunction with (an)other Commission member(s) and NATSIEC. For 2009 and 2010 however, the working group, operating by teleconference and email, was extended to include liturgists from member Churches, including someone in parish ministry, together with a representative from the State ecumenical councils. This has enabled a refreshed and more informed approach, hopefully contributing to more accessible and appropriate materials. Particular thanks are therefore due to the team of Revd.Dr.Jonathan Inkipin, Revd.Dr.Gerard Kelly, Graeme Mundine, Sr.Carmel Pilcher, the Revd.Charles Sherlock, the Revd.Meredith Williams. This has been part of the beginnings of a process to link the NCCA more closely with Australian liturgical and other prayer and worship leaders (including the Australian Consultation on Liturgy). Some other resources (eg prayers for special occasions) have also been granted to the NCCA Faith & Unity Commission as the first stage in compiling a bank of helpful ecumenical prayer materials for use at other times than the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Time and resources have, however, worked to date against further development.

4. Ecclesiology; study of WCC texts; mutual accountability

If at times churches seem to be struggling of late to go beyond established milestones on their journey together, new markers pointing to some new ecclesiological openings. This

has been the happy finding of the Commission in relation to the two main ecclesiological texts which emerged from the Porto Alegre Assembly of the World Council of Churches (texts also agreed with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity). Indeed the Commission has found aspects of the two texts so fruitful that it considers more time should be given to them in the future before agreed Commission papers are shared with others. In the meanwhile it warmly commends the texts to the NCCA member and observer Churches.

The Nature and Mission of the Church

The WCC text so far given most attention is *The Nature and Mission of the Church*. This has been positively received, with inevitable qualifications, on all sides. Whilst this rich text may not manage to find growing convergences on all hitherto thorny issues, it does express a growing sense of ease in discussion of difference. It also helpfully presents points of difference in clear shaded boxes in the body of the text. It thus represents a fine tool for teaching: even, as one Commission has expressed it ‘a BEM for today’s generation. The text’s ‘useful ambiguity’ has indeed thus led to healthy Commission discussion of central questions such as sacramentality, apostolicity, the nature of unity, and the role of ministry (especially the celebration of sacraments and universal primacy). The text appears in part to recognise the different methodologies of Churches in our postmodern contexts and it is felt that further discussion would be particularly valuable in relation to questions of communion and diversity and also types of ecclesiology. Orthodox and Pentecostal views would also be good to hear in this.

Called to be the One Church

The second WCC text addressed by the Commission is *Called to be the One Church*. This is also felt to be a rich and fruitful text. More work needs to be done on this however so that any discussion paper and report for the NCCA member Churches is fully worked through

Mutual Accountability

A significant element which has arisen for the Commission is the challenge of *Called to be the One Church* to mutual accountability. The term mutual accountability appears to have emerged, at least more prominently than in the past, from Porto Alegre (used once for example in the amendments to the WCC Constitution as well as in the two WCC texts the Commission has been discussing). It has also developed within discussions about reception in some Churches (eg the Anglican). Some NCCA member Churches have expressed concern about such terminology, at least in relation to ecumenical bodies (eg re. the Australian Covenanting process), depending on whether this is seen as juridical. The different understandings of accountability in different Churches affect this considerably and the Commission commends this question to others also.

Discussion on what it might mean to develop mutual accountability has highlighted the current role of bilateral conversations and theological education and the challenge of enabling this through all levels of the churches. Perhaps the Pontifical Council’s process of ‘harvesting’ and sharing the results of work done so far may be a step in developing a new methodology to take this forward through the churches and local councils of churches? The language of mutual accountability certainly represents a powerful shift in approach, although this can only be a long term goal based on invitation. The Commission believes this topic is worth deeper study and seeks to discuss this further.

5. Broadening the Theological Dialogue

Discussion of ‘Broadening the Theological Dialogue’ might be seen as one of the most challenging but important new markers on the ecumenical theological horizon. If the Australian ecumenical footprint is not to become fixed, a deep and informed focus needs to be given to this question. How do the NCCA, other ecumenical bodies, and their member Churches respond to contemporary developments in Christianity, including

Pentecostal and Evangelical expressions and new (informal) forms of ecumenism, which do not easily comprehend or relate to established ecumenical structures? The Commission has therefore reflected on various perspectives. In this it has been helped, as with other issues, by the presence of Pastor Stephen Fogarty, from the Assemblies of God in Australia, and by Dr. Robert Gribben in relation to learnings from the Global Christian Forum. The dialogue is not however simply with those 'outside' the tent of the NCCA member Churches but also within. It arises, for example, from the reality that in recent years traditional-style Commission work has not drawn as much new support as working groups on specific projects, such as Safe as Churches. The traditional language of ecumenism has little carriage, even within many parts of traditionally supportive member Churches, and inter-religious work has found more energy for some.

The Commission believes that this dialogue is integral to the basis and intent of the NCCA Constitution and has therefore worked towards a statement of principles for approaching the dialogue. As a crucial marker for the future it therefore commends them to the NCCA National Forum for adoption (see appendix) lest the NCCA itself become not merely a milestone on the way to unity but a millstone.

6. Receptive Ecumenism

The changing shape of the ecumenical landscape is also reflected in the Commission's consideration of, and, qualified, interest in, Receptive Ecumenism, another stream of new contemporary ecumenical thinking. Discussion has so far centred on papers delivered at the 2009 international conference at Ushaw College, Durham by a number of Australian theologians (including Dr. Gerard Kelly), and by Dr. John Gibaut (director of the WCC Faith & Order Commission).

It has been voiced that receptive ecumenism, like spiritual ecumenism, is possibly part of a reshaping of ecumenical language and methodologies, appropriate for the times, although the need for traditional ecumenical activities very much continues. It has been also suggested that the Commission, and other parts of the NCCA, could intentionally model this approach and explore such a methodology at future gatherings. The Commission believes this topic is worth deeper study and seeks to discuss this further.

7. Other activities and projects of the Commission

Bilateral Dialogues

The importance of the Australian Bilateral Dialogues have not featured prominently in the life of the Commission over the period since the last NCCA National Forum. In 2007 the National Forum was immediately preceded by a day conference in which the Bilateral Dialogues shared their work and insights with one another and others. The Bilaterals remain important to the Commission and to the wider ecumenical life and there have been further moves forward in a number of dialogues, including on most stubborn issues such as episcopate and oversight. However the general mood is more sober about future progress via these relationships.

Stages on the Way II

The publication of *Stages on the Way II* was at the Bilaterals Consultation in July 2007 has been followed through and advertised through various avenues by the Commission. It remains not simply as a very positive milestone and expression of past achievement but as a marker and encouragement for the future.

International Dialogues

The Commission has been delighted to receive first hand reports on international dialogues of which a number of its members are a part. This has included the Anglican-Lutheran International Dialogue, the Roman Catholic-Disciples of Christ Dialogue and the WCC Faith & Order Commission.

Theology of Peace and the Decade to Overcome Violence

The Commission has continued to receive occasional reports and reflections related to the theology of peace, including reports on the Historic Peace Churches Conference developments from Bill Jaggs, Gerard Guiton and Dale Hess (Religious Society of Friends).

John Henderson as NCCA General Secretary sought to enable a more whole-NCCA approach to peacemaking by seeking to facilitate work between the Commission and the CWS Commission to provide an adequate theological basis for the re-branding of NCCA-CWS work as act for peace. It was disappointing that the Commission's offer of expert assistance in this regard was not taken up. Such cross-NCCA work is perhaps something which could be considered in other areas in the future.

The Commission also decided to revisit its work, and that of the NCCA more generally, on the Decade to Overcome Violence as it draws towards a close.

Climate Change

The Commission also heard about NCCA work on this subject and discussed possible theological ways forward.

Communications

The challenge of communicating its work and engaging with others is one regularly faced by the Commission. Constructive work has however been done on developing use of the Commission's webspace. The Commission also welcomed NATSIEC use of YouTube for sharing discussion of Indigenous views on Covenanting and the Week of Prayer in 2009.

8. Pre-Forum Event

The Commission decided against a pre-Forum event related to Bilateral dialogues. Instead it decided to hold a one day pre-Forum event on current theological trends in ecumenism in relation to the anniversary of the 1910 International Missionary Conference, looking back but only to look forward with new contemporary themes. Dr. John Gibaut from the WCC would be a keynote speaker, with respondents including Dr. Robert Gribben (in relation especially to the milestones of Australian ecumenical history and to the Global Christian Forum), Joan Hendriks (offering an Indigenous perspective not present in 1910 or until recently) and Dr. Shane Clifton (sharing a Pentecostal perspective as another outsider to the 1910 tradition but very much a contemporary voice). The day was organised with the Centre for Ecumenical Studies and will be repeated at United Theological College in the week after the National Forum as part of the CES course in Sydney. This combination of traditional and continuing ecumenical thinking and initiatives with more recent approaches and perspectives is perhaps a symbol of the journey on which the Commission has been travelling in general. As such it also helps define the uncertain but hopeful state of the ecumenical footprint today.

9. The Future Resourcing and Work of the Commission

The Commission would like to place on record its appreciation to Jonathan Inkpin as its Secretary to over the last term.

The Commission has become aware that for its next phase of work it will not have the secretarial support on which it has relied in the past. In concrete terms this amounts to the loss of 210 hours per annum. The Commission will not be able to find this amount and type of support from among its own members. It thus seeks from the Forum a very clear indication of the core tasks for its work for the next three years, given this lack of resources.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION***Meeting Venue***

The Commission would like to place on record its gratitude to the Centre for Theology and Ministry in Melbourne, to its staff and not least to Dr. Chris Mostert for assistance in arrangements.

Attendance

Despite the very high level of commitment of many members of the Commission, it has been disappointing to experience a very uneven 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. Of particular concern is the dearth of Orthodox participation.

Commission members 2007-2010:

Anglican Church of Australia - The Revd Dr Colleen O'Reilly, The Revd Dr Cathy Thomson, The Revd Dr Richard Treloar.

Assemblies of God Australia (observer) - Pastor Stephen Fogarty.

Churches of Christ in Australia - The Revd Dr Merryl Blair, The Revd Max Wright.

Coptic Orthodox Church of Australia - The Revd Fr Attia Athanasius.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia - The Revd Fr Elias Kentrotis.

Lutheran Church of Australia - Pastor Cecil Schmalkuche.

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers Australia) - Bill Jaggs (alternate: Gerard Guiton).

Roman Catholic Church in Australia - Dr Ann Hunt, The Revd Dr Gerard Kelly, The Revd Dr Peter Matheson.

The Salvation Army in Australia - Major Paul Kinder.

Syrian Orthodox Patriarchal Vicarate of Australia - Mr Chamoun Malki.

Uniting Church in Australia – The Revd Sue Gormann (later replaced by Maureen Postma), The Revd Dr Christiaan Mostert, The Revd Graham Perry.

NCCA General Secretary, ex officio - The Revd John Henderson (succeeded by the Revd Tara Curlewis).

Secretary to the Commission – The Revd Dr Jonathan Inkipin

Personal

In concluding this report, I am aware that I first wrote a report for the NCCA leadership in 2002, and now this is to be my final one. During that time I have served the NCCA in several different capacities, including with the Decade to Overcome Violence initiative, NATSIEC, forseten and more recently the Faith & Unity Commission. I want to express my gratitude to the churches, to the Executive and to those who have appointed and supported me for the opportunity to serve the NCCA's ecumenical endeavour for the best part of eight years. It has been a very great privilege to do so.

I pray that the work of the NCCA will continue creatively and challengingly in serving the churches as they seek to express more visibly the unity of the Church.

Jonathan Inkipin

Secretary

10 April 2010

ADDENDUM 1

FURTHER STUDY ON AUSTRALIAN CHURCHES COVENANTING TOGETHER

Following the recommendation from the Forum of the NCCA, the Faith and Unity Commission has continued to study covenanting with a view to assisting the churches to further engage in the covenanting process begun in 2004. To help focus our work we sent to the churches and to the state councils of churches two questions for consideration: *What is it about our churches which makes the process of implementation of the “Australian Churches Covenanting Together” difficult? What makes it work when it does happen?* Responses to these questions came through the members of the Commission on behalf of their respective church. From among its members the Commission received papers from the Anglican Church, the Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), the Roman Catholic Church, the Salvation Army, and the Uniting Church; and input from the General Secretary on the roles of councils of churches, and from NATSIEC. One comment was also received from a state council. This material has enabled the Commission to reflect further on *Australian Churches Covenanting Together*, and to offer these reflections to our churches. Our hope is that this report may assist churches to keep thinking about covenanting and to better understand the possibilities the covenanting process provides for deepening relationships with each other in practical ways.

Stories of Covenants

We heard stories of some recently formed covenants, the most prominent of which were those between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic Churches at a diocesan level. In NSW there is the tri-diocesan covenant between the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle and the Roman Catholic dioceses of Maitland-Newcastle and Broken Bay. A feature of this diocesan covenant is the conscious attempt to have local Anglican and Roman Catholic parishes enter into a local covenant. More recently the Roman Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba has become part of the long-standing covenant between the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Other stories of covenanting focused on rural and remote Australia. Two examples were considered, involving the Anglican Diocese of the Northern Territory and the Lutheran Church of Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory District. These covenants reflect the special situation of rural and remote areas, especially in the provision of ministry. Among other things, they enable the minister of one church to provide pastoral care to the members of the other church, and to lead worship – usually according to the rites of the minister’s church.

The South Australian Council of Churches indicated that it was focusing on baptism/initiation as a way to look more deeply at covenanting. The purpose was to arrive at concrete and practical ways for the churches to implement *Australian Churches Covenanting Together*.

From these stories there emerged certain elements that seemed to facilitate covenanting.

- The importance of church leadership was crucial. This seemed to work well when the respective leaders had a close personal and professional relationship and had already been engaged together in a variety of activities and projects in the church and in the local community. The diocesan structure of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches seemed to facilitate this sort of leadership, especially where the local bishops had been resident for some years and had been able to gradually develop good relationships.
- Another element that facilitated covenanting was the support of the local clergy. A commitment to regular joint clergy meetings also seemed helpful. This not only enabled clergy to get to know each other, but also to consider together the pastoral

needs in their local area and then to seek ways of jointly responding.

- A further element that facilitated covenanting was good formation at all levels of church life. When this happened the covenant was not something that came out of the blue, but was seen as a natural step in the relationship between the churches. Moreover, good formation helped people understand both the scope and the limitations of the covenant.

The situation in rural and remote communities brings out more clearly the link between covenanting and already existing inter-church relationships. In these places the natural, local community that exists in a town or district contributes to the good relationships between churches. Further, the fact that these church communities are often responding to pastoral needs (and often a crisis in the provision of ministry) highlights the concrete nature of a local covenant.

Covenanting has both theological and existential dimensions. The theological basis is the common faith that the churches can recognise they share. The existential dimension is the concrete way in which that faith is shared – sometimes out of necessity, to help sisters and brothers in need, and sometimes as an aspect of a shared civic life. When two or more churches enter into a covenant it comes to expression in a concrete, existential form.

It was noted that among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians there was already a highly developed capacity to work across denominational boundaries, because their sense of communion as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was stronger than their denominational identity. A concrete example of a commitment to a practical goal is the Make Indigenous Poverty History campaign.

Some Questions and Difficulties Arising in the Churches

Our study has shown that many churches still face difficulties with the idea of covenanting. In some cases there are conceptual difficulties, especially when there could be a variety of meanings of covenant. Some may expect too much from a covenant, as if it represents full church union. Others who regard it as a solemn act feel that some acts of covenanting appear rather trivial. For all of our churches, our self-understanding as a church affects our understanding of the nature and purpose of covenanting.

The structures of authority in some churches have resulted in a questioning of the significance of a national church body entering into covenant. Is this done on behalf of the local congregations? In other words, it would seem that the significance of the original act of covenanting is interpreted differently in different churches. Some have interpreted it as paving the way for similar covenants at the local or congregational level. Others have appreciated the significance of the original event and are happy to live within the spirit of that original act of covenanting without seeing the need for more local expressions of the covenant.

It is quite clear that there are many local initiatives involving prayer together, joint pastoral care, joint public advocacy etc that have never been formalised in an act of covenanting. The question posed by some is what difference a formal covenant would make. Or again, could these instances be seen as concrete expressions of the national act of covenanting. While it is true that these situations should be considered in relation to their respective church's engagement in the national covenant, the argument for a local covenant is that by covenanting together the participating churches bring before God in a solemn act a commitment to unity and common mission.

Closely connected to this is the question of whether the act of covenanting is more about affirming an already existing unity, or more about a stage taken on the way and a means to reach the final goal. Our Commission does not opt for one or other of these alternative

interpretations, and suggests that the act of covenanting involves both an ontological and a functional dimension. In the act of covenanting, churches acknowledge before God the unity already received as gift, no matter how strong or weak that unity may be. At the same time the covenanting churches make a commitment to each other to act together to the extent that they are able. They also commit to using this present situation as the basis for deepening their unity. The very nature of their act of covenanting means that it is always dynamic and should be renewed periodically.

These different responses have also highlighted a question about the role of the NCCA and local councils of churches in the covenanting process. Our exploration of this question reminds us of the aims of councils of churches to keep before the churches the imperative of unity and to help them find ways to express the unity they already share. A council of churches provides a forum where churches take seriously their commitment to each other.

Our study also suggests that the structures in some churches are less conducive to acts of covenanting. For example, the Uniting Church in Australia wonders if the relatively short tenure of its leaders makes it difficult to develop the sort of interpersonal relationship with the leaders of other churches that will lead to a solemnising of its ecclesial relationship with other churches. Moreover, the different territorial configuration of the churches (diocese, district, presbytery etc) could make it more difficult to enter into a covenant relationship beyond the congregational or parish level.

It was also observed that some smaller churches feel that the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church and the Uniting Church do not often make it easy for smaller churches to enter into these covenanting relationships. Perhaps a slightly different form of covenanting might be possible.

It is well known that a change of leadership can bring a different set of priorities for a church. Without the commitment either to enter into a covenanting relationship or to reaffirm an existing covenant any acts of covenanting will be weakened. It was observed that for some churches, especially those with a strong evangelical focus, acts of covenanting would be a low priority.

It was also noted that the issues facing a particular church and its internal life could make any acts of covenanting impossible for the time being. Pressure can come from within the membership of the church to resist the idea of covenant. On another front, some churches have resisted entering into a new relationship with a church that is debating doctrinal and moral issues.

Some Practical Suggestions

Several churches have indicated that it would be helpful to see articulated the various levels and forms of covenanting relationships. A useful resource could be the small document “Australian Churches Covenanting Together Locally”. This is available on the Faith and Unity website. It gives some practical examples as well as a brief theoretical overview.

The possibilities for covenanting are numerous, and it will be for local churches to work out what they can do together and commit to together. The list below gives some examples:

- On the **local** level covenanting could draw churches into regular prayer for each other at Sunday worship.
- On the **local** level covenanting could see churches commit to some joint action by way of outreach to the needy or marginalised.
- On the **local** level a covenanting relationship may involve churches being committed to a joint analysis of the pastoral priorities in that area.
- In a **rural** area a covenanting relationship may see two or more churches make a commitment to offer pastoral care to the other when one of them is no able to offer

ministry in a small community.

- At a **regional** level two or more churches entering into a covenanting relationship may make a commitment to hold an annual meeting of clergy and ministers.
- At a **regional** level two or more church leaders may enter into a covenanting relationship that commits them to promote some degree of joint theological formation and/or on-going formation for those preparing for ministry or already in ministry.

Recommendations

At the 2007 Forum of the NCCA new members were invited to sign *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* in those places where they were able.

1. We recommend that this become the accepted practice for new member of the NCCA. In this way, *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* becomes for the NCCA an instrument by which it assists the churches to enter into deeper relationships with each other. For the churches, the multilateral act of covenanting concretises their commitment to each other and to the unity of the church.

Australian Churches Covenanting Together was always intended to be a dynamic document that reflected the growth in unity among the churches. National heads of churches signed it on behalf of their church.

2. We recommend that churches be encouraged to regularly evaluate their ecumenical relationships at all levels of church life in the light of their commitment to each other at a national level.
3. We recommend that the Faith and Unity Commission be asked to monitor international agreements between churches with a view to helping Australian churches commit to equivalent agreements at the local level.
4. We recommend that the various dimensions of *Australian Churches Covenanting Together* be reviewed at each Forum of the NCCA, with a view to broadening them when member churches can recognise new developments in their relationships.

There are many instances across the country where local congregations join each other for such things as prayer, bible study, and support for the poor and marginalised. There are instances where they share buildings and other resources.

5. We recommend that the churches invite those at parish level to acknowledge what they are already doing and to bring this before God in a solemn act of covenanting.
6. We recommend that these local covenants or local agreements be renewed annually, perhaps at a time of the year that is significant for all the churches involved, or else during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Most of the stories we have heard of covenanting have involved bilateral relationships.

7. We recommend that covenanting be a topic for consideration at the next Forum on Bilateral Dialogues. The aim of such a consideration would be to help the churches recognise the agreements that have been reached with their dialogue partners and to prompt them to look for ways to bring the unity they already share to concrete expression.

Faith and Unity Commission
March 2010

ADDENDUM 2

FAITH AND UNITY COMMISSION

BROADENING THE THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE: ISSUES AND PRINCIPLES

At the request of the then General Secretary, the Revd John Henderson, this paper is offered as an initial response to the perceived need for the NCCA and its members to engage with Christian people and organisations that are active in Australian society but not members of the NCCA.

Issues

- There is a dynamic, growing, public expression of Christianity beyond the NCCA membership. For example: the Australian Prayer Network, the Australian Christian Lobby, the Evangelical Alliance. The Faith and Unity Commission has welcomed the Assemblies of God in Australia as an observer to its meetings, thus bringing us into dialogue with the Pentecostal movement. Internationally, we recognise the important connections being made as part of the Global Christian Forum.
- These groups are often suspicious of the NCCA and many of its members, and consider traditional ecumenism to be too church focused, with only weak public Christian commitment.
- For their part, the NCCA and many of its members are suspicious of the methods used in these groups, and of the theological foundations underpinning their activities.
- Despite these mutual suspicions bridges are being built between these two broad groups. There are important instances of cooperation and mutual engagement on specific projects (rather than the traditional workings of the NCCA's commissions), such as the Safe as Churches project.
- Within each of the member churches of the NCCA it is possible to discern different streams of theology, ranging from the more systematic to the more practical. Furthermore, members of our own churches may also participate in these new expressions of Christianity.
- The new form of Christian engagement evident in these new movements may suggest to the NCCA and its member churches that we are witnessing the birth of a new or alternative "ecumenical" paradigm (although these movements would not call their engagement ecumenical). This new paradigm takes as a starting point personal testimony about experiences of faith rather than dialogue about doctrines and creeds; it is less formal and less academic; it often challenges the Enlightenment paradigm regarding faith and reason; and it proposes a different understanding of mission, more forthright in its proclamation of moral values.

Principles

- The NCCA should be a participant in this new multilateral conversation, willing to bring its own gifts to the table and to receive the gifts of others.
- Such participation becomes possible where the NCCA can discern that there is sufficient common purpose existing between itself and any one of these new movements. For example, they "confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures" and are committed "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" (Basis of NCCA).
- The NCCA should be willing to enter into broader partnerships on particular issues of

national or shared interest.

- Building trust among all participants should be a priority. Without this trust Christians of different persuasions will remain suspicious of each other and continue to deliver contrary messages to the Australian public.
- The NCCA and its commissions should be ready to engage with other Christian groups using new and different methodologies, with spiritual/religious experience as a starting point. This need not diminish the traditional work of the commissions.
- Encounter with other Christians is always an opportunity to renew and purify our ecumenical commitment. Engagement with these newer Christian movements may be an occasion to develop our understanding and practice of spiritual ecumenism, with a strong focus on Christ and the Spirit.

Prepared by Faith and Unity Commission
June, 2009

Gender Commission Report

Since the inception of the Gender Commission in 2001 the members have together sought to fulfil the purpose for which it was formed – which is to work “to develop and promote inclusive models of Christian life within and between member Churches, NCCA, commissions and networks and other agencies as appropriate.”



Much has been achieved in that time, as is evident in the successive reports to past National Forum gatherings.

We honour those who devoted so much of their time, energy, abilities and personal resources to this work.

In the period between the 2004 National Forum and that of 2007 the focus of this work was primarily;

1. organising public events to enhance interfaith dialogue and to promote dialogue on other gender related social justice issues,
2. conducting nation wide ‘Audacity to Hope’ workshops in collaboration with State and Territory Ecumenical Councils, and
3. maintaining connections with a network of international, national and local organisations.

The continuation of this work was supported and endorsed by the NCCA at the 2007 National Forum.

2007 – 2010:

The past three years has been a period of change and challenge reflective of those facing the wider church and the community at large.

There has been no lessening of the relevance and importance of the work of the Gender Commission. But we have been forced to recognise a change in the capacity of our members to maintain the time and resource intensive strategies previously employed to such great effect. Consequently there has been a process of refocusing the commitment of the time, energies and resources available to us without diminishing our mandate or abandoning the hopes and dreams for the future within contemporary church life as expressed by women and men through the ‘Audacity to Hope’ workshops (see attached summary).

We have also felt the effects of changes in composition and leadership within the group. Declining membership has become a critical issue. Bernice Moore, our convenor and an inspirational force in our work has moved on from her pivotal role in the Commission. We would like to gratefully acknowledge Bernice’s contribution over many years to the commission. Her hard work, visionary leadership and determination will be hard to replace.

Since the last Forum two significant projects have been planned.

‘A Church for All’ Project

The ‘Church for All’ project was based on a model similar to that of the ‘Audacity to Hope’ workshops. The project aimed to actively engage members of local churches in working together to find ways of addressing the concerns, hopes and desired actions that arose from the ‘Audacity to Hope’ research. A series of interactive seminars were designed to bring about positive change in the areas identified by the ‘Audacity to Hope’ consultations. In each State

and Territory the seminars were to be locally arranged and coordinated in conjunction with the relevant ecumenical body, and hosted by Church communities in the local area.

Speaking Tour

Ayra Inderyas is the Secretary of the Women's Desk of the Church of Pakistan and works for gender justice in the face of widespread violence against women. Ayra was to be the guest speaker at the Gender Commission public forum at Parliament House in 2008. Other speaking engagements were also planned, targeting audiences such as school and Church groups who are interested in promoting social justice and gender justice in particular. The purpose of this tour was:

- to raise awareness of the plight of women in Pakistan and to allow the story of our sisters there to be heard.
- to give support to the women and men who struggle for justice and human rights despite the risk to their own safety.
- to highlight the links between what is happening in other parts of Asia and what is happening here in Australia – such as trafficking of women and the abuse suffered by indigenous women

While much time and energy was devoted to the planning of these projects, the human and financial resources necessary for their success were not available.

The Way Forward

Faced with this reality, the Commission members recognised the need to develop alternative, less resource intensive ways of carrying forward the work of the Commission.

We have identified and explored the following pivotal questions:

- Is our mandate still relevant to the Commission, to NCCA and member churches and to the wider church?
- How do we enact this mandate in ways that are effective but achievable?
- How do we keep faith with the commitment made to those who shared their concerns, hopes and dreams through the 'Audacity to Hope' workshops?

Having grappled with these questions, the key strategy for moving forward and the basis of our planned activities will be continued dialogue as a platform for creative action towards transformative change. This includes;

- dialogue with heads and representatives of Churches at the Forum regarding the mandate and method.
- dialogue with State & Territory Ecumenical Councils, church and interfaith groups.
- dialogue with and between grassroots believers.
- facilitating and promoting exchange between the above three.

Steps to creating the basis for this dialogue are in process;

1. A review of mandate has been undertaken by the Commission, confirming our commitment to the mandate and stimulating renewed vision for how it can be enacted.
2. Delegates at the NCCA National Forum are asked to participate in dialogue with members of the Commission, including a survey to give feedback on the relevance of our mandate and views on how it could be fulfilled in the coming three years. These views will be taken into account in planning of future Commission activities.

3. The Commission is working on the development of a website or ‘wiki’ with the purpose of:
- Sharing resources and materials relating to gender relationships, such as papers, reflections and studies developed by the Commission or identified from other sources, including international and inter-faith organisations.
 - Surveying the views of church leaders, State Ecumenical councils, church members and isolated or disconnected Christians on gender related questions and disseminating the results in ways that foster creative and positive engagement.
 - Providing a forum for ongoing dialogue on gender issues within the Church and in particular carrying forward the ‘hopes and dreams’ expressed by the participants in the Audacity to Hope workshops. This will take forms such as facilitated electronic discussion groups or online conferences around these themes.

We seek the support of the ongoing support of the Executive and the Forum delegates in participating in this dialogue.

Gender remains a significant basis of exclusion within society and the church. For this reason the Gender Commission remains committed to the creation of inclusive models of Christian life which celebrate the diversity which is the glory of the body of Christ.

We appeal to member churches without active representatives on the Gender Commission to nominate representatives to join us in making this vision a continuing reality.

Susan Reese
Acting Convenor
May 2010

GENDER COMMISSION CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

Church	Representative
NCCA General Secretary	Tara Curlewis
NATSIEC	Graeme Mundine
Anglican Church	Deborah Palmer
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	Barbara Lumley
Roman Catholic Church in Australia – Indigenous Ministry	Ms Elsie Heiss
Baptist Union of Australia	Rev Robyn Richardson
Lutheran Church of Australia	Mrs Tanna Mackenzie
The Salvation Army	Major Susan Reese
Uniting Church	
Antiochan Orthodox Church	
Armenian Apostolic Church	
Assyrian Churches of the East	
Chinese Methodist Church in Australia	
Churches of Christ in Australia	
Congregational Federation of Australia	
Coptic Orthodox Church	
Greek Orthodox Church	
Mar Thoma Church	
Romanian Orthodox Church	
Syrian Orthodox Church	

ADDENDUM

HOPES AND DREAMS

A Church that nurtures a living relationship with God

- All have access to a living relationship with God.
- Faith and hope for the future
- Have faith in the Holy Spirit to work

A Church that empowers laity

- That people who are searching will be encouraged to grow into their potential
- Explore the meaning of ministry and community
- Ordinary people 'own' the Church
- Everyone respected as having the inspiration of the Holy Spirit
- Accept all peoples gifts
- Churches will focus on Mission and establish open structures for people to move into ministries regardless of gender.
- Grassroots women free irrespective of hierarchy domination
- Young women to come after older women
- Democratic decision making / consensus

A Church that is inclusive

- Explore appropriate alternative models of Church
- All people will have access to helpful structures within the Church
- Growth of ecumenical movement – unity between Churches
- Unity between denominations while preserving what is precious to each
- Churches use gifts together
- Unity between ethnic groups and cultures
- Changed perception of women's work
- Gender will become irrelevant
- Education in local Churches on gender issues
- Opportunities for women to be real leaders and spiritual mothers
- Female ordination / representation at Vatican / appointment of female Bishops
- Inclusive language and liturgy in the Church
- 50% women in NCCA executive and Heads of Churches

A Church that speaks to the world.

- That Churches will offer Christ to the world
- From war & violence, peace can emerge
- That we will move away from an 'age of terror' to an 'age of deep peace'.
- Open to a new way of being Church
- Honest, open dialogue
- Facing our doubts and insecurities
- Chaplaincy in schools
- Dare – open to possibilities

Safe Church Project Working Group Report

The major undertaking of the Working Group in 2009 was the **Safe as Churches? IV Conference (SAC?IV) held in South Australia in June**. This series of Consultations/Conferences was the original brief for the Working Group. Membership of the Group so far has been drawn from practitioners in the areas of child protection, safe environments or response to abuse within churches.

The Group also has interest or involvement in:

- **Safe Church Training Agreement (SCTA) (*But not oversight of this project*)**
- **Production of a charter** stating a commitment to creating a “Safe Church”.
- **Exploration of the theological basis of response to abuse and theology of safety** through interaction between theologians, policy makers and practitioners.
- **Agreement across denominations on what we screen for** and how we assess people for ordination, volunteers etc with the aim to develop more standard approaches.
- **Research possibilities into issues surrounding abuse in Churches.**
- **The development of the various state networks** which followed Safe As Churches? III.

Safe as Churches? IV Conference, 2009

- The South Australian Safe Church Network in conjunction with the SA Council of Churches hosted the Conference in **South Australia on 11 – 13 June, 2009**.
- **Conference was held at Adelaide West Uniting Church and the Adelaide College of Divinity, South Australia.**
- Heads of Churches, Professional Standards Directors and other Practitioners from churches across Australia and New Zealand were invited to the conference.
- **Conference aimed to meet its Professional Development** objectives for those working in the areas of protection, prevention and response to abuse.
- The theme of the Conference was: “Breaking Open the Jar .. being nurtured and nourished for the work being done”. As well as the plenary addresses, which are posted on the NCCA website, a range of workshops were held catering to the needs of those attending:
 - Healing, forgiveness and reconciliation
 - Exploring shortcomings in processes leading to failure in healing
 - Supervision and safe churches
 - Training requirements for safer church communities
 - Learnings in prevention and response
 - Learnings about offenders
 - Investigating and assessing abuse complaints
 - Facilitation – mediation and apologies
 - Power, polity, politics and abuse in churches
- Feedback from those attending the Conference was good. The theme appealed to people and the exploration of the Gospel story of the alabaster jar was of great value to those who work in these areas. There was a good sense of solidarity and a recognition that we gain strength from sharing our experiences and learnings.
- It was noted that the NSW Safe Church Network had agreed to participate in organising a SAC? Conference in 2011 through involvement of some of its members in an organising committee if such a committee was set up and chaired from this Working Group.

David and Pauline Pearson (Conference)

The SCTA will organise this conference/workshop on 16 October 2010. Topics will include cyberbullying.

Membership of the Safe Church Working Group

Members of the SCPWG:

Elizabeth McClean Presbyterian	Ronis Chapman Society of Friends	Peter Barnett Baptist
Helen Newton Hillsong	Audrey Babio Hillsong	Meg Herbert Uniting
Robyn Smartt Salvation Army	Garth Blake Anglican	Phil Mulhall Catholic (Convenor)

NCCA General Secretary
(ex officio)

The Working Group does need augmentation.

Phil Mulhall
Convenor
April 2010

ADDENDUM**Draft Mandate for the Safe Church Group**

The Safe Church Network is committed to leadership so as to ensure that Australian Churches are physically, emotionally and spiritually safe by:

1. Supporting Safe Ministry workers in churches by providing training, professional development and networking opportunities.
2. Raising awareness and understanding in churches of issues relating to Safe Ministry and the prevention of abuse, including emerging issues.
3. Encouraging churches to develop and implement Safe Ministry policies and procedures
4. Developing and sharing Safe Ministry resources and training for use by churches in the implementation of their policies and procedures.
5. Reflecting on and identifying the social, cultural and institutional factors that contribute to abuse in church communities and provide understanding on these issues.
6. Facilitating cooperation among Australian churches on Safe Ministry issues.
7. Providing Safe Ministry advice and responding to requests from the NCCA Executive.

The Safe Church Network works within the understanding of *Holistic Safe Church Ministry* as defined.

Holistic Safe Church Ministry - finds the balance in fulfilling the pastoral, legal, insurance, risk management, denominational and ethical responsibilities. This includes implementation of prevention and response policies, procedures and support for people in the areas of duty of care, vulnerable people, positions of power, codes of conduct, response to allegations of ministry misconduct and/or abuse, and incident reporting and responses, monitoring of practices, safe recruitment of leaders, safe supervision of leaders, preparation and conducting of church programs in safe physical and emotional environments.

Social Justice Network Report

Membership. Since the 2007 NCCA forum, the following people have served as members of the Network:

Mr Theo Mackaay	Anglican
Mr Darren Mitchell	Anglican
Mr Richard Melki	Antiochian Orthodox
Mr John Ferguson	Catholic
Sr Libby Rogerson	Catholic
Mr Craig Brown	Churches of Christ
Mr Heshmat Grace	Coptic Orthodox
The Revd Tara Curlewis	NCCA General Secretary
The Revd John Henderson	NCCA General Secretary
Wies Schuiringa	Religious Society of Friends
Major Cecil Woodward	Salvation Army
Mr Martin Brahim	Syrian Orthodox
The Revd Elenie Poulos	Uniting
The Revd Dr Ann Wansborough	Uniting

The members of the Social Justice Network have met five times a year at the NCCA office and there has been email contact in between meetings. Some members have participated in the meetings by phone instead of travelling to Sydney. The Network members have experienced the meetings as a gathering of people from the different member Churches who share a common journey, each responding to the major social justice issues of our time. The meetings have been a place to affirm the mutuality of our work, to be encouraged and inspired, freely making our resources available to one another and knowing that together we are bearing witness to our faith.

The issue of attendance also needs to be raised here. There seems to be a difficulty for some members of the Social Justice Network in attending these meetings. We encourage members to attend and note that the work of the Social Justice Network is poorer for their absence.

Context

In her report to the Sixth Forum, the Revd Dr Ann Wansbrough noted that Australian *“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.”*

With some exceptions, that trend has continued.

The Network defers to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) for comment on Indigenous matters, but joins in NATSIEC’s concerns about the continuation of the federal government’s Emergency Intervention in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and its intrusion into the lives of Aboriginal families and communities.

It seems that some in Australia are not trusted to develop their individual lives and capacities. At the very least, the NT Intervention has lacked a truly consultative and community development approach that is based on equal partnership, respectful of traditional culture and

networks. The NT Intervention is now being used to place increased strictures on welfare recipients. For many categories of Centrelink clients, the future holds increased government monitoring of their lives.

In the policy area of asylum seekers and refugees a disturbing trend back to the intolerant and insular public discourse of the early part of the decade is also emerging. Sensationalised public discourse by some politicians and the media has once more peddled myths of ‘illegal’ boat arrivals and of the number of arrivals overwhelming Australia. Last year, Australia received a little over 6,000 asylum applications including those who arrived by boat. This represents only 1.6% of the 377,000 claims received by industrialised nations. In the broader context, 42 million people worldwide are uprooted by violence and persecution to become ‘internally displaced’ or to flee their countries in search of protection.

Over the last three years we have also experienced the global financial crisis and the increasingly threatening effects of climate change, particularly as our brothers and sisters in the Pacific draw our attention to their devastating environmental plight. Both of these global crises have caused many people in our society to reflect critically, often for the first time, on such issues as the implications of living in a global economy, the question of the planet’s finite resources and how we share those resources and ensure their availability for future generations, and whether we must put limits on our continual growth and how this can be done in a world where so many still live in dire poverty.

It is as important now as it has ever been in human history, that the world hears the prophetic voices of the churches as they call for and act for justice, peace and reconciliation in the world.

Theology

The revised Common Lectionary offers Amos 7: 7 – 17 for the Sunday of the Forum. How would the nation measure up when the plumbline is held against Australia? As we witness a range of social justice issues around which public discourse is abandoned as too difficult, politically too hot or simply divisive. The Network seeks to provide material to the Council and the member Churches to prompt discussion and suggest action.

The Gospel for the Sunday of the Forum is Luke 10:25-37.

Those who follow Jesus as Lord are commended when they know what is required of them and act accordingly. As our nation is lead by a committed Christian Prime Minister and may be facing an election by year’s end, the Network draws attention to what the Lord requires in all circumstances. Alongside such public witness, the Network will continue to reflect on what those requirements are for the life of the Council and its member Churches.

Social Justice Sunday resources

The Network’s major task each year continues to be the production of resources for Social Justice Sunday. This work has become increasingly difficult in recent years funding becomes harder to secure. Our thanks go to those funding bodies and member churches which have made grants available, and continue to do so.

Since the 6th Forum, the Social Justice Sunday resources have tackled the following themes:

- 2007 “*In whose interest? Australia as a global citizen*”, focusing on the part Australia can, and should, play in an increasingly interdependent world.
- 2008 “*Faces of poverty*”, an examination of homelessness issues through the stories of a number of people who are homeless or facing housing stress.
- 2009 “*Hope for the Common Good*”, economic issues in light of the global financial crisis.

2010 (currently being developed) issues of violence and marking the end of the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence.

We continue to produce printed publications for Social Justice Sunday, but are making greater use of internet-based resources.

Other work

In June 2009 the Network presented a protocol for fair trade in Christian goods to the Executive. The so-called “Holy Hardware” campaign was endorsed by the Executive and has since been widely promoted.

Members of the Network attended the second Civil Society Dialogue in Canberra in late 2008.

The Network sought the support of the NCCA for the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons.

Future directions

The Network’s report to the November 2008 meeting of the Council’s Executive took the form of an interactive exercise to assess which issues were considered to be of greatest importance to the member churches for the Network’s agenda. We thank the members of the Executive for their willingness to participate and share their thoughts with us. The exercise showed that the Network’s agenda is broadly in line with the priorities of the member churches and also affirmed the value of the work being done.

Resources

Once again we draw the attention of the Forum to the Network’s struggle to do its work without proper funding support.

Theo Mackaay
Acting Chair
April 2010

Communications Desk Report

The Communications Desk is dedicated to the public profile and brand recognition of the NCCA. It is staffed 14 hours per week by Debra Porter, dporter@ncca.org.au.

Media & Public Statements

Contacts

We continue to develop relationships with journalists, church and secular. The difficulties within the secular media are increasing as media outlets reduce the number of dedicated religion staff.

Watching for media uptake of the NCCA media releases and responding to requests for interview and other media contact is an important part of the function of the Communications Desk. At the request of the NCCA Executive approximately one year ago, we began recording mention of the NCCA, uptake of media releases, requests for interview and other contact from the media. There have been more than 170 mentions/quotes of the NCCA in the past year, mostly within Church sources. The conscious effort to qualify as many instances as we are able has given reviewable insight that will be useful into the future.

Media Releases (www.ncca.org.au/home/media-releases)

Since July 2007 the NCCA has distributed 62 media releases to newspapers, radio, television, Christian media contacts, NCCA Executive members, NCCA Observer Church contacts, and other friends of the NCCA.

Topics covered by NCCA releases during the past 3 years include:

- Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
- Week of Prayer for Reconciliation
- Palestine & Israel
- Poverty
- Global Citizenship
- Christians in Iraq
- Religious Persecution
- Cluster Munitions
- Victorian Bushfires
- Overseas Aid
 - ♦ Christmas Bowl
 - ♦ Samoa
 - ♦ Sri Lanka
 - ♦ Philippines
 - ♦ Indonesia
 - ♦ Haiti
 - ♦ Congo
 - ♦ Sudan
 - ♦ Pakistan
 - ♦ Iraq
 - ♦ Burma/Myanmar
 - ♦ Zimbabwe
- Indigenous issues
 - ♦ Northern Territory Intervention
 - ♦ Welfare Reform
 - ♦ Racial Discrimination Act
 - ♦ Reconciliation
 - ♦ UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
 - ♦ Sorry (Government Apology)
 - ♦ Poverty
 - ♦ Coming of Light Celebration (1871)
- Overseas Visitors
 - ♦ All Africa Council of Churches
 - ♦ Sudan Council of Churches
- Announcement of Act Alliance
- Refugees
- Appointments
 - ♦ NCCA President
 - ♦ NCCA General Secretary

Recent media releases are available at www.ncca.org.au/home/media-releases. Go to www.ncca.org.au/archives/media-release-archives to read archived media releases issued prior to 2009.

Easter and Christmas Messages

We continue to collect and distribute short (approximately 250 word) Easter and Christmas messages from the heads of our member and observer Churches. The short, significant messages bring the reflections of our Churches to the attention of the media at these most important times in our calendar. You can find these messages within our media releases.

Policy & Procedures

We continue to use the *Policy and Procedures on Public Statements and the Media*. To view, please, visit www.ncca.org.au/home/media-releases?start=30.

NCCA Website (www.ncca.org.au)

The website was totally reviewed, updated and restructured during late 2008 and early 2009. The main part of the new website went live on 31 August 2009. It was followed in September 2009 by the Act for Peace (Christian World Service Commission (CWS)) pages.

Although the two parts of the website were developed separately, the indexing and search functions have been integrated to allow the whole site to function as one.

The NCCA does not employ dedicated web authoring staff, except in the area of Christian World Service. Secretariat, Support Services and NATSIEC staff maintain up to date information in between other responsibilities. The staff members of the NCCA are dedicated to bringing the public the latest information concerning the NCCA projects and ecumenical news.

The goal is to continue to develop a site that will be attractive, easier to navigate and provide a wide range of information and ecumenical resources. As always I encourage you to visit the NCCA website at www.ncca.org.au. Please send all questions and comments concerning the website to superusers@ncca.org.au.

Brochures, Business Cards and Banners

The Communications Officer continues to develop, print and distribute NCCA brochures and business cards.

NCCA Banners and the Mantle¹ are available from the Secretariat. Send an email to secretariat@ncca.org.au or call (02) 9299 2215 to lodge a booking and arrange transportation.

Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA)

Two staff members represent the NCCA in this regional organisation. We have participated in the annual conference each year, Auckland, A/NZ, (2007 – Kaylea Fern and Debra Porter), Brisbane (2008 – Jordan Shank and Debra Porter) and Sydney (2009 – Debra Porter).

The future of media generally and the negative effect of the global financial crisis were a major part of the 2009 conference. The concerns are based in reduced budgets as well as the changing structures of the non-church media. Non-church media are moving away from specialist departments and journalists to general staffing. Reliance on journalistic professionals with no or little experience of religious matters is giving the Churches a lower public media profile. How will future media reporting reflect the interests of Australia's religious bodies? This is a question of great concern.

Debra Porter

Communications Officer

May 2010

1 The NCCA Mantle was designed and first viewed at the inaugural NCCA Forum in 1994. View information on the Mantle at www.ncca.org.au/about/117.

Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund

The Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund (RWELF) 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 balance of the Fund as at 31 December 2010 stood at \$213,716 due to the fund’s policy to retain capital \$4,853 is available for grants.

Guidelines for Applications

1. Applicants are expected to present significant proposals for enhancing their ecumenical perceptions and/or leadership skills, indicating the benefits anticipated for themselves and for the wider church.
2. Normally each application is endorsed by an appropriate body within the person’s own church.
3. The grant is intended to cover not more than 75% of the costs of the applicant’s proposal, requiring some financial commitment from the applicant, local church and/or other parties.
4. Applicants should be aged 35 or less. Standard post-graduate degree work in seminaries or other academic institutions falls beyond the purpose of the Fund.
5. Successful applicants accept responsibility for reporting back to the committee and to their own churches at the completion of the programme.

Application Requirements

Application for assistance should take the form of a letter setting out the plans and aspirations the applicant has for serving the church in Australia, with all the usual personal information, background and interests. Documentation concerning financial consideration also needs to be supplied as well as two references, one from a leading figure in the applicant’s denomination.

All enquires and applications are directed to the NCCA General Secretary

Fund Membership

The current membership of the Fund Committee is Dr R L Walker (Chair), Rev’d Canon Bruce McAteer, Dr Trish Madigan op, Ms Mary Pollard, Rev’d Yangrae Son, Fr Steven Scoutas, and the NCCA General Secretary (ex officio).

The Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund notes that as the NCCA no longer has a Youth Officer, the special youth advisor is no longer available as a resource person to the fund. Consideration is being given to identifying people who may be approached in the capacity of special youth advisors when needed.

Approved Grants

The Fund has approved two grants since the 2007 Forum;

1. Chantelle Ogilvie - CCA Asian Ecumenical Course, October 2008

The Fund approved supporting this application and the grant covered costs to \$2,280.00 for Chantelle to attend the Course in Indonesia.

Chantelle expressed her appreciation saying; “*The Asian Ecumenical Course was, for me, a rich time of learning that has increased my appreciation for ecumenical dialogue and broadened my understanding*”

of the potential of my own work as Justice and Peace Research Officer for the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney. I am sincerely grateful to the National Council of Churches Australia and the Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund, and to my supervisor, Dr Steven Lovell-Jones, for allowing me this opportunity to take part in such a valuable experience.”

2. Reverend Susan Malthouse – NCC India Ecumenical Youth Assembly (NEYA), January 2010

A grant of \$2,670.00 was approved for Susan to attend a 5 day youth Assembly organised by the NCC India, the theme “*Come let’s be friends*” focusing on nurturing friendship with nature, humanity and God.

Susan’s report to the fund concluded saying; “I am incredibly grateful to the Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund and the Uniting Church’s Christian Unity Working Group for their assistance in helping me attend NEYA and visit India. Although it was not all I hoped it would be, I have learnt a great deal and still hope that a similar ecumenical gathering of young people from all the Christian Churches might be possible and helpful for us all. I look forward to exploring this into the future, as well as seeing where the personal experiences lead my own ecumenical interests and ministry.”

Donations to the Fund

Towards the end of 2009 a Melbourne iconographer and ecumenist approached the NCCA wishing to make payments associated with their work of painting icons as occasional donations to assist young people to benefit from ecumenical experience or training programmes. The suggestion that donations be made to the Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership Fund was warmly received, several donations have subsequently been made.

Future Promotion

The committee is currently exploring the most appropriate ways to promote the Fund acknowledging that a variety of media are necessary to connect with young people today. The NCCA website, <http://www.ncca.org.au/about/177> continues to be one place where information is readily available.

Dr R L Walker

Chair

31st March 2010

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) Report



Introduction

The 6th National Forum commended plans for the NCCA to recruit and train participants in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI).

In 2006, the NCCA decided to establish an Australian 'desk' of the EAPPI. This program of the World Council of Churches (WCC) arranges for Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) - volunteers who spend 3 months in Palestine and Israel living in local communities and accompanying local people in their everyday lives. This immersion program supports Palestinians and Israelis, is a witness to the injustices suffered, and creates a team of advocates around the world to speak up for those who are marginalised and who suffer under the troubles of the region.

It is exciting to see the way the scope of the EAPPI work has grown in attempting to meet the emerging needs and challenges. Situations change, but the critical needs of the Palestinian and Israeli people do not. International advocacy coming from personal experience is crucial to changing the reality. The WCC has recognised that the EAPPI is one of its most successful programs.

Investigation Committee

Following the November 2007 NCCA Executive an Investigation Committee began meeting. The Committee brought a report and recommendations to the March 2008 Executive. Members: Aimee Kent - Uniting, Member of the NCCA Executive; Tanna MacKenzie - Lutheran, Member of the NCCA Gender Commission; Chantelle Ogilvie - Catholic, World Youth Day Coordinator and Australian Young Christian Workers & Australian Young Christian Students; Debra Porter - Anglican, NCCA Staff (Convener); and Maureen Postma - Uniting, General Secretary of the Victorian Council of Churches.

In summary, it was reported that the purpose of the NCCA EAPPI Desk within the structure and constitution of the NCCA is to

- promote the EAPPI in Australia, and as opportunities arise in the region.
- respond to queries about the EAPPI.
- arrange for and assist in processing applications of volunteers from Australia, and as opportunities arise from the region.
- arrange for and assist in training of prospective EAs.
- ensure and assist in support of EAs before, during and following placements.
- arrange for and assist in debriefing.
- seek funding for the Desk.
- monitor communications and advocacy efforts of volunteers.
- participate in advocacy.
- maintain communications with the WCC EAPPI.

Funding

We have received funding from the NCCA Christian World Service Commission to assist with sending EAs and participation in the annual National Coordinators' meeting. A small number of donations have been given through our online GIVE facility. The Lutheran Church and the Uniting Church have provided some funding for individual EAs. EAs are also contributing to their own costs.

SHAPING OUR ECUMENICAL FOOTPRINT

Suggestions and offers of funding can be given to Debra Porter, eappi@ncca.org.au or (02) 8259 0802. Donations can be made via cheques payable to NCCA Ltd (Marked for EAPPI) sent to the NCCA EAPPI Desk and by credit card via the NCCA website at https://www.thankq.net.au/tq_donate_ncca/Donate1.aspx?pid=2.

Promotion

The NCCA EAPPI Desk has a web presence at www.ncca.org.au/eappi. The World Council of Churches EAPPI has a web presence at www.eappi.org.

You will find a copy of the latest EAPPI brochure in your 7th National Forum kit when you sign in at the venue in Canberra. Please promote the EAPPI within your Church and other appropriate organisations.

Training of EAs

Several programs in Australia and overseas were assessed for suitability and cost.

It was decided for 2010 to utilise the program offered by PALMS Australia, a Catholic organisation that prepares volunteers for work in aid and humanitarian programs overseas. We are very appreciative of the cooperation and excellent training offered by PALMS. Debra Porter joined the candidates for the final sessions and commissioning ceremony, and engaged the candidates in some EAPPI specific sessions.

Ecumenical Accompaniers (EA)

During 2010 the first three Australian EAs will participate in the program. EAs will write stories, contact journalists and politicians, and seek possibilities for presentations.

If you would like to arrange for an EA to speak to a group in Adelaide, Melbourne or Sydney later this year, please, contact the NCCA EAPPI Desk, eappi@ncca.org.au.

Stories and Updates

Since late 2009 there has been an increase of dispossession of Palestinians living in the West Bank. Palestinian homes, offices, schools etc continue to be demolished. The West Bank is divided into 3 areas. Approximately 60% of the West Bank is classified as area C. Palestinians living in area C are required to acquire a permit before commencing any building, including even minor renovations and repairs. Approximately 94% of these applications are denied. People continue to build and risk demolition. Young people frequently leave as they are not able to build homes or add onto existing homes. Schools and other public buildings are also subject to the granting of permits.

Settlements (Israeli communities in the West Bank), however, are growing. New settlements are developing. East Jerusalem is particularly difficult. The Israeli Government does not accept that any part of Jerusalem is not a part of Israel. No wall/fence has ever been constructed that isolates one part of Jerusalem from another. Internationally it is recognised that the city is divided into East (Palestinian) and West (Israeli) Jerusalem. During my visit in November 2009, many Palestinian residents of Sheikh Jarrah (an inner Eastern suburb) were living on the footpath because they had recently been forcibly removed from homes that their families were given by the UN in the 1950s. The families that I spoke with were originally removed from homes in Haifa in the 1940s.

The problem of many mobile as well as static check points continues. The check point barriers and the restrictions of the West Bank A, B and C zones have slowed Palestinian life to a crawl.

Currently teams of 4 to 5 EAs are being sent year round to the 6 placement areas, Yanoun, Jayyous, Tulkarem, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron. In several areas, the EAs are the only internationals on the ground. The UNOCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) relies on the EAs for statistics in a number of areas, including but not limited to checkpoint assessment.

The latest stories from EAs and the EAPPI staff are available at www.eappi.org.

Kairos Palestine (December 2009)

A group of Palestinian Christians representing a variety of Churches and church-related organisations have issued an animated and prayerful call for an end to the occupation of Palestine by Israel. This document echoes a similar summons issued by South African Churches in the mid-1980s at the height of repression under the apartheid regime. It is considered that it is crucial to the future organisation and reflection of the EAPPI. Please take the time to read this essential document in the progress to support Christians in Israel and Palestine. This document can be found online at www.oikoumene.org/gr/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document.html. Members of the Executive have been asked to make it available as appropriate to church councils and churches.

WCC General Secretary, Sam Kobia, applauds church support for the document, www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article//wcc-general-secretary-app-2.html.

WCC Media Release, <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/a-palestinian-christian-c.html>.

NCCA EAPPI Desk Staff

Ideally the Desk should have a dedicated staff person for the equivalent of 14 hours per week. To date we have not been able to gather sufficient funding to support such a position.

In 2007, it was decided that Debra Porter would incorporate the function of an EAPPI National Coordinator within her other responsibilities, until such time as funding was available to cover a dedicated staff person.

The Australian EAPPI Organisational Chart is attached as an Addenda to the EAPPI Report.

National Coordinators' Annual Meeting

Each year a meeting of representatives from each of the countries involved in the EAPPI meet to discuss the running of the program, administration and visit the 6 placements.

There are currently 11 national co-ordinations, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Deutschland, Norway, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom & Ireland, and United States.

Visitors

During the past three years the EAPPI has had 2 EAs from other countries visit Australia, Ryan Moore (UK) and Patricia Price-Tomes (UK). Both made themselves available briefly to speak to groups in Australia.

The National Coordinator from the USA, Eric Fistler, visited in 2008. A prospective EA from Switzerland (an Australian now living in Switzerland) visited in 2010.

The Mayor of Bethlehem, his wife and several city councillors came to Australia in 2008; and the former Mayor of Nablus with two other Palestinians made a visit to the NCCA earlier this year. The NCCA was not the host for these visits, but we appreciate the time that was made available to meet with, ask questions and receive updates from them.

NCCA EAPPI Committee

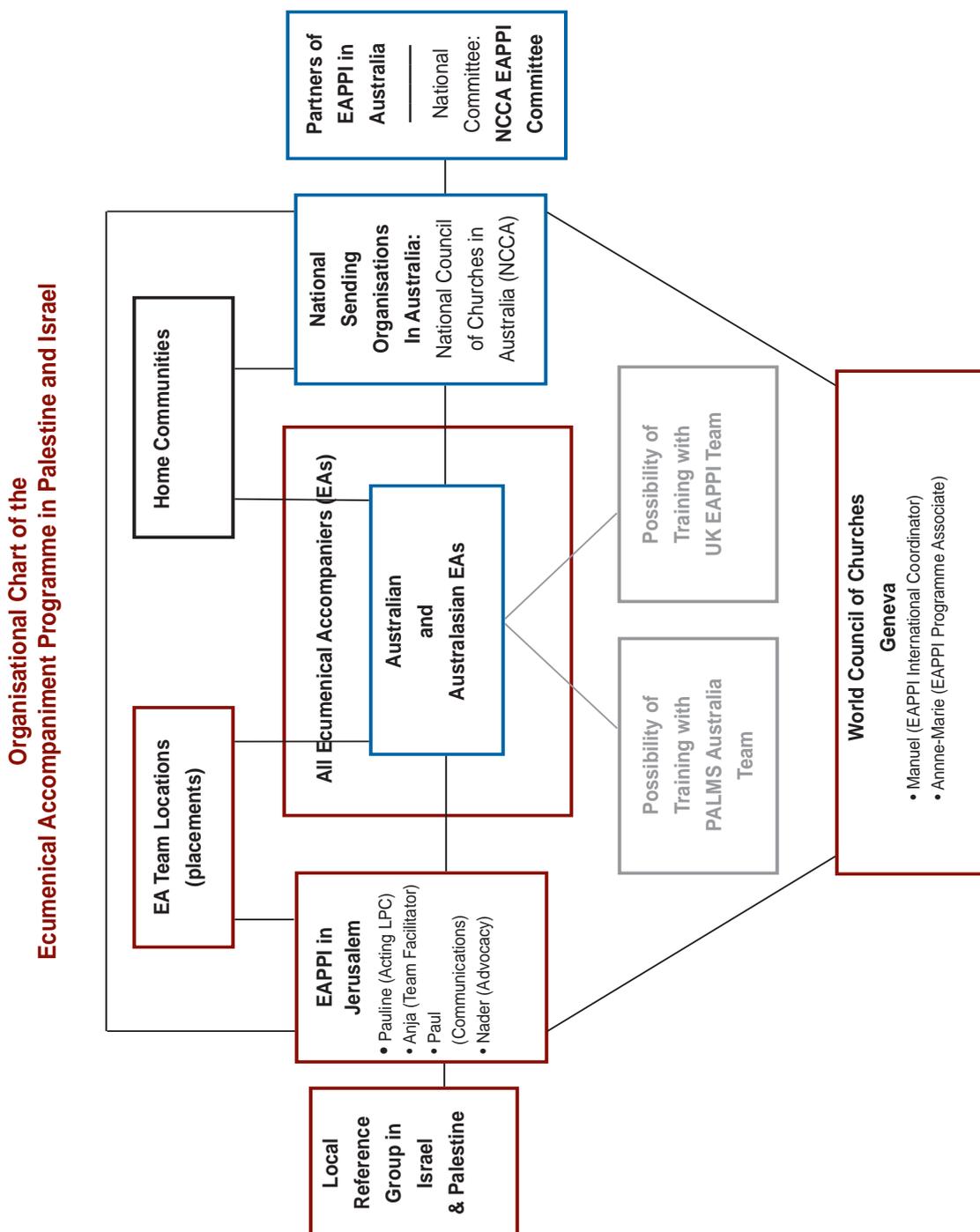
The EAPPI Desk has been supported since mid 2008 by a Committee. Initially the Committee members were Rod Benson (Baptist), Debra Vermeer (Catholic) and Debra Porter (Anglican, NCCA).

We have continued to search for 2 - 3 additional members.

Early in 2010 Debra Vermeer reluctantly resigned from the Committee for reasons of health. We are grateful for the wonderful contribution made by Debra. Her participation will be missed. We keep Debra in our prayers.

Debra Porter
 NCCA EAPPI Desk
 May 2010

ADDENDUM



Appendices

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". 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"¹, 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"². 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"³.

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.

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)

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.

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

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia

Churches of Christ in Australia

Congregational Federation of Australia

Coptic Orthodox Church

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Lutheran Church of Australia

Mar Thoma Church

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 Australia

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

Syria 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

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia

Churches of Christ in Australia

Congregational Federation of Australia

Coptic Orthodox Church

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

Lutheran Church of Australia

Mar Thoma Church

Religious Society of Friends

Roman Catholic Church in Australia

Romanian Orthodox Church

The Salvation Army

Syrian Orthodox Church

Uniting Church in Australia



Australian Ecumenical Milestones

- 1896** Formation of Australian Student Christian Movement
- 1922** Australian Council of Christian Education formed representing Protestant and Anglican churches
- 1926** National Missionary Council of Australia formed, representing Protestant and Anglican churches,
- 1946** Constitution to form the World Council of Churches - Australian Committee adopted with 8 Members: Anglican, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Methodist, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army, Baptist, Religious Society of Friends (Quaker)
- 1947** First annual meeting.
- 1949** First Christmas Bowl Remembrance Appeal held in Australia.
- 1950** First Full-time General Secretary -- John Garrett.
- 1951** Resettlement Office and Christian Commission for Inter Church Aid, established in Melbourne
- 1952** First Australian Youth Conference and formation of Australian Christian Youth Council. Resettlement Office established in Sydney.
- 1954** Week of Prayer for Christian Unity celebrated in Melbourne and Adelaide.
- 1959** Greek Orthodox Church joins.
- 1960** First national conference of Australian churches 14th annual meeting changes name to Australian Council of Churches. New members include: Antiochian Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic Churches
- 1963** Australian Church Women established,
- 1965** ACC sends an observer to Vatican II. The Roman Catholic Church entered observer status in the ACC. Church and Life Movement starts ecumenical Christian education program
- 1967** Force 10 Appeal started. First ACC-Catholic Faith and Order conference on baptism.
- 1970** Catholic Church joins Tasmanian Council of Churches
- 1972** Force 10 becomes joint project with Australian Catholic Relief.
- 1978** Romanian Orthodox Church joins.
- 1979** Catholic Church joins Victorian Council of Churches. World Development Tea Cooperative starts.
- 1983** ACC meets with Catholic bishops. First joint Social Justice Sunday commemorated.
- 1983** First ecumenical social justice statement: Changing Australia.
- 1985** First national Heads of Churches meeting
- 1987** Conference of Churches in Western Australia starts with Catholic Church as member
- 1988** Catholic Church joins South Australian Council of Churches. Simply Sharing Week launched. ACC invites non-member churches to consider setting up a new body.
- 1989** ACC Aboriginal and Islander Commission established.

SHAPING OUR ECUMENICAL FOOTPRINT

- 1990** Catholic dioceses join NSW Ecumenical Council
- 1991** World Council of Churches Assembly - Canberra
- 1992** Queensland Churches Together formed, with Catholic, dioceses as members. Final ACC biennial general meeting.
- 1993** Catholic archdiocese of Sydney joins NSW Ecumenical Council. Intending member churches approve Constitution for new National Council of Churches in Australia.
- 1994** NCCA inaugurated at St Christopher's Cathedral Canberra in July with 13 Members: Anglican, Antiochian Orthodox, Armenian Apostolic, Assyrian Church of the East, Churches of Christ, Coptic Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Religious Society of Friends, Roman Catholic, Romanian Orthodox, The Salvation Army, Syrian Orthodox, and Uniting Church
- 1998** The Lutheran Church joined
- 2001** The Congregational Federation of Australia join
- 2004** Australian Churches Covenanting Together signed in Adelaide by the 15 NCCA member churches
- 2005** Memorandum of Understanding between NATSIEC and NCCA
- 2007** The Mar Thoma and Chinese Methodist Churches join and sign as part of the Australian Churches Covenanting Together.

General Secretaries:

Australian Council of Churches

The Revd Dr C. Bernard Cockett	1946	
The Revd T McDougall	1946 – 1948	Presbyterian Church
The Revd C Dennis Ryan	1948 – 1950	Congregational Union
The Revd John Garrett	1950 – 1954	Congregational Union
The Revd Malcolm MacKay	1954 – 1956	Presbyterian Church
The Revd Harvey Perkins	1956 – 1967	Methodist Church
Mr Val Brown	1967 – 1969	Church of England
The Revd Frank Engel	1969 – 1976	Presbyterian Church
Ms Jean Skuse	1976 – 1988	Methodist Church
The Revd David Gill	1988 – 1994	Uniting Church

National Council of Churches in Australia

The Revd David Gill	1994 – 2001	Uniting Church
The Revd John Henderson	2002 – 2008	Lutheran Church
The Revd Tara Curlewis	2009 -	Uniting Church

Presidents:**Australian Council of Churches**

Archbishop Howard Mowll	1946 – 1950	Church of England,
The Rt Revd J R Blanchard	1951	Presbyterian Church,
The Revd Dr G Calvert Barber	1952 - 1953	Methodist Church
Archbishop Howard Mowll	1954	Church of England
The Revd C. Denis Ryan	1955 – 1956	Congregational Union
Archbishop Howard Mowll	1957 – 1958	Church of England
Archbishop R C. Halse	1959 – 1960	Church of England
The Rt Revd A C. Watson	1961 – 1962	Presbyterian Church
The Revd B R Wyllie	1963 – 1964	Methodist Church
Archbishop Frank Woods	1965 – 1966	Church of England
Commissioner Bramwell Cook	1967	The Salvation Army
The Rt Revd N. Faichney	1968 – 1970	Presbyterian Church
Bishop D A Garnsey	1970 – 1973	Church of England
The Revd N. R Gilmore	1973 – 1976	Churches of Christ
Bishop G. R Delbridge	1976 – 1980	Church of England
Bishop Gabriel Gibran	1980 – 1984	Antiochian Orthodox Church
The Revd Dr H D'Arcy Wood	1984 – 1988	Uniting Church
Archbishop David Penman	1988 – 1989	Anglican Church
Bishop Oliver S Heyward	1989 – 1992	Anglican Church
The Revd Ian Allsop	1992 – 1994	Churches of Christ

National Council of Churches in Australia

Archbishop Aghan Baliozian	1994 - 1997	Armenian Apostolic Church
Archbishop John Bathersby	1997 – 2000	Roman Catholic Church
The Revd Dr Lance Steicke	2000 - 2003	Lutheran Church
The Revd Professor James Haire	2003 – 2006	Uniting Church
The Right Revd Richard Appleby	2006 – 2009	Anglican Church
Bishop Michael Putney	2009-	Roman Catholic Church

**Memorandum of Understanding
between the
National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander
Ecumenical Commission
and the
National Council of Churches in Australia**

Signed 3rd December 2005

By

President of the NCCA, Revd Professor James Haire

General Secretary of the NCCA, Revd John Henderson

Chairperson of the NATSIEC, Bishop James Leftwich

Executive Secretary of the NATSIEC, Graeme Mundine

And endorsed by the Executive of the NCCA and

All members of the NATSIEC

Preamble

1. The National Council of Churches in Australia and its member Churches are aware of the importance of the First Peoples of this land: the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples who have been custodians of this country for many thousands of years.
2. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), and the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) acknowledge the importance of mutual respect and understanding by modelling reconciliation to its member Churches and to the wider Australian community; and the benefits of a close and informed relationship.
3. The NCCA is committed to furthering reconciliation and ensuring that the First Peoples of this nation are shown respect and are valued for their contribution to Australian church life.
4. The National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission is mandated to:

“Provide a basis for further political action by church-related Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the member Churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia.”
5. The National Council of Churches in Australia is mandated to:

“Encourage and enable the member Churches in the light of the Gospel to give prophetic leadership to each other and the community by

iv] acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and [Torres Strait] Islander people”

Intent

The intent of this *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)* is to have in place an agreed procedure for the NCCA to act respectfully, appropriately, and in solidarity, with Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples, through NATSIEC.

Objectives

The objective of the MOU is to:

1. Put on record the key requirements of the consultation process for the National Council of Churches when making comment on Indigenous issues to the member Churches, the wider non-Indigenous community, and the Indigenous community.
2. Ensure those members of NATSIEC and through them, Indigenous communities around Australia are consulted before statements are made to them and on their behalf by the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Principles

The following principles underpin the implementation of this MOU:

1. the NCCA is expected to consult with the NATSIEC in all matters relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia as a matter of respect;
2. as the Indigenous Ecumenical peak body in Australia, the NATSIEC has an important role to play in addressing the NCCA's involvement in Indigenous issues;
3. particular member Churches have Indigenous members and/or Indigenous Church bodies¹ with whom they can consult about matters relating to them and NATSIEC encourages member Churches to use those resources when involving themselves in Indigenous Issues.

Implementation: How to consult with the NATSIEC

1. Media Statements

In the event of a media statement made by the National Council of Churches in Australia (including its various Commissions and Networks) relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, the Council is expected to bring a draft copy of the statement to the NATSIEC² for endorsement.

2. Public Events

The NCCA, its Networks, Commissions and staff, are requested to include a 'Welcome to Country' or an 'Acknowledgment' of Country³ at the start of any events in which they are involved, regardless of Indigenous content or involvement, as a sign of respect.

In the event that the President, General Secretary, an Executive member, a member of a Commission / Network or a staff member of the NCCA is to speak at a public event involving Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, they are to involve the NATSIEC by including them in the preparation of speeches.

3. Articles for print

If the President, General Secretary, an Executive member, a member of a Commission / Network or a staff member of the NCCA is preparing an article for publication (for either a resource produced in-house or for an external body), involving Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander issues, they are requested to involve the NATSIEC in the preparation of such articles by informing the NATSIEC⁴ of their intent and by producing a draft for endorsement by the NATSIEC **before** the article goes to print.

¹ Such as NATSIAC (Anglican), NATSICC (Catholic), UAICC (Uniting), ACCIM (Churches of Christ), Salvation Army Aboriginal Ministries (Southern Territory).

² The NATSIEC Executive and where possible the total membership of the NATSIEC will be involved in endorsing any press releases, speeches or articles produced by the NCCA relating to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples / issues / affairs.

³ Please see Appendix I for an appropriate formulation.

⁴ See footnote no. 2.

4. Projects

If a Commission or Network of the NCCA is planning a project that has any impact on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Peoples, they are to invite the NATSIEC into the planning phase of the project. They are also required to consult directly with the stakeholders of the project.⁵

Review and Amendment

The MOU will commence on the date it is signed by all parties, and, unless otherwise agreed between the Parties, continue until the next meeting of the NCCA National Forum in 2007.

The Parties will undertake a joint review of the consultation process outlined above before the meeting of the NCCA National Forum in 2007.

This MOU may be amended at any time by an agreement in writing between the Parties.

Signed on the 3rd December by:

President of the NCCA, Revd Professor James Haire

General Secretary of the NCCA, Revd John Henderson

Chairperson of the NATSIEC, Bishop James Leftwich

Executive Secretary of the NATSIEC, Graeme Mundine

And endorsed by:

The Executive of the NCCA and all members of the NATSIEC

⁵ Where the project is targeting, or taking place within, a particular Indigenous community, consultation with NATSIEC **only** is **not** sufficient.

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA
CONSTITUTION**

[as amended 13-17 July 2007]

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:

- o General Church Consultations
- o the National Forum
- o the Executive of the NCCA
- o Specific Consultations
- o Commissions, Working Groups and Networks
- o 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 the President and 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.

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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:

- o observers from non-member Churches, and
- o 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 normally

- [a] be elected by the National Forum;
- [b] hold office until the conclusion of the next ordinary meeting of the National Forum; and
- [c] be eligible for re-election;

In the event that an unexpected vacancy in the office of President occurs between meetings of the National Forum, the Executive may elect the President who will hold office until the commencement of the term of office of a President elected by the National Forum.

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.

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16.02 The General Secretary of the NCCA will be appointed by the Executive, which will also decide the terms and conditions on which the General Secretary is appointed. The General Secretary is also 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.



National Council of
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