

National Council of Churches in Australia

2022-2023

ANNUAL REVIEW



**National Council of
Churches in Australia**

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NCCA Prayer

*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*

This year we have been praying for:

- Peace on the Korean Peninsula
- Australian local communities – storms, floods & disasters across the country
- Indonesia – earthquake in Cianjur, West Java
- Türkiye and Syria - earthquakes causing widespread devastation
- Hunter Valley community, NSW – tragic bus crash
- the countries in the WCC Weekly Prayer Cycle

PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION



The Australian ecumenical journey is a continuing witness to a vision of the unity and connectedness of the churches in Australia. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is one expression of this and does not control it. The NCCA does not exist apart from the member churches that govern, guide and resource it. The work and focus of the NCCA is reflective of the members churches and also a product of them.

We together have been living in the uncertainty of 'post-COVID'. The process all of us are moving through is one of resettling and clarification as we look to the future. It is impacting all the churches in Australia. Not all that was strong and energetic in the past continues to be embraced as enthusiastically as it was in the past.

We are seeing a shift away from the more traditional patterns of ecumenical life towards networks of people who share energy and commitments that, by their nature, are ecumenical.

The traditions of Ecumenism are in part captured in the 'Lund Principle' established in 1952 at a meeting in Lund, Sweden: *"Should not our Churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other Churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?"*

What is striking about this principle is that it refers to a way of working and not to an institutional point of reference.

This is what it means to be ecumenical – a way of working – in the whole household of God (oikumene). Through the Lund Principle we are asked to reflect on the ways we are engaged with each other through our work and witness together.

It is clear that relationships come first (being in conversation), action second, and the matters of deep difference third.

This is a reversal of what sometimes happens: 'I can only relate with you when we agree about our convictions'.

The Lund Principle is a

challenge that recognises the differences we hold in otherwise close relationships.

Recently, in June 2023 when the World Council of Churches' Central Committee met, General Secretary the Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay wrote the following in his report to the meeting:

We need to affirm and deepen the desire for Christian unity knowing that this is what Jesus prayed for in John 17:21. Unity is a gift already given to us to appropriate in Christ, unity is not uniformity and, more so, a broken and suffering world is in need of Christians working together towards reconciliation, justice and peace. Our inability to live up to the calling of visible Christian unity should not diminish or blur the ultimate vision. Let us continue to pray and work together so that the world may believe!

We celebrate the journey of the NCCA, which in 2024 will be 30 years old, as a journey of relating, praying and working together in a common witness to the joy of Jesus Christ.

Rev John Gilmore
NCCA President



Above L-R: Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Lidcombe; St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta; St Stephens Uniting Church, Sydney.

GENERAL SECRETARY

Abound in hope

A key pillar of the current NCCA Strategic Roadmap is 'Encouraging Relationships' with a priority focus area being to "assist our Churches to celebrate their ecumenical engagement and encourage their members to engage in ecumenical activities at local, regional and national and international levels" as 'churches together'.

This past year has been busy with deferred meetings and celebrations. I have spent time with some of our newer member churches in Australia and with their churches of origin in Asia, like the Indian Orthodox Church and Malankara Mar Thoma Syriac Church, at the National Council of Churches of India Assembly in Hyderabad.

Together with the Pacific Conference of Churches, NCCA has hosted a number of meetings of Pacific churches and national councils of churches, both in Australia and in the Pacific region. This has brought together representatives of Pacific diaspora communities in our member churches in Australia with Pasifika churches. We have been discussing how we work as "churches together" in 'Re-weaving the Ecological Mat', a theological lens for looking at human flourishing in the Pacific. In these meetings there has been a particular focus on the pastoral and practical care needs of Pacific seasonal workers in Australia and the social and spiritual support for families at home.

The second focus area for the NCCA in 'Encouraging Relationships' is in "assisting to cultivate a 'civilization of love' in a culture where media thrives on cultivating extreme and violent voices".

We have seen this during the Constitutional Referendum campaign where racism and misinformation fed fear and division within our communities. Our reconciliation journey with Australia's First Peoples must continue with us walking alongside - listening, sharing, healing.

A 'civilization of love' starts with sharing our message of hope that is founded in the Gospels and Jesus' teachings. Faith, hope and love are our Christian gifts to share in these times. Participating in Micah Australia's Christian Women Leaders Network delegation to the Australian Parliament to promote 'A Safer World for All' (see photos below), was an expression of our Christian witness in our nation.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul writes of hope as *"a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul"*. (6:19) Paul also gives us this benediction in his letter to the Romans (15:13): *"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."*

Liz Stone
NCCA General Secretary



The NCCA

National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) was formed in 1994 as an unincorporated association, succeeding the Australian Council of Churches established in 1948.

NCCA was incorporated in June 2016 as a company limited by guarantee and it has 18 member churches:

Anglican Church
Antiochian Orthodox Church
Armenian Apostolic Church
Assyrian Church of the East
Chinese Methodist Church
Churches of Christ
Congregational Federation
Coptic Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Church

Indian Orthodox Church
Lutheran Church
Mar Thoma Church
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
Roman Catholic Church
Romanian Orthodox Church
Syrian Orthodox Church
The Salvation Army, and the
Uniting Church in Australia

NCCA LTD BOARD

The NCCA Ltd Board met virtually in July and October 2022 and then again in February, April and June 2023.

As at 30 June 2023, NCCA Directors were:

NCCA President



Rev John Gilmore
Churches of Christ in Australia



Rob Floyd
Uniting Church in Australia



Anne Hywood
Anglican Church of Australia



Geoff Officer
Catholic Church in Australia



Thomas Ling
Chinese Methodist Church in Australia



V Rev Fr Abanoub Attalla
Coptic Orthodox Church



Fr Anastasios Bozikis
Greek Orthodox
Archdiocese of Australia



Ann Zubrick
Religious Society of Friends Australia
(Quakers)



Comm. Miriam Glyuas
The Salvation Army Australia

BASIS

National Council of Churches in Australia 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 toward the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service, to the glory of One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS



Encouraging relationships

Connection and fellowship

Witnessing together

Enabling and resourcing

FOCUS AREAS

A
B
C
D

Building stronger relationships with members, key partners & the public

Coordinating member networks for mutual support & participation

Being a prophetic voice in society and to one another

Ensuring a strong, sustainable & relevant organisation

NATIONAL CHURCH LEADERS

The NCCA General Secretary facilitates meetings of National Church Leaders.

These meetings are for support, getting to know one another and topical discussion. National Church Leaders meet three times a year, twice online, and once in person.

7 December - Briefing from Australian Law Reform Commission on Religious Discrimination Inquiry

15 March - Briefing and Prayer for Earthquake affected Syria and Türkiye by Antiochian Orthodox Church| Discussion on Church and NCCA statements

14 June 2023 - Rex Rigby, National Superintendent of Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia, joined the in-person meeting in Sydney, to discuss the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the Referendum on a Voice to Parliament.

FAREWELL

WELCOME

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia



Bishop Albert Wong



Bishop Milton Nee

The Salvation Army, Australia



Commissioners Robert & Janine Donaldson



Commissioner Miriam Glyuas

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

NCCA PARTICIPATED IN:

Felicitations for Ordination

Cor Episcopa,
Very Rev Fr Thomas Varghese
Indian Orthodox Church
24 September 2022



Above: 2nd from left, Fr Eapen Mathew, Ms Liz Stone, Bishop Jacobus (Greek Orthodox), Rev Fr Thomas Varghese, HG Dr. Yuhanon Mar Diascoros, HE Bishop Anba Daniel, Mr Ramanand N Garge, Very Rev Fr Dr Shenouda Mansour, Fr Sujit Solomon David.



ONLINE LECTURE EVENING
Organised by the Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia & New Zealand

Presented by
HIS GRACE BISHOP DANIEL
Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church
Diocese of Sydney & Affiliated Regions

Topic:
Historical Background of the Coptic Orthodox Church,
Current Challenges & Its Relationship With
The Armenian Apostolic Church

Online Lecture by His Grace, Bishop Daniel

Historical Background of the Coptic Orthodox Church

Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia & NZ

28 September 2022

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Anniversary: 10-Year Jubilee Celebration

Archbishop Najarian: Episcopal Ordination and Primateship

Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Australia

20 November 2022



L-R: Fr Shenouda, (Coptic Church) Liz Stone & John Gilmore (NCCA), and (centre) Archbishop Najarian.

Installation: Commissioner Miriam Gluyas

The Salvation Army, Australia

Bourke Street, Melbourne

12 February 2023



Closing service:

Convention of General Synod

Lutheran Church of Australia & New Zealand

Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre, Victoria

12 February 2023



Above: Bishop Paul Smith. Image credit, LCA NZ

ECUMENICAL PRAYERS

Red Wednesday Mass

Prayer Service for Persecuted Christians

Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, Our Lady of Dolours

22 November 2022



Above: At Our Lady of Dolours, Chatswood, Liz Stone (far left) with Archbishop Najarian (centre L), Deacon Nishan Basmajian, (centre R), and (far right) Pina Bernard (Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay)

World Day of Prayer [Taiwan]

Ecumenical Service,

St Stephen's Uniting Church, Sydney

3 March 2023



Above: Liz Stone (at lectern) with ecumenical leaders at St Stephen's Uniting Church, Sydney

Mid-Lent Service of Prayer for Peace and for those affected by Natural Disaster

St Andrew's Ukrainian Catholic Church & NSWEC

14 March 2023

Prayer for Myanmar

Collins St. Baptist Church, Melbourne,

30 April 2023



Right: Liz Stone lights a candle at the Melbourne prayer vigil.

OUR ENGAGEMENT

NCCA HELD

Global Peace Prayer

Online Prayer Service hosted by NCCA

22 March 2023

Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce - Assembly Hybrid meeting

24 March 2023 – Melbourne

Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce - Webinar

'Finding Freedom - Through Education': Overcoming barriers to higher education for refugees and people seeking asylum

19 June 2023





The Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT), established in 2013, is an ecumenical activity of the National Council of Churches, with voluntary membership of 12, drawn from NCCA Member Churches. It meets monthly online and schedules an annual face-to-face meeting.

The ACRT aims to promote a Christian vision of compassion and hospitality for refugees and asylum seekers and provide resources for Member Churches and their congregations. It disseminates information, encourages engagement in practical and prayerful ways, provides links to networks and stakeholders, promotes advocacy campaigns, coordinates webinars, and supports local initiatives and networks.

The NCCA and ACRT are grateful for the leadership provided by Rob Floyd as Chair for several years.

Linking with special days/weeks

ACRT is considering connecting special days/weeks in the community with refugee and asylum seeker-related issues, in addition to Refugee Week.

Examples include:

- National Homelessness Week (the impact on refugees of insecure housing and limited rentals),
- International Peace Day (war and conflict is a primary reason for seeking asylum),
- Human Rights Day (we are created in the image of God and that as bearers of God's image, all people are inherently worthwhile and deserving of dignity and respect).

"Along with NCCA and its Member Churches, ACRT contributes to providing a strong moral voice in the public space relating to debate and policies for refugees and people seeking asylum, and to advocate for just and humane policies."

Rev Sandy Boyce, ACRT Co- Chair

Recognition - ACRT members

In the 2023 King's Birthday honours list, Rev Meewon Yang was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to refugee support services.

In 2022, Brigidine nun, Sister Brigid Arthur (AO) was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for her decades of work helping asylum seekers.

It's also important to recognize the many individuals, groups, and networks providing support to refugees and asylum seekers in various capacities.

Projects

ACRT is considering working with a volunteer filmmaker to create short videos showcasing the work of church groups that have received grants through the Refugee Support Fund. The videos aim to inspire other churches to collaborate on activities that support refugees and asylum seekers and can be shown in church settings. The grants provide financial aid for those waiting on refugee status determination and appeals, refugees settling as new residents, and people seeking asylum.

Social media and website

Keep updated on ACRT stories, links and campaigns.

ACRT Website:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/acrt-2>

ACRT Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/AustralianChurchesRefugeeTaskforce>

REFUGEE SUPPORT FUND

The Refugee Support Fund makes grants available to enable assistance for vulnerable groups that are unable to access Australian Government support and assistance or can only access limited government-funded programs and services that meet their needs.

Two rounds were offered in 2023 FY

R1 - 5 Projects = \$43,994

R2 - 9 Projects = \$95,360



These funded settlement/living support needs:

- Employment;
- Education & Training including financial/consumer literacy, driving;
- Health & Wellbeing;
- Housing;
- Civic Participation including religious practice;
- Language assistance.

For more information visit the NCCA website page:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/support-grant-funding>

ACET

The Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce (ACET) is governed by the NCCA Board and managed by the General Secretary of the NCCA. It was set up in March 2023.

The mandate of the Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce is to offer support and direction to the member churches of the NCCA, to promote a shared Christian vision of our relationship of mutuality and interdependence with God's creation and seek reconciliation of all creation with God.



MARTUNG UPAH APPEAL

martung upah appeal

Martung Upah* is the annual fundraising appeal for the NCCA, supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development Fund. Donations help provide educational resources, engage churches in Indigenous issues, and fund community development projects. The goal is to create a better future for First Nations children and eliminate discrimination in Australia.

To donate, visit the NCCA website:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/martung-upah-appeal-2>

* "Martung Upah" means "partnership" in Western Australia.

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DEVELOPMENT FUND

A tax-deductible fund set up to assist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples by giving small, usually one-off grants for community development projects.

Projects should cover any or all of the following:

- Development of Skills
- Education
- Community Development
- Culture
- Reconciliation

Two rounds were offered in 2023 FY

R1 - 2 Projects = \$10,000 R2 - 2 Projects = \$10,000

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about-us-1/development-fund>

The ACET seeks to:

- engage and communicate with churches and church agencies on issues relating to ecological issues, including climate change;
- facilitate the NCCA and its member churches to have a strong moral voice in the domestic debate around responding to climate change and other ecological issues as agreed by the ACET Executive;
- assist with communication, information and resource sharing across churches in Australia. The resources will include a diversity of theological resources;
- seek to provide coordination between Australian churches on campaigning and advocacy activities in support of addressing climate change and other ecological issues; and
- collaborate with existing and emerging networks of stakeholders in the Australian environmental movement.

The members of the ACET agreed to focus on the following actions:

- Share resources that have been produced by individual denominations and churches.
- Publish actions and events from the denominations and churches involved in the Taskforce..

FIRST NATIONS

NCCA is dedicated to promoting unity among churches for the purpose of achieving justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and fostering the healing of these communities.

In 2022/23 the NCCA continued their commitment to and support of The Uluru Statement from the Heart.

During the Voice to Parliament – Federal Constitutional Referendum 2023, NCCA supported our member churches in understanding a 'First Nation Voice' in context of The Uluru Statement from the Heart.



Above: Promoting 'Statements from the Soul', are (L-R) First Nation advocate, Rachel Perkins; Rev John Gilmore, and Rev Anne Hewitt, (Churches Together SA).

"We join our Indigenous brothers and sisters in their longing for an Australia where the pain and hurt of so many years is, in time, healed and we are all renewed."

NCCA Statement - 14 June 2023

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/first-nations>

FAITH AND UNITY

The Faith and Unity Commission met on 20-21 September 2022 and again on 26-27 April 2023. The work plan for the current period is close to completion.

These meetings brought the work on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace to a conclusion by finalising a short statement, *"The Churches in Australia and the Care of Creation - foundations for a Christian response to the ecological crisis"*, in support of the Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce. This statement drew on the rich theological traditions of each of our churches.

The work on indigenous spirituality had been delayed over the COVID years, but it was picked up again when the Commission welcomed Rev Dr Garry Deverell from the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Divinity for a conversation. This will be followed up with further conversations with first nations theologians and religious leaders.



Above: Rev Dr Garry Deverell, UD



Above: Dr David Kirchhoffer, ACU

For resources offered by the Commission visit:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith-unity>

SAFE CHURCH PROGRAM

The Safe Church Program remains dedicated to providing support and empowerment to local church leaders. Their aim is to create safe environments for children and vulnerable adults while fulfilling safeguarding requirements.

In recent years, religious leaders and organizations have faced increased legislative and compliance requirements related to protecting children and vulnerable people across all States and Territories.

NCCA's Safe Church Workbooks and Awareness Workshop presentations have been recently updated for NSW & ACT, VIC & TAS, WA, QLD, and SA to incorporate these changes.

With a view to the Forum in 2024, the Commission re-visited the NCCA's Australian Churches Covenanting Together document. The ecumenical landscape today is much changed from the days when the churches first signed this document. The Commission wishes to assist the churches to renew their commitment to each other through the covenanting document.

Among the visitors to Commission meetings was Dr David Kirchhoffer, ACU Brisbane, a member of the WCC Faith and Order Commission. He presented the work that had been done on moral discernment and led us through the tool that had been developed to facilitate dialogue to build *Koinonia*.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

21 to 28 May 2023.

"Do good; seek justice." (cf Isaiah 1:17)

The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2023 was chosen by a working group appointed by the Minnesota Council of Churches. and based on the verse from the prophet Isaiah:

"learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow"

The World Council of Churches' resources were adapted for use in Australia by the NCCA Faith and Unity Commission in collaboration with the Faith and Order Commission of the Victorian Council of Churches.



In Australia, the image of two peoples' journey of listening was taken from the NCCA painting:

"Invasion" by artist John "Munnari" Hammond A'Hang ©



Numerous Safe Church Awareness Workshops and Refresher Training have been run throughout the country, and new presenters have been trained in NSW & ACT, VIC & TAS, and WA to meet the need for these workshops.

The Safe Church Program is currently looking toward the future to see where and how we can best support and serve our churches and church organisations in their safeguarding endeavours.



Above: Presenter training in Marrickville (L) and Grafton, NSW.

ACT FOR PEACE

At the heart of the work of Act for Peace is a powerful conviction: to create a just and peaceful society, we have to work together. It's not only the right thing to do, it's the only thing that will work.

Founded by the Australian Churches in 1948, Act for Peace is a diverse collection of people, united by the belief that all people are created equal, and we should love our neighbours as ourselves.

Together, we are working to reduce displacement and create safety, dignity and belonging for uprooted people.

In FY23, Act for Peace supporters backed 19 partners in 18 countries across Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Middle East. Their generosity helped to deliver 32 projects, directly helping more than 285,450 people affected by displacement.



CHRISTMAS BOWL

In December 2022, thousands of Australian Christians joined together in practical action with refugee and displaced communities around the world who have been forced from their homes by conflict and disaster.

This year, the Christmas Bowl not only expressed our unity in Christ, but provided a powerful way for Australian Christians to share hope through practical Christian action, led by our committed local partners working in the toughest conditions around the world.

Act for Peace is the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Act for Peace is a member of the Church Agency Network, the Emergency Action Alliance, Micah and the ACT Alliance, a coalition of churches and faith-based organisations working together in more than 120 countries.



Above: Act for Peace partner Church World Service Indonesia supports the Dream-2 Project (Disaster Resilience through Enhanced Adaptive Measures), which has helped Eko and his family adapt farming practices to strengthen community resilience against the impacts of climate change.

Photo credit: Agung Pranoto/Act for Peace

"The work of Act for Peace is more vital and necessary than ever. Thank you for joining with us as we pursue our vision to create a world where everyone belongs, recognising the inspiring, skilled leadership of those most affected by the displacement crisis and playing our part to build a global community that finds solutions for one of the greatest crises of our times."

Janet Cousens, CEO



Above: Act for Peace's partner in Pakistan, CWSA, is supporting families from Afghanistan who are seeking refuge in Pakistan with cash assistance for immediate food security and other essentials.

Photo credit: CWSA

Thank you to all those who took part in the Christmas Bowl in 2022. With your committed support, the inspirational dedication of our local partners and the resilience of displaced people, we will help refugees to create a brighter future for themselves and create a world, together, where people uprooted by conflict and disaster have a safe place to belong.

<https://www.actforpeace.org.au/>

ECUMENICAL PARTNERSHIP

Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network (PCPAN)

The Pacific Church Partnership Program is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to support Pacific churches and leaders in enhancing their leadership and organisational skills to better contribute to development outcomes in Pacific Island countries.

The Network has a total of 22 seats, 12 of which are allocated for the Pacific region while the remaining 10 are designated for Australia.

The Network's meetings serve to enhance and establish strategic partnerships between Australian church leaders, church-based development leaders, and First Nations people and members of the Pacific diaspora in Australia.



Above: Network participants at the 2022 meeting held in Canberra.



Above: L-R Rev James Bhagwan, PCC General Secretary, with Rev John Gilmore, NCCA and Pastor Bernard Yalimyou, Vanuatu Christian Council

Two successful meetings were held, with assistance from the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC).

These were held in Canberra, 18-20 July 2022 and the second in Tonga, May 2023.

Judy Houston, NCCA Project Officer, worked with the NCCA for 12 months to coordinate and facilitate these meetings with the PCC.



Above: (L-R) Liz Stone with Judy Houston, NCCA Project Officer.

Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit (PAELS) 26 - 29 November 2022

The Pacific Conference of Churches and Micah Australia brought 31 young people from 13 Pacific nations and 50 young Australians to meet with 84 politicians in Canberra. All gathered to discuss, envision, pray, and advocate for their future.

NCCA Safe Church Program Coordinator, Naomi Boulton was nominated to join the Australian participants.

Pacific Island delegates identified key development issues of climate change and natural hazards, education and youth unemployment, and access to water and sanitation. They met with over 80 politicians to advocate for these issues and share their vision for healthy environments, empowered youth, and flourishing communities in Australia's First Nations communities and the Pacific Region.



Above: Participants of the Summit in front of Parliament House, Naomi Boulton (centre front)

"The importance of sharing stories was highlighted during a visit to the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, where delegates were welcomed by elders and shared language and songs."

Naomi Boulton, NCCA

The delegates formed friendships and shared diverse perspectives, standing in a shared Christian faith and hope for an inclusive Australia in partnership with Pacific Nations.

The summit aimed to create a forum for future leaders to build respect and relationships, learn about experiences outside of their own, and advocate in Australia's centre of political power.

The first two days featured powerful personal stories from First Nations and Pacific Islander peoples about racism, corruption, mistreatment, and climate change.

The Summit is a long-term investment in relationships.



Above: Participants at the Pacific Australian Emerging Leaders Summit (PAELS), on Parliament lawn, Canberra, November 2022.

ECUMENICAL PARTICIPATION

Pacific Church Leaders Development Conference (PCLDC)

The Pacific Church Leaders Meeting brings together leaders from member churches of the Pacific Conference of Churches to discuss common issues affecting their communities and how the churches can collaborate to address them.

The meeting provides an opportunity to celebrate the shared journey of faith and life of Pacific churches as an ecumenical body of Christ. All members of the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) are encouraged to participate, along with other denominations who may be invited to attend opening sessions, information sessions, worship, and fellowship.



Above: Participants at the 2022 meeting held at Baulkham Hills, Sydney.

NCCA and PCPAN hosted two meetings of around 30 Pacific leaders in Baulkham Hills, Sydney in November 2022, and then again in Majuro, Marshall Islands in May 2023.



Above: Rev John Gilmore receives a warm welcome, Majuro, Marshall Is.

Representatives attended from member churches and organisations in Fiji, Samoa, American Samoa, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, West Papua, Australia, New Caledonia, Nauru and Maohi Nui.



Above: Representatives from member churches following the opening service, held in Majuro, Marshall Islands.

Asia

National Council of Churches in India

NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone, attended the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) XXIX Assembly, in Hyderabad India 21 - 23 April 2023.

International

World Council of Churches

(WCC) 11th General Assembly

Karlsruhe, Germany

31/8-8/9 2022

Theme: *'Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity'.*

NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone, attended the Assembly.

R: Liz Stone with Rev David Campbell, ACT Presbyterian
Far R: 3 Australian Anglican representatives

WCC Central Committee Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland,

26-29 June 2023

This meeting coincided with the WCC's 75th Anniversary and was attended by Rev John Gilmore.



Above left: NCCA GS, Liz Stone and NCCI President, Mrs Aleyamma (Leena) Thomas (Mar Thoma S)



Above: NCCA GS, Liz Stone addresses the assembly



L: Bishops of Assyrian Church (Australia) with Liz Stone (centre) R: Syrian Orthodox Australian- Theodora Issa



Below L: Liz Stone with (L) Colleen Geyer and Rev Sharon Hollis UCA, and below R: with Rev Tara Curlewis, UCA



ECUMENICAL NETWORKS

AEON

Australian Ecumenical Officers Network (AEON)

Participation in this network enables communication across the states and appreciation of our various Christian traditions. The NCCA General Secretary meets with representatives from Church Councils in:

- Australian Capital Territory,
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory,
- Queensland,
- South Australian,
- Tasmania,
- Victoria,
- Western Australia.

The group meets three times a year to share and exchange ideas.

One of these is an in-person meeting.

In 2023, the group met in Sydney.



Above: AEON members meet in Sydney,



INTERFAITH

The NCCA values its participation in interfaith networks which allow it to appreciate the diversity of culture and faith among its members and partners' communities.

Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews meeting

16 November 2022 - Virtual meeting

"There is a basic truth that undergirds the overcoming of difference. Without listening, difference cannot be understood or overcome."

Rev John Gilmore, NCCA President

2022 ACU Federal Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast

24 November 2022

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) held its sixth Federal Parliamentary Interfaith Breakfast at the National Press Club, Canberra. NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone shared the "Rainbow Prayer" with all present.



Above: Liz Stone greets Archbishop Prowse, Catholic Diocese of Canberra/Goulburn

Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO)

20 October 2022 - Met in Sydney CBD



Above: the late Jeremy Jones AM (far left) with APRO members including NCCA General Secretary, Ms Liz Stone.

Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC)

20 December 2022 - ALRC/ APRO Consultation on the Inquiry into Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Legislation.

Faith Leaders' Open Letter - February 2023

Call for Constitutionally guaranteed Voice

Reverend John Gilmore, NCCA President, is a joint signatory to the Open Letter from Australia's leaders of major religious organisations to Federal Parliamentarians on 22 February 2023.

The letter called for support of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament as requested in the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart.

ECUMENICAL FUNDS

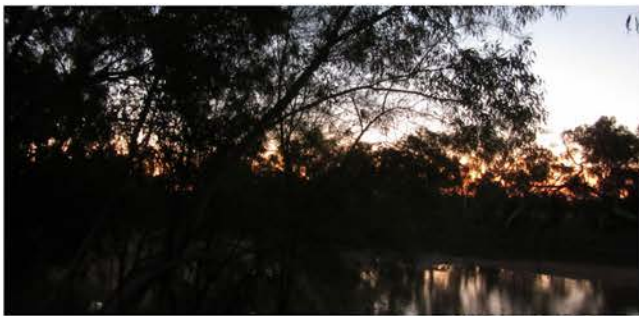
GLENBURNIE PROGRAM

Funding is intended to “provide resources for the churches and the community on issues relating to a *“just, participatory and sustainable society (JPSS).”*

Last year, in the 2022-2023 Financial Year, one project received funding for \$6,000.
In the recent round of grants, 2023-2024 Financial Year, four projects received a total of \$90,522.

For more information of the JPSS vision visit:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about/ecumenical/item/178-glenburnie-programme>



Sunset over Bourke River, Boulia, QLD



Projects will provide resources to enable Australian Christians to:

- Advocate for justice, peace, and ecological wellbeing by considering global perspectives to address local issues.
- Share resources and experiences of the ecumenical movement to inspire commitment and renewal among Christians in local congregations towards the JPSS vision.
- Embrace the JPSS vision and join the ecumenical movement worldwide. Discover and foster an understanding of the diversity of liturgical traditions and connect to community engagement.
- Offer JPSS training to enhance the skills of upcoming ecumenical leaders, including both laypeople and clergy.

RONALD WILSON ECUMENICAL LEADERSHIP FUND

The Ecumenical Leadership Fund assists young people, aged 35 or less, eager to enlarge their ecumenical experience and leadership skills.

It helps those who have exhibited leadership potential to develop their gifts and focus their vision.

In the financial year 2022-2023 two applications were funded:

- Naomi Boulton, UCA, to attend the stewards program – World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland, June 2023.
- Adrian Dass, Anglican, to attend the World Parliament of Religions - in Chicago, August 2023.



Above: Naomi Boulton (right) with NCCA President, Rev John Gilmore



Above: Naomi participating in WCC worship



Above: Adrian Dass

As we move forward, it is imperative that we continue to support and participate in such initiatives to build a more inclusive and harmonious world where people of all faiths can coexist in peace.

Adrian Dass (Anglican Parish of Hume, VIC)

For guidelines and application details visit:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about/ecumenical>



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Bexhill Open Air Cathedral in Northern NSW (open to all Christian denominations for religious services) Photo credit: Getty Images.

NCCA's audited financial statements for 2022-2023 are available on request:
secretariat@ncca.org.au

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA - ANNUAL REVIEW 2022-2023