

InUnity online

A publication of the National Council of Churches in Australia **Vol 53 No 1 Autumn 2006**



Armenian Patriarchate - Jerusalem

In this issue ...

Interfaith Dialogue in Cebu, Philippines, & in Israel/Palestine

Reflections on the 9th WCC Assembly, Porto Alegre, Brasil

Simply Sharing Week - focus on the Solomon Islands

“The Audacity to Hope - Women Dreaming Together”

**... as well as news from NCCA agencies, world ecumenical news,
dates for your diary, and more ...**

Welcome to another *InUnity* online ...

The National Council of Churches has welcomed a number of international and interfaith opportunities already this year. In this issue the General Secretary reflects on his experience of the **9th World Council of Churches Assembly** in Porto Alegre, Brasil; and the Asia-Pacific interfaith dialogue in Cebu, Philippines. I share with you some experiences of an interfaith and cross-cultural tour of Israel/Palestine. February, March and April have been busy and exciting months.

Make Indigenous Poverty History, **Simply Sharing Week** and **Partners4Peace** need your support! Read about them on pages 7, 8 and 9. Be sure to share the information with your parish, friends and families.

The Gender Commission are busy this month with the **Audacity to Hope** workshops. For more information turn to page 11.

The NCCA welcomes our new Ecumenical Youth Officer, Troy Blair. Troy brings a wealth of skills and experience to our Youth Desk. Read more on page 13.

Below is the new NCCA logo. The traditional NCCA ship logo was redesigned for the 5th NCCA Forum in 2004. It was welcomed with great enthusiasm then, and we welcome it back as we begin to use it on letterhead, brochures, posters ...



I hope you enjoy reading the Autumn 2006 edition of *InUnity* online. As always, if you have any questions, please, contact us at inunity@ncca.org.au, by calling (02) 9299 2215 or write to *InUnity* online, National Council of Churches in Australia, Locked Bag 199, Sydney NSW 1230.

Debra Porter
Communications Desk

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World Council of Churches, 9th General Assembly Porto Alegre, Brasil, 14-23 February 2006

The 9th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches took place in February under the theme “God, in your grace, transform the world.” This was my first Assembly, and I found it especially significant that the theme took the form of a prayer. Whatever tasks we do, we must begin and end in God.

That’s especially important given the vast nature of what the WCC undertakes. This Assembly brought together 691 delegates from 348 member Churches, as well as many other representatives, observers, and visitors. Around 4,000 people were present on the campus of the Pontifical University in Porto Alegre, Brasil, where the meetings were held. There is no other comparable gathering of global Christianity in the world today. While many Christians are still not represented in the fellowship of the WCC, particularly the Catholics, relationships continue to develop.

Not surprisingly the Assembly was caught in the dilemma created by its own breadth. Unity in diversity is a neat idea, but it’s not easy to manage! Delegates were believers drawn from the ranks of their local Churches who brought burdens of political, justice, pastoral, and theological issues. There was a strong voice from the poor, the disadvantaged, and the oppressed. We all heard the call for justice and peace loudly and clearly throughout the Assembly. Too many people live with fear and violence, and the meeting railed against such things.

The fight against injustice continues, one to which the Churches of the WCC are committed. At this Assembly, however, there were growing feelings about the future of the WCC and whether it is an effective voice for change. To me there was a lot of talk about peace and justice, but little about love and compassion. There were no innovative new programmes to fire the imagination but there were comments about the apparent reluctance of the WCC itself to be transformed. These were particularly voiced by the young, the Indigenous peoples, the disabled, and the so-called ‘specialised ministries’ - the Church based development agencies who provide much funding for the programmes of the WCC.

We must accept that the WCC is a reflection of the Churches that create it, so it should be no surprise that it goes through the same crises they do. The changing position of the Churches in the Western world, and the emerging theologies of the Churches in the ‘South’, is a big part of that crisis, and the interface is clearly evident at the WCC. It confronts us with an important reality that no Christian can ignore. The shifting balance of global Christianity, and of other religions as well, is part of what is giving rise to the emergence of a new religious conservatism or in some cases, fundamentalism. How the WCC, and the rest of us, deal with this is critical for our witness at this time.

I felt the Assembly was caught somewhere between the church and the world, struggling to give expression to unity on both fronts. It undertook a huge, if not impossible, task and as a result its pronouncements can sound a little confused. That’s OK if we see the Assembly as a step along the way. We need the WCC – or something very much like it. If it didn’t exist we would be trying to invent it, and it’s worthy of our support. It’s like a global Christian workshop, and its gatherings raise many important questions, even if they can’t provide all the answers. The WCC is a step in the right direction for the witness and mission of the church, and as Christians we need to encourage it and nurture it.

There hasn’t been time yet for me to digest all the issues that the Assembly presented and attempted to deal with. Just being there was a great privilege and a huge opportunity, one for which I am grateful, both to God and to the Australian Churches who made my attendance possible through the NCCA.

John Henderson, General Secretary
March 2006

Written by the Revd John Henderson, NCCA General Secretary

View information, photos and reports of WCC programs and events at <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/>.

The NCCA is an Associate Council of the WCC.

Dialogue in the Asia-Pacific

The word 'interfaith' is increasingly hitting the spotlight as Australians become more conscious of religious difference. While some people think interfaith dialogue can only be about all religions being the same, this is not the case at all. True dialogue begins on the basis that we are different, and learns to respect that difference. I believe this is true on the personal, Church, national, and regional level.



Australian delegates at the 2004 Yogyakarta Dialogue

Government from nominations supplied by the NCCA, the Churches, and other religious bodies, and the team has consisted of 6 Christians, and 1 each from the Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu communities. This year we were also joined by 4 advisors, which included Indigenous representation. The Declaration adopted at the end of the 2006 Dialogue covered the four main topics discussed: the role of interfaith dialogue in promoting regional peace and security; the place of interfaith in promoting human dignity and development; the role of education in promoting interfaith understanding and cooperation; and the influence of the media on interfaith and intercultural understanding.

We have supported our Government in this initiative. It is a special opportunity to work in partnership as together we enter this uncharted territory, and it also helps religions in our region know one another and co-operate in a way that can only be useful. We are at a critical moment in world history, and in the history of religions, and we each have the responsibility to do what we can to break down the fear and prejudice that can so easily hold us in their grip. God expects us to love and respect our neighbour, and to do everything we can for his or her welfare. To do that we need to know who our neighbour is. Interfaith dialogue penetrates walls of suspicion, and prevents stereotypes, caricatures, vilification, and ultimately, violence.



Australian Minister for Multicultural Affairs, Mr Ross Cobb, speaks to the gathering, watched by Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Aotearoa New Zealand President Helen Clarke

The NCCA is ready and prepared to engage in this dialogue. Through years of ecumenical endeavour we have learnt the skills of patient listening, reserving judgement, and exploring difference. This is not with the intention to make all faiths the same or to synthesise their beliefs. The aim is to help us, as human beings, live together well in this space on this earth and share our common humanity, living up to the best ideals found in our respective religions.

Written by the Revd John Henderson, NCCA General Secretary; photos supplied by Revd Henderson.

Exposure Tour of Israel

In March, 17 Christians from Australia were given the opportunity to experience first hand the religiously significant, controversial and diverse people and places of Israel. Members of the group welcomed this opportunity as a way to further engage in the journey of interfaith dialogue. Individually invited by the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council (AIJAC), many did not previously know each other. Our Christianity and our common desire to listen, discuss and ask questions, to make the most of this opportunity, brought us together.

Previous trips organised by AIJAC have focussed on policy makers, officials, politicians, and journalists. This was the first time they had hosted a group of clergy and church workers. We spoke with NGOs, government employees, educators, journalists, and religious leaders. Our trip lasted for 15 *very full* and important days.

Linking today's Israel to 2000 years ago is both exciting and challenging. So many centuries, so much building and rebuilding. Israel is a modern country. It's people are diverse in lifestyles, political opinions and religious practices.

Archaeology has contributed much to the understandings, as well as the controversies, of religions. Most of the sites traditionally associated with the New Testament are marked with churches of one denomination or another. Ancient land was, however, all around us. An ancient grove of olive trees grow next to the Basilica of the Agony (Garden of Gethsemane). The Old City Walls (Jerusalem), the ruins of Caesarea Maritima, the Sea of Galilee, the ancient Galilee boat, and the ruins at Capharnaum are exciting. The churches, relatively new and hundreds of years old, speak to us of the development of our theology.



Garden of Gethsemane - Jerusalem

Visiting the ruins of Dan, Megiddo, Tiberias, Qumran and Massada gave us an opportunity to share common history with our tour leader, Rabbi John Levi, and tour guide, Roley Horowitz. Standing together with Jewish people in the remnants of synagogues, homes, palaces, military camps, and places of work and recreation, gave us opportunities to reflect upon the development of our faiths, similarities and differences of Judaism and Christianity.



Garden of the Righteous - Yad Vashem

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' centre, provides an impressive, educational and moving walk through the lives of the many who perished, and those who survived, the holocaust. The Children's Memorial, in a separate building, is a walk through the images of more than a million lights in memory of the children.

Outside in the Garden of the Righteous plaques pay tribute to the many that did what they could to save Jews from the Nazis.

Yad Vashem also includes the International School for Holocaust Studies and the International Institute for Holocaust Research.

For more information on Yad Vashem visit <http://www.yadvashem.org>.

The Australian Ambassador, Mr Tim George and his wife, Geraldine, graciously hosted an afternoon tea for our group at their home in Herzliya. This was both a moment of much needed relaxation and an opportunity to hear from an Australian perspective some of the issues within Israel.

At the Armenian Patriarchate, the Revd John Henderson (NCCA General Secretary), Mr Graeme Mundine (Executive Officer, NATSIEC) and I met with the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Archbishop Torkom Manoogian. Bishop Aris Shirvanian showed us around the Cathedral of St James (inside the Old City of Jerusalem) relating stories of the history of the Armenian Church in the Holy Land dating back to the 3rd century. **InUnity's** cover photo is a remembrance of this visit.



Ecumenical Tour Group with the Australian Ambassador to Israel, Mr Tim George

Christians in Israel and Palestine continue to diminish in numbers. There are currently about 10,000. Around half of this number are Armenians, many of whom live within the Cathedral grounds. Families currently living within the Cathedral grounds are the descendents of refugees from the Armenian Genocide.

To read more about the Armenian Patriarchate visit <http://www.armenian-patriarchate.org>; or the Armenian Genocide of 1915 (commemorated 24 April) visit <http://www.armenian-genocide.org>.

Launched in 1998, the Hand in Hand program established several schools where Jewish and Arab children learn together. The schools are integrated, bilingual and teach regular classroom subjects as well as respect and understanding. Hand in Hand is committed to Jewish and Arab children, families and communities living together.

To read more about Hand in Hand visit <http://www.handinhandk12.org>.

The Maksam Association for Ethiopian Jewry is one of the many non-government organisations helping disadvantaged people in Israel. This after school care facility is a blessing to the many poor Ethiopian families. Here the children are cared for and participate in a wide range of activities until their parents are able to be with them.



Maksam Association for Ethiopian Jewry

continues to hope for the Christian community, for the Palestinian people, and for peace. He will visit Australia later this year.

Unfortunately, an intended visit with Christian Palestinian Dr Bernard Sabella did not take place. Reflections on the Palestinian elections from Dr Sabella are on [p. 9](#) of *InUnity*.

Bethlehem is so near to Jerusalem that it would be difficult to know when you had left Jerusalem and when you had arrived in Bethlehem, except for the Security Fence.

The Security Fence is in many parts a wire fence, through which you can see the other side. Any part of the fence where Palestine borders Israeli neighbourhoods is deemed by the Israeli Government to be a high risk area for terror attacks. Along these sections concrete barriers are constructed. There are mixed feelings both in Israel and

in Palestine about the Security Fence. Disputes about where the border should be, whether or not the physical barriers are actually the reason for a reduction in terror attacks, and concerns about the barriers also being barriers to dialogue, are major issues that the Israelis and the Palestinians need to resolve.

Thankfully, many are still crossing the borders, still seeking to have relationships with 'neighbours' living on the other side of the Fence.

I will continue to stay in touch with many of the people I met in Israel and Palestine. I will continue to pray for them. I will do what I can to tell their stories, and like Mitri I will hope.

"Christian hope holds firm that it's never too late for faith in action and for acts of compassion. Christian hope does not surrender to the forces of death and despair but challenges them. ... something we practice, ... something we plant. If we don't plant any trees today, there will be nothing tomorrow. But if we plant a[n olive] tree today, there will be shade for the children to play in, there will be oil to heal the wounds, and there will be olive branches to wave when peace arrives." Mitri Rahab

For more information from Mitri visit <http://www.mitrirahab.org>

Written by Debra Porter, NCCA Communications Officer; photos supplied by Debra Porter.

For more information on our hosts, AIJAC, visit <http://www.aijac.org.au>.



Indigenous MAKE POVERTY HISTORY.



The campaign is beginning to roll...

Several hundreds of people, for example, visited the NATSIEC stall at the Yabun concert in Redfern Park on 26 January, signing one of the three Poverty Poles completed that day, with many buying a **Make Indigenous Poverty History wristband** and/or **t-shirt**.

Those signing included the NSW Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Milton Orkopoulos (pic below), Aboriginal MP Linda Burney and a delighted NSW Governor, Marie Bashir.



*NATSIEC staff with Governor Marie Bashir
and Sir Nicholas Shehadie*



How can we help **Make Indigenous Poverty History**?

- Make a Poverty Pole and get others to sign it!
- Pray and work for a change of heart among politicians and community leaders that justice for Indigenous peoples will be a priority.
- **Check out <http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph> for details and updates on the *Make Indigenous Poverty History* campaign.** Not online? call (02) 9299 2215 for more information.
- **Buy – and sell for NATSIEC! – *Make Indigenous Poverty History* wristbands** (\$2 each) or **T-shirts** (available in all sizes – price \$20)

Photographs taken at the Yabun Concert, courtesy of NATSIEC.

More from NATSIEC on page 8.



Simply Hoping for Health: The Solomon Islands Story

Isn't it fun to look back on times when you have shared stories or a meal with a friend? That's because sharing is one of the greatest pleasures in life!

But even though sharing is so richly rewarding, learning to share is the greatest challenge the world is facing right now.

In 2000, the world's leaders signed on to the Millennium declaration, promising to share their resources with less developed countries, so that millions more people could have the right to basic needs like food, education and health care. But we still have a long way to go.

One of Australia's neighbouring countries, the Solomon Islands, is hoping that 2006 will be the year when many villages can enjoy renewed health.

Simply Sharing Week is an opportunity for Australians to make that hope a reality by sharing stories, resources and learning how everyone from a child to the Australian government can get involved in making the Solomons a healthier place to live.

You can participate in **Simply Sharing Week 14-21 May 2006** or at any time of year that suits your group. To receive your educational resources, contact Kaylea on (03) 9650 6811 or email kfearn@ncca.org.au.

*Join thousands of other churches and schools around Australia
in Simply Sharing with the Solomon Islands.*

Written by Kaylea Fearn, Simply Sharing Week Coordinator; photos supplied by Kaylea Fearn.

NATSIEC helps lead the world

NATSIEC deputy chair, Bishop Saibo Mabo, and Executive Secretary, Graeme Mundine, have been attending the WCC Assembly in Brazil, leading a workshop at the pre-Assembly gathering of Indigenous delegates, and taking the message of Indigenous Australians to the wider world.

Mung-ud-dor Bi Buya to meet

In the coming months NATSIEC is looking to bring together key Indigenous Christians to work together in developing Australian Indigenous theology. The initiative is to be called Munguddor Bi Buya - three words meaning light, drawn, respectively, from the Bunjalung and two Torres Strait Islander languages.

Prayer for Reconciliation and Unity 2006

This year the Week of Prayer for Reconciliation and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity overlap closely. The NATSIEC and the NCCA's Commission on Faith and Unity have worked together to develop a shared poster and prayers. These excellent ecumenical resources are available from the NCCA offices, (02) 9299 2215, or downloadable from the NATSIEC web pages, <http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec>.



The new CWS regular giving opportunity, **Partners4Peace**, has been available since July last year. There are now over 550 Partners4Peace and growth in numbers is being boosted with many former *forceten* supporters choosing to join.

As with *forceten*, 80% of each gift is sent to project partners. Partners4Peace receive a copy of **Peace Mail** each month, either by post or email. These newsletters give stories from project partners about their peace-building work. For a limited time, new Partners4Peace receive copies of all Peace Mails, giving a great overview of the range and diversity of our ecumenical partners and their projects.

The stories are also available at <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/partners4peace>.

Sorry if you haven't heard from us, but.....

A number of Partners4Peace forms have been received with wonderful commitments or requests for bank deposit books, but sadly they contained no name or address. If you have sent a form to Partners4Peace, and are wondering why we've been so long in responding, please relieve Howard and Colleen's anxiety by

calling 1800 025 101 or e-mailing partners4peace@ncca.org.au.

On the other hand, if you've been thinking about becoming a Partner4Peace but you are not really able to commit to regular giving, please be assured that gifts are welcome in whatever pattern and manner that works best for you. Please, don't delay, become a Partner4Peace and help build peace and justice in our troubled world.

A brochure and form is available in .pdf format at <http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/partners4peace>.

Palestinian Elections

excerpts from a letter of Dr Bernard Sabella
Jerusalem, January 27, 2006

I ran as a Fatah candidate in the January 25th Palestinian parliamentary elections and I won the trust of my people for one of the two Christian seats from Jerusalem. My campaign was not a sophisticated one as I attempted throughout to reach people in Jerusalem; its villages, refugee camps, towns and other communal localities on a person to person basis. I had also opportunities to address relatively large audiences, some of which topped 500 people. Throughout I learnt many lessons from my people as they aired their views on current developments and their expectations for the future.



Their concerns were mainly concerns related to daily preoccupations, special needs, services and the impact of the concrete wall and Israeli military occupation practices that separate them from each other and from their basic rights of movement, free access and normal living. They stressed the need for honest communication and periodic visits of their representatives. While each locality has its unique problems, they are all willing to work together in order to come up with a comprehensive development plan that will include all of greater Arab Jerusalem.

... continued on page 10

continued from page 9 - Palestinian Elections ...

In the village of Beit Anan, most Western village of Jerusalem, Jad a young Palestinian who just finished college and is unemployed spoke of the needs of young people. ... The village council president spoke of the medical needs of the community that does not have a clinic or even an ambulance. ...

In the town of Sawahrah Ash Sharqiyah, 'Ali a young Fatah activist spoke eloquently of the need to reform Fatah. ...

In Arab Al Jahalleen, a Bedouin encampment turned village on the Eastern outskirts of Jerusalem, the concerns revolved around providing feed to livestock on a regular basis and with affordable prices. ...

During the campaign I have touched base with our people and saw the love we all have to the good earth of Palestine. I was also elated by the participation of Christian Palestinians in the process. A group of Christian organizations held an open debate for all 9 Christian candidates in the Arab Orthodox Club of Dahiat Al Barid, north of Jerusalem. Over 250 people attended and the debate among candidates was truly heated but polite with the written questions from the audience touching on hot political, social and other issues and agendas pertaining to each of the candidates. On a more personal initiative, I held one meeting with over 100 Christian Palestinians and they were all of the opinion that participation in the election was a serious obligation.

Some ask me about the Hamas landslide. My own interpretation is that this is democracy and our Palestinian people have cast their vote. I would have loved to see my Fatah movement win a comfortable majority but this did not happen due to so many different factors. The challenge now is whether internal Palestinian reform can be accomplished without the adoption of pragmatic positions on the political front. All Palestinians without exception want an end to Israeli occupation and the sooner the better. The question of how to accomplish this has been debated again and again in various Palestinian factions and movements over the years. Now that Hamas has become the political majority movement, the debate is going to be on its agenda. I realize that difficult and hard decisions await to be taken by Hamas. A movement that is at the helm of government is necessarily different from a movement in opposition or altogether out of government. I pray that Hamas would make the correct choices which are in the interest of our people, first and foremost. ...

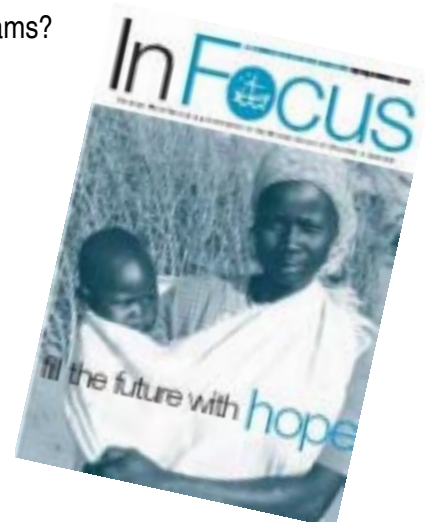
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Read the stories and give through CWS programs at
<http://www.ncca.org.au/cws>

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To read the latest edition online
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CELEBRATING IN 2006

Did you know that the Gender Commission of the NCCA is enthusiastically celebrating in 2006? Why is it so you ask? Answer: We have received a grant from the Glenburnie Foundation to support our project to present six Workshops entitled “The Audacity to Hope – Women Dreaming Together” on an interstate basis this year.



The Gender Commission is excited by this possibility of working at the grass-roots with groups around Australia in 2006. Last year we dreamt the Workshop as a possibility of widening the influence of the Gender Commission. We organised three days in rural NSW at Gosford, Newcastle and Casino. They were dynamic and exciting Workshops with hopeful and missionary outcomes. Hence, it is energising to develop plans to organise Workshops in 2006 in Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Why do we need these Workshops? There are issues which we know need to be addressed.

In Acts, Peter preached and quoted the prophet Joel saying, “Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message.” (TEV) We live in ‘those days’, and know that certain misconceptions about the lesser role of female from early Church fathers have coloured church thinking negatively for centuries. Women need to regain God’s plan of equality, to know that “our worth, our words, our vision, our organisational skills, our energy, our understanding are not less because we are female.”

Bishop Guy Deroubaix (France) in 1996, in a Pastoral letter, wrote that it is essential for Christians today to commit themselves to actively hope for “A Church where the audacity to do something new will be stronger than the habit of doing things as they’ve always been done.” That is our hope and dream for women and supporting men.

While some dates are tentative at this stage, we have planned days in Adelaide on 28th April, in Canberra on 6th May, in Sydney on 13th May, Melbourne on 20th May and Ballarat on 27th May. We were in dialogue with the Queensland ecumenical council in March with a view to planning future workshops in regional areas.

This is only the beginning, and we are dreaming of the geographical growth of Workshop presentations and of the Gender Commission spreading information about it and its activities.

It is an energising Workshop, which captures imagination, hope and vision. If you are interested why not contact us, secretariat@ncca.org.au or call (02) 9299 2215, and help us to organise an ecumenical day in your region or join in with the ecumenical council in your state and register to attend the Workshop they are organising locally. We are also looking at possibilities in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania but haven’t any dates yet.

The hope is that you can be inspired by these sessions so that together we can be the Church we dream of now and into the future. Help us make that happen.

Written by Bernice Moore and Alicia Simpfendorfer, Co-convenors, NCCA Gender Commission.

WorkChoices?

WorkChoices is a major social justice issue for the Churches. At the NCCA Executive meeting in June 2005, the SJN presented a [briefing paper](#). The ACTU made a presentation. A few weeks later, a meeting was held between representatives of the NCCA and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Many members of the Executive expressed concern. The General Secretary made a public [statement](#) that raised the concerns of the Churches, and requested a meeting between the Prime Minister and Church representatives.

After two months, the Prime Minister decided it was not a priority to meet with the Churches. Following the release of WorkChoices in October, the Prime Minister met with some individual leaders, but still did not meet with the NCCA.

The Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches and the Religious Society of Friends made submissions to the very short Senate inquiry, as did some groups associated with these Churches. A number of individual Churches, including the Salvation Army, made public statements challenging the legislation. None endorsed the legislation.

Some Churches also worked with unions on the issue because of clear overlapping concerns. Several leaders participated in the video material for the ACTU day of action on 15 November.

The view of the Churches has been based on social justice principles that the legislation violates key human rights and core labour standards. The changes may benefit some highly skilled employees, but it will disadvantage the majority. The overall impact of changes, in which every day is treated as 'ordinary', is likely to reduce the take home pay of many and 'shared time' for family and community.

The only substantive changes to the legislation achieved by the objections were in regard to outworkers in the garment industry, as a result of the advocacy of FairWear (funded in part by Church agencies), <http://www.fairwear.org.au>. The concerns expressed by the Churches included the following (for a more detailed list see the submissions at http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/EET_CTTE/wr_workchoices05/submissions/sublist.htm):

- o The lack of adequate principles and processes for the new minimum wage fixing body, the Australian Fair Pay Commission.
- o The shift in power towards employers. Employers can impose AWAs (individual Australian Workplace Agreements) on new employees. Employers can refuse to negotiate a collective agreement. If they negotiate a collective agreement, they can undermine it by using AWAs.
- o Abolition of the "no disadvantage test", meaning that AWAs can remove a number of award conditions, without compensating employees.
- o Employers do not have to negotiate in good faith. Most employees will find it impossible to take advantage of the provisions for a bargaining agent, as they will not know their rights or will not have access to someone with appropriate expertise.
- o The role of unions is restricted.
- o The role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission will be curtailed and it will lose the power of compulsory arbitration in intractable disputes.
- o The removal of unfair dismissal protections for a large part of the workforce.
- o Lack of clarity in the legislation, including which employment rules Churches and not for profit organisations will come under, given the various arrangements under which they are recognised as legal entities.

Written by the Revd Dr Ann Wansbrough, Chairperson, NCCA Social Justice Network.

Not online? Ask for a copy of the 2005 SJN briefing paper on workplace relations legislation, call (02) 9299 2215.

Changes at the Youth Network

Melanie Crawford resigned from the position of NCCA Ecumenical Youth Officer earlier this year. Melanie worked tirelessly to increase the ecumenical participation of youth in our member Churches. The Youth Network is grateful for Melanie and the gifts that she shared.



Troy Blair

Welcome Troy Blair!

Troy has only been with the NCCA a short time, but already he is deeply involved in his new role as Ecumenical Youth Officer.

Not only working for NCCA, Troy is one of the associate ministers at Northside Community Church (Churches of Christ) on Sydney's lower North Shore. In this role Troy has direct responsibility for Young Adult and Families ministries and oversight of Youth and Children's ministry. Troy was ordained after graduating from the Sydney College of Divinity with his Bachelors Degree in Theology in 2004. Troy has also worked in heavy industry as a mechanical engineer in Wollongong and in management in Sydney, and has bachelor and masters degrees in these areas.

Troy has a real heart for young people, desiring nothing more than for them to discover "life, and life to the full" through a relationship with Jesus Christ. He also desires that all people realise the potential they have to not only make a difference but make the world different. "This all starts and ends with Jesus Christ and ecumenical synergy can help make this process easier and more effective for young people", Troy said. "And I am honoured to be but one of the many contributors to Churches working together and so bringing hope and healing to our hurting neighbourhoods and hurting world."

Troy is married to Edwina, also an ordained associate minister at Northside, and they have a daughter, Taylor.

Read more about the Youth Network at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/youth_network.

Photo by Debra Porter



NCCA Bookshop

books and other ecumenical resources
call (02) 9299 2215, email the NCCA office
or visit <http://www.ncca.org.au/bookshop>
to view some of the books in stock

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12. Aotearoa New Zealand
13. Germany
14. Women's Perspectives
15. The Early Church
16. Korea
17. The Andean Region
18. Indigenous Australia

Seeds of Peace CD

\$5.00*



This CD produced by the Decade to Overcome Violence (Australia) contains stories, study materials and worship materials, as well as background information regarding DOV.

**Prices do not include postage.*

May 1, 2006 - US religious groups rally for Darfur, but Nigeria peace talks flounder

Washington (ENI) - Thousands of Americans - many officially affiliated with religious groups - rallied in three major US cities and demanded a tougher international response to stop violence in Darfur, the war-torn region in the western part of Sudan.

In a demonstration of the strong religious-based concern in the United States about the Darfur crisis, representatives of Muslim, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Protestant and evangelical groups attended and addressed demonstrators at the largest event on 30 April, in Washington DC.

April 27, 2006 - Churches urge Sri Lanka rebels to halt suicide bombings, by Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) - Churches in Sri Lanka have condemned an escalation of violence in the Indian Ocean nation, urging Tamil rebels to halt suicide bomb attacks and government forces to cease activities that are undermining the resumption of peace talks.

April 24, 2006 - Philippines' 'green' cardinal apologises to planet, by Maurice Malanes

Manila (ENI) - Manila's Roman Catholic Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales was given a red hat in March when Pope Benedict XVI made him a cardinal, but for many of his faithful the colour of his headgear should be green due to his advocacy for the environment.

"Human acquisitiveness and avarice threaten the supply and availability of resources destined also for future generations," Rosales said at a 22 April Earth Day celebration held at a garbage dumpsite that has been turned into a housing resettlement site in Manila. There, he apologised for the people's "sins" against nature.

April 24, 2006 - Church report says Zimbabwe army seizing poor farmers' harvests

Harare (ENI) - A report by a church-backed non-governmental organization says President Robert Mugabe's army is seizing grain from poor farmers in the traditionally opposition-supporting province of Matabeleland ahead of local government elections scheduled for September in the hope of drawing votes for the ruling Zanu-PF party.

April 24, 2006 - Orthodox Christians in Jerusalem celebrate Easter with Holy Fire, by Michele Green

Jerusalem, 24 April (ENI)—Thousands of Orthodox Christians crowded into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem to witness the annual holy fire ceremony in which a flame believed to be miraculously lit in Christ's tomb is then dispersed throughout the Orthodox Christian world as an Easter message that Jesus has not forgotten his followers.

The Greek and Armenian Orthodox patriarchs entered the underground tomb in the church during the ceremony on 22 April and soon emerged carrying torches baring flames.

April 20, 2006 - Tutu says churches found it easier to speak out under apartheid, by Frank Jomo

Johannesburg (ENI) - South African Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu says the church in his country finds it difficult to speak out about the suffering of underprivileged people for fear of being accused of not helping the government in its nation-building process.

A 2004 survey found that South Africans ranked unemployment - estimated at 27.8 per cent - as the country's most serious problem.

April 12, 2006 - WCC asks European Union to give new Palestinian Authority more time

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is urging the European Union to exercise "respect for the democratic mandate given by [the recent Palestinian] elections and time for the new government to find its feet and demonstrate its intentions," following the Council of the European Union's endorsement of a temporary halt to direct aid to the Palestinian government headed by Hamas.

...

At its 10-11 April meeting in Luxembourg, the EU Council confirmed that it was "reviewing its assistance to the Palestinians" as a result of its "grave concern" that the new Palestinian government had "not committed itself [...] to non-violence, recognition of Israel's right to exist and acceptance of existing agreements". It warned that the absence of such commitment would affect direct assistance to the government, yet noted that the EU would continue to provide assistance to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian population.

World News continued . . .

April 2, 2006 - Australian Salvation Army officer Commissioner Robin Dunster becomes Chief of Staff

Commissioner Dunster is the first woman to be Chief of Staff - second in command of The Salvation Army's worldwide force of more than 1.1 million members.

Congratulations

The Revd Professor James Haire, President of the NCCA is to be awarded Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of Ulster (UK) to be conferred in July 2006.

The Most Revd Francis Carroll, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference was awarded Australian Catholic University's highest honour, Doctor of the University (honoris causa), at the University's graduation ceremony on Friday, March 31.

If you would like to receive regular free news summaries via email from ENI (Ecumenical News International) subscribe at <http://www.eni.ch>; or from WCC e-news subscribe at <http://onlineservices.wcc-coe.org/>.

In Memoriam

We remember before God all those who have made contributions to the life of the ecumenical movement. We are grateful for the path they have laid before us.

In this issue of *InUnity* we remember,

The Revd Neil Gilmore former President of the Australian Council of Churches, 1973-1976. Neil was a member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee, 1968-1975, former President of the Churches of Christ in Australia, and a supporter of NCCA Christian World Service and *forceten*. 11/12 February 2006.

William P Thompson a US church leader and layperson instrumental in bringing the world's Congregationalists and Presbyterians together in the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, and its first president, 1970-1977. 27 April 2006 - aged 87.

Count me in ... (online? click here)

Yes! I would like to be involved in the work of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss/Dr/Revd _____ First name(s) _____ Surname _____

Address _____ Suburb _____ State _____ Postcode _____

Telephone (____) _____ Email _____

Denomination _____ Home Parish _____

NCCA Resources

- I would like to be added to the *InUnity* email list
(complete email address above or email inunity@ncca.org.au)
- I don't have Internet access, please send me a paper copy of *InUnity*
- I would like to be added to the Ecumenical Friends mailing list
- I would like to receive a Simply Sharing kit
- I would like to receive information about Partners4Peace
- I would like to receive Christmas Bowl resources

Financial Support

- I would like to support the work of:
- The National Council of Churches in Australia (CDAD)
 - National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (CDKC)
 - Christmas Bowl (CB)
 - Partners4Peace* Simply Sharing Week
- My gift:** \$20 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other \$ _____

Payment method:

- Cheque/money order enclosed Credit card – Please charge my Bankcard Visa Mastercard Diners Amex

Name on card _____ Card no _____ Expiry date __/__/____ Signature _____

- This is a *non-tax deductible* gift This is a *tax deductible* gift

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What's On?

May

- 6 World Debt Day
<http://www.jubileeaustralia.org>
- 26 National Sorry Day
- 26-4/6 Prayer for Reconciliation & Christian Unity
Resources at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith_and_unity/weekofprayer or call (02) 9299 2215
- 28 Asia Sunday
<http://www.cca.org.hk/resources/liturg/asiaday/asia2006/asiaday2006.pdf>

June

- 3 National Day of Thanksgiving
http://www.thanksgiving.org.au/article_list.asp?intcategoryid=0
- 4 Pentecost - Western 
- 5 World Environment Day
<http://www.unep.org/wed/2006/english/>

11 Pentecost - Orthodox

- 25 Jubilee Sunday
<http://www.jubileeaustralia.org>

July

- 2-9 NAIDOC Week
<http://www.naidoc.org.au>

August

- 4 National Aboriginal & Islander Children's Day
- 6 61st Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous People
- 27 Refugee and Migrant Sunday
Resources http://www.ncca.org.au/cws/rdp/refugee_and_migrant_sunday

September

- 21 International Day of Peace
<http://www.overcomingviolence.org>
- 24 Social Justice Sunday
Resources available - tba

What's On? dates and information are collected by the NCCA website editors. The latest list of events can be found at http://www.ncca.org.au/whats_on. To submit entries to **What's On?** please email inunity@ncca.org.au or write to **InUnity**, NCCA, Locked Bag 199, Sydney NSW 1230. Inclusion in **What's On?** is at the discretion of the editors.

National Council of Churches in Australia

Commissions

The National Council of Churches in Australia has four commissions that take responsibility for the various programs:

- Commission for Christian World Service
 - International Programs
 - Refugees and Displaced People
 - Strathfield Home
 - Partners4Peace
 - Education and Communications

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission
Commission on Faith and Unity
Gender Commission

Networks & Working Groups

The National Council of Churches in Australia has also established a number of networks to help the wider church explore issues of particular interest:

- Safe as Churches Working Group
- Social Justice Network
- Working Group on the Decade to Overcome Violence
- Youth Network

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State Ecumenical Offices

If you need to order resources or require a speaker on ecumenical issues please contact your state ecumenical office:

New South Wales Ecumenical Council

- Sydney

Locked Bag 199, Sydney NSW 1230
Tel: (02) 9299 2215 Email: nswec@ncca.org.au

- Canberra

GPO Box 1526, Canberra ACT 2601
Tel: (02) 6273 8805 Email: rocorrigan@csu.edu.au

Northern Territory Council of Churches

PO Box 39818, Winnellie NT 0821
Tel: Bishop Philip Frier (Pres) (08) 8941 7440 or
Tel: Fr Stephen Hacket (Sec) (08) 8941 1244
Email: ntccdarwin@gmail.com

Queensland Churches Together

PO Box 2045, Milton BC QLD 4064
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South Australian Council of Churches

GPO Box 2106, Adelaide SA 5001
Tel: (08) 8221 6633 Email: sacc@picknowl.com.au

Tasmanian Council of Churches

163 Macquarie Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Tel: (03) 6234 2543 Email: tcc@trump.net.au

Victorian Council of Churches

Level 4, Causeway House,
306 Little Collins Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: (03) 9650 4511 Email: vcc@vcc.org.au
NCCA - Christian World Service, Victoria
Tel: (03) 9650 6811 Email: cwsvic@ncca.org.au

Council of Churches of Western Australia

PO Box 831, Scarborough WA 6922
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Layout - Debra Porter

The NCCA is a member of the Australian Religious Press Association.