

CWSA – General Debate

A number of statements were made in support of the proposed incorporation of CWS. The following concerns were also considered.

Some concern was expressed regarding the possibility that incorporation would move or could lead to a move of CWS away from the NCCA. It was pointed out that there are security steps built into the proposed Constitution to guard against this. The suggestion that the General Secretary should be the Director of the incorporated CWS, as a further protection, was deemed to be unnecessary. Frank Carroll shared some insights from Catholic experience and commented that the safeguards that have been put in place will help to cancel out many of the concerns experienced by the Roman Catholic Church in Australia.

Christmas Bowl would remain within CWS and therefore contribute to the continued understanding of CWS Inc as an ecumenical entity. Christmas Bowl is a registered trademark of NCCA Ltd, and there is no need to change this.

Tax exemption status would continue under the proposed CWS Inc. Nothing would change.

CWS's ability to facilitate and encourage collaboration between denominations in their response to human need will remain as it is.

It was requested that the Executive give some thought to protocols for public statements before the company is formed.

Covenanting (Commission on Faith & Unity)

04.07.06 It was resolved that²

this National Forum

- receives the document “Australian Churches Covenanting Together”; (*see appendix L*)
- celebrates the reception of the document as a sign of what the NCCA member Churches can covenant to do together at this point in our journey; and
- commends the Churches' commitment to continue to explore such further steps as will be necessary to make more clearly visible the unity of all Christian people in this country.

Covenant Signing

Subsequently the Forum witnessed the signing of the Covenanting Process/Statement already agreed to by the churches. Ray Williamson explained the history of the document. The President read out the statement to be signed by the member Churches.

Representatives of the churches signed the document.

Presentations and Recommendations of the Executive, Commissions, Networks and Working Group

Reports, as found in the 5th National Forum Working Papers were taken as read. Representatives of each body made creative visual and verbal presentations.

The Executive

The Executive presentation was made by the General Secretary.

² (Moved by Erica Mathieson. Seconded by Lindsay Faulkner.)

04.07.07 It was resolved that

the Executive report be received.

Concerning Christian World Service:

04.07.08 It was resolved that

1. in order to achieve the objectives of the NCCA as outlined in 4.01.b.iii, iv & v of the NCCA Constitution, the Forum approve in principle the creation of a new company, NCCA CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE LIMITED.
2. the Forum approves in principle the draft Constitution of NCCA CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE LIMITED.
3. the Forum reappoint the current CWS Commission until such time as NCCA CHRISTIAN WORLD SERVICE LIMITED can be established, at which point the Commission will cease to exist.

Concerning the invitation to move to Canberra:

04.07.09 It was resolved that

The President vacated the Chair during discussion and voting on recommendations concerning a possible move to Canberra, because of his conflict of interest as Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACCC). The Chair was temporarily taken by David Woodbury (Salvation Army).

4. the Forum recognises the strategic and symbolic importance of the national capital as a base of operations for the National Council of Churches in light of:
 - a. Its image as a truly national body for the Churches;
 - b. Its relationship with State Ecumenical Bodies;
 - c. Its legitimate primary engagement with agendas that are national in character.
5. the Forum thanks the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture for its approach to the NCCA that we consider occupying part of Stage Two of their project in the Parliamentary Triangle, and views this as a unique and stimulating opportunity for the strategic relocation of the NCCA.
6. the Forum encourages the Executive to seriously explore the acceptance of this offer, bearing in mind:
 - a. The national ecumenical goals of the NCCA;
 - b. The integrity of the entire operation of the NCCA and its constituent parts;
 - c. The future relationship between the NCCA and the proposed CWSA;
 - d. Financial and property constraints;
 - e. Practical implications for member Churches.

Gender Commission

Ronis Chapman made the Gender Commission presentation. A leaflet containing the Gender Commission Mandate was distributed to all participants of the Forum.

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/gender_commission.

04.07.10 It was resolved that

the Gender Commission report be received.

04.07.11 It was resolved that

2. the Forum endorses the work of the Gender Commission
3. the Forum endorses the following current directions:
 - develop programs with the Youth Network and the NATSIEC; and
 - work with CCA, WCC and DOV to promote the “On The Wings of a Dove” program in Australia.

Christian World Service (CWS)

Gregor Henderson, Caesar D’Mello, Ray Wilson, Mark Hobson, Charlie O’Campo, Colleen Hodge and Michelle Knight made the Christian World Service Commission presentation.

The Forum read together the CWS Statement. (*see appendix K*) The presentation followed.

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/christian_world_service.

04.07.12 It was resolved that

the Christian World Service Commission report be received.

04.07.13 It was resolved that

1. the Forum urge individual member Churches to engage in conversations with CWS to together seek ways to raise denominational support for the Christmas Bowl.
2. each member church be urged, over the next three years, to work with and help resource Christian World Service to achieve the following:
 - a. at least a doubling of parish and school participation in Refugee and Migrant Sunday (held on the last Sunday in August) and the action priorities it identifies;
 - b. the active support through denominational and ecumenical networks of a planned CWS broader education and attitude change program to create more informed and sympathetic church and community responses to the situation of vulnerable “people on the move”, notably refugees and asylum seekers; and
 - c. Australian Government adoption of CWS/NCCA policy priorities on refugees and asylum seekers, notably:
 - i. the abolition of temporary protection visas (TPVs) and replacement with permanent protection visas for unauthorised arrivals found to be refugees;
 - ii. the replacement of a mandatory detention with a more flexible initial screening approach;
 - iii. a “Complementary Protection” model to protect those not fitting the strict refugee definition;
 - iv. the abolition of “The Pacific Solution”, and the closure of detention centres on Nauru and Manus Island;
 - v. the processing of boat arrivals in Australia and increased funding of the UNHCR; and
3. the Forum urge the Australian Government and the Federal Opposition to commit themselves to raise the level of Australia’s overseas development assistance to 0.7% of GDP.
4. in recognition of East Timor’s need to be stable, self-sufficient and secure, the Forum write to the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Leader of the Opposition, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Shadow Minister for Mining, Energy and Forestry, urging that Australia

accede to East Timor's claim on oil and gas deposits which are physically nearer to East Timor, and in this light settle the maritime boundaries between the two countries immediately and graciously.

Commission on Faith and Unity

The Commission on Faith and Unity presentation was made by Chris Mostert.

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith_&_unity_commission.

04.07.14 It was resolved that

1. the Commission on Faith and Unity report be received.

04.07.15 It was resolved that

2. the specific report on the Covenanting process be noted with pleasure, and that the Commission be requested to keep the ongoing challenge of this process before the Churches.
3. the Commission be encouraged to give priority to the monitoring of bilateral dialogues in Australia.
4. the Commission be asked to keep the member Churches informed of international developments in ecumenical dialogue and agreements.

Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV)

Jill Tabart and Jon Inkpin made the DOV presentation.

What can we do? Use the DOV resources and spread the news about them so others can join the journey. Make changes to become bridge builders, support CWS, Social Justice Sunday resources (2004 resource includes DOV themes), support the On the Wings of a Dove (WCC) project, find out what our state ecumenical body is doing and take initiatives within our own church, pray for peace and support the DOV initiative in staffing its developing work.

DOV resources available at <http://www.ncca.org.au/dov>

04.07.16 It was resolved that

the Decade to Overcome Violence Working Group report be received.

04.07.17 It was resolved that

1. the Forum urge member Churches to engage in active peacemaking, sharing with the DOV Working Group initiatives undertaken;
2. Forum members commit themselves, and take every opportunity to ensure their Churches are committed to cultivating a culture of peace;
3. the Forum encourages the Executive to continue the position of DOV Coordinator from January 2005 for up to 3 years, subject to funding availability.

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission (NATSIEC)

Graeme Mundine made the NATSIEC presentation.

Web pages at <http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/indigenous>.

04.07.18 It was resolved that

the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission report be received.

04.07.19 It was resolved that

1. the National Forum encourages member Churches to do more to bring Indigenous affairs back to the centre of their attention, and the attention of the wider community, by these and other means:
 - a. liaising with and supporting the work of NATSIEC;
 - b. respecting, listening to and responding to Indigenous voices in the Churches and wider community;
 - c. continuing the commitment begun through the *Continuing the Journey* Report (2001); and
 - d. speaking out for justice for Indigenous Australians.
2. That a follow up review from the *Continuing the Journey* report takes place during the upcoming term of the Commission.
3. That NATSIEC calls a gathering of Indigenous Church leadership to address the issue of the place of Indigenous peoples in church and society.
4. That NATSIEC investigate the possibility of creating a 'Think Tank', which aims to produce action solutions to address the disadvantage of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

Social Justice Network (SJN)

Ann Wansbrough made the Social Justice Network presentation.

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/social_justice_network.

04.07.20 It was resolved that

the Social Justice Network report be received.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee report was presented by Malcolm Dodd
The 2001 and 2002 financial statements were tabled.

04.07.21 It was resolved that

1. the Finance Committee report be received.

Commission on Mission

The Commission on Mission presentation was made by Martin Teulan.

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/commission_on_mission.

04.07.22 It was resolved that

the Commission on Mission report be received.

04.07.23 It was resolved that

the Churches review their representation on the Commission on Mission and appoint to the Commission key denominational leaders in local mission so that the Commission will be able to fulfil its mandate into the future.

Youth Network

The Youth Network report was presented by Johnathan Jones

Web pages at http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/youth_network.

04.07.24 It was resolved that
the report of the Youth Network be received.

04.07.25 It was resolved that
all projects of the NCCA Youth Network be supported by and promoted in member Churches.

Ecumenical Leadership Fund

The report was introduced. No formal presentation was made.

04.07.26 It was resolved that
the ELF report be received.

Recommendations from Member Churches

Dialogues

04.07.27 It is resolved that³

the NCCA Forum requests the Executive to

1. find effective means through which the results of dialogues can be made available to church members by way of popular reports;
2. make available the results of dialogues to non-dialoguing members of the NCCA; and
3. facilitate the availability of the dialoguing Church participants to inform other Churches within the NCCA.

Baptism Proposals

It was commented that worship or liturgy experts in the local area usually develop resources such as those suggested at '2' below. It is, however, legitimate for the NCCA to be involved in developing a rite.

04.07.28 It is resolved that⁴

the NCCA Forum

1. note that a number of churches practice common baptism; and
2. request the Executive to prepare guidance for these churches on how they may conduct baptisms according to their own rites within a common service.

3 (Moved by the Lutheran Church of Australia. Seconded by the Uniting Church in Australia.)

4 (Moved by the Lutheran Church of Australia. Seconded by the Uniting Church in Australia.)

Interfaith

Discussion took place concerning guidelines already in place, the use of the terms 'discussion' and 'dialogue' (resulting in minor amendment to the proposed recommendation) and the work currently being undertaken by the Foreign Minister, Mr Alexander Downer.

Comments were also made concerning the experience that the Orthodox Churches could bring to interfaith discussions. A question was asked about strengthening Orthodox representation in such discussions. The General Secretary recalled the Orthodox consultation on interfaith matters in 2002, and reiterated the desire to have a strong Orthodox voice in any interfaith work the NCCA undertakes.

04.07.29 It is resolved that⁵

the NCCA Executive be encouraged to provide guidelines for churches that assist them to distinguish between interfaith discussion and interdenominational dialogues, and that the group appointed to develop such guidelines include a significant representation from Orthodox Churches.

04.07.30 It is resolved that⁶

In the light of recent announcements of the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, of joint proposals by the Australian and Indonesian Governments to develop interfaith regional conferences in South East Asia:

1. the NCCA welcomes the possibility of such interfaith conferences;
2. notes the interfaith discussions already underway in Australia initiated by the NCCA and others; and
3. requests the NCCA Executive to approach the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to offer support and assistance in the development of such interfaith regional conferences in South East Asia.

Finance - Seeking more income for the NCCA

There was discussion regarding the organisational aspect related to this resolution. Comment was made on the possibility that this proposal could have an energising effect. There is a belief that people want to be involved and contribute. It was commented that this may be a short-term strategy. There is a need for a longer term strategy. It was also noted that this resolution does not necessarily commit member Churches to an 'extra' Sunday.

04.07.31 It is resolved that⁷

1. the Forum requests member Churches to promote in all their congregations the conduct on one Sunday each year of a special offering for the work of the NCCA and state ecumenical bodies;
2. the Forum request the state ecumenical bodies to agree to a 50-50 division of the net monies received (receipts less expenses) between the NCCA and the relevant state ecumenical body; and

5 (Moved by the Lutheran Church of Australia. Seconded by the Uniting Church in Australia.)

6 (Moved by the Uniting Church in Australia. Seconded by the Roman Catholic Church.)

7 (Moved by the Uniting Church in Australia. Seconded by the Anglican Church of Australia.)

3. the Forum request the Executive to:
 - arrange implementation of the annual special offering, including liaison with member Churches and state ecumenical bodies, the setting of the date each year and the provision of publicity materials; and
 - take any further decisions needed in relation to the annual special offerings.

Financial Support

The feeling of the Forum was that it is important to recognize in kind support, but that it should not be specified by monetary value.

04.07.32 It is resolved that⁸

when commissions and committees report on the financial support they receive from the Churches that they acknowledge the contribution they receive in kind from the Churches, e.g. personnel or use of facilities.

Location of Commissions

It was acknowledged that the membership of Commissions, Networks and current Working Groups is in place for the next three years. This resolution needs to be considered when nominated members for consideration at the next Forum.

04.07.33 It is resolved that⁹

the NCCA work towards basing some of its commissions in cities other than Sydney or Melbourne, in association with local state councils of churches.

Pacific

04.07.34 It is resolved that¹⁰

in the light of a strong request by our Pacific partners, the Forum is called upon to urge member Churches to continue and strengthen dialogue with their denominational counterparts in the Pacific to

- reflect and act together on issues of conflict and peace building in the Pacific;
- find appropriate ways of assisting communities in the Pacific;
- devise ways of sharing information and insights regarding the Pacific with Australian people; and
- extend support for the work of CWS in the Pacific.

Davis and Jean McCaughey

04.07.35 It is resolved that¹¹

the NCCA Forum, meeting in session, sends greetings to Davis and Jean McCaughey on the celebration of Davis' 90th birthday; wishing them God's richest blessing and thanking them for their many years of distinguished contribution to the Ecumenical Fellowship.

8 (Moved by the Roman Catholic Church. Seconded by the Salvation Army.)

9 (Moved by the Lutheran Church of Australia. Seconded by the Uniting Church in Australia.)

10 (Moved by the Uniting Church in Australia. Seconded by the Roman Catholic Church.)

11 (Moved by the Uniting Church in Australia. Seconded by the Anglican Church in Australia.)