

# **Constitution**

## **NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN AUSTRALIA**

**[as amended 13-17 July 2007]**

### **1. NAME**

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

### **2. BASIS**

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

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

[ii] to work together towards the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service,

to the glory of the One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### **3. THE CHURCH, THE CHURCHES AND THE NCCA**

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

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

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

### **4. OBJECTIVES**

4.01 The objectives of the NCCA are:

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

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

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

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

- i] developing a deeper understanding of evangelism/ evangelisation in Australia's cultural context;
- ii] addressing moral issues;
- iii] speaking out on behalf of oppressed people;
- iv] acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people; and
- v] responding to human need and acting on issues of justice, peace and creation;

[c] to promote relationships

- i] with non-member Churches, state ecumenical bodies within Australia, regional and national ecumenical bodies in Asia and the Pacific, and the World Council of Churches; and
- ii] with people of other living faiths; and

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

## **5. MEMBERSHIP**

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

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

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

## **6. STRUCTURE**

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

6.02 The components of this structure are:

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

## **7. GENERAL CHURCH CONSULTATIONS**

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

## **8. THE NATIONAL FORUM**

8.01 The National Forum is the general meeting of representatives of member churches of the NCCA together with representatives of state ecumenical bodies and representatives of a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body. The National Forum's responsibility is to enable member Churches to establish and review the overall policies and programmes of the NCCA.

8.02 The membership of the National Forum will comprise:

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

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

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

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

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

## **9. MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL FORUM**

9.01

[a] The National Forum shall hold an ordinary meeting at least once every two years for the first four [4] years after the first meeting of the National Forum and thereafter at least once every three [3] years on such date[s] and at such place as the National Forum [or the Executive] may determine.

[b] The National Forum may hold special meetings at such other times and for such purposes as the National Forum determines.

[c] The Executive may whenever it thinks fit convene a special meeting of the National Forum.

[d] The Executive shall on the requisition in writing of not less than one third of the member Churches convene a special meeting of the National Forum.

[e] Not less than 3 months notice of a meeting of the National Forum shall be given to the member Churches.

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

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

9.03 At a meeting of the National Forum:

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

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

9.05

- [a] No business shall be transacted at any meeting of the National Forum unless a quorum of members is present at the time when the meeting proceeds to business nor shall a meeting proceed if the chairperson determines by a count that a quorum is not present.
- [b] A quorum shall consist of not less than one-half of the membership of the National Forum, present in person or by alternate appointed pursuant to Clause 8.04.

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

9.07 The Executive may invite appropriate people who are not members of the National Forum to attend a meeting of the National Forum. Such persons may be given the right to speak but not to vote. Categories of persons who will be invited include:

observers from non-member Churches, and  
one executive staff person from each state ecumenical body.

## **10. THE EXECUTIVE**

10.01

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

10.02 The Executive will consist of:

- [a] the national heads of the member Churches;
- [b] one other person appointed by each member Church;
- [c] not more than six [6] members elected by the National Forum pursuant to Clause 9.02 [c];
- [d] two members appointed by a national Aboriginal and Islander ecumenical body
- [e] the General Secretary and the Treasurer of the NCCA [ex officio]; and
- [f] the President in any case where the person elected as President is not otherwise a member of the Executive.

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

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

10.05 At a meeting of the Executive

[a] the President shall preside, or

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

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

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

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

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

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

10.11

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

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

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

## **11. OFFICE BEARERS**

11.01 The office bearers of the NCCA shall be :

[a] the President

[b] the General Secretary

[c] the Treasurer

11.02 The President of the NCCA will normally

[a] be elected by the National Forum;

[b] hold office until the conclusion of the next ordinary meeting of the National Forum and

[c] be eligible for re-election;

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

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

## **12. SPECIFIC CONSULTATIONS**

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

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

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

### **13. COMMISSIONS**

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

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

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

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

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

### **14. WORKING GROUPS**

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

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

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

### **15. NETWORKS**

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

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

### **16. STAFF**

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

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

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

### **17. PUBLIC STATEMENTS**

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

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

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

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

## **18. RELATIONSHIPS WITH NATIONAL HEADS OF CHURCHES**

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

## **19. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE ECUMENICAL BODIES**

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

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

## **20. RELATIONSHIPS WITH A NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER ECUMENICAL BODY**

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

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

## **21. THE NATURE OF REPRESENTATION**

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

## **22. FINANCE**

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

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

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

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

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

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

22.07 The NCCA shall have power to establish trust funds.

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

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

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

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

### **23. CORPORATE ENTITY**

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

23.02 Whenever the Executive considers it desirable

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

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

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

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

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

## **24. AMENDMENTS**

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

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

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

## **25. DISSOLUTION**

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

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

## **26. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LAWS**

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

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