



# National Council of Churches in Australia NATSIEC

13<sup>th</sup> September 2010

For Immediate Release

From the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC)

## World Council of Churches 'Living Letters' Team visit Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory, Australia

The World Council of Churches Living Letters visit to the Northern Territory (NT) in Australia has commenced in Darwin. The Living Letters Team is visiting Australia at the invitation of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC). The invitation was extended to show solidarity with Aboriginal people and to share insights and helpful approaches to achieving Just Peace. Specifically, the visitors will listen to Aboriginal people talk about their experiences of the NT Emergency Response (The Intervention) and other social justice issues.

Delegates were welcomed on Sunday night by Larrakia Elder Cathie Wilson and NT church leaders at an informal dinner.

Bishop Eugene Hurley, Catholic Bishop of the NT said, "We welcome the Living Letters team and hope that this visit shines a light on the human rights issues that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory struggle with on a daily basis. It is also an opportunity for the team to learn from the beauty of our local cultures."

Bishop Greg Thompson, Anglican Bishop of the NT agreed and said, "The Living Letters team is here to listen to the voices of Aboriginal people who are so often silenced and excluded from the decisions and debate about issues that affect their lives. This is an opportunity to hear their voices"

Wendell Flentje, Moderator of the Northern Synod, of the Uniting Church in Australia said, "Our hope is that this international team can stand in solidarity with Northern Territory Aborigines and tell the world, and the general Australian community, about the difficult issues they face here."

Team leader, Maria Chavez Quispe, said, "Living Letters teams are small ecumenical teams which visit a country to listen, learn, share approaches and challenges in overcoming violence and in peace making, and to pray together for peace in the community and in the world. We hope our presence in Australia will show the Aboriginal people that they are not alone and that we are here to listen to them and to take their message to other Australians and the international community."

The Living Letters team will visit communities throughout the Northern Territory. A media conference will be held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September at the Harbour Room, Anglican Cathedral, Darwin at 12.00, followed by a public forum at 12.30 to present the team's initial observations.

**For comment: Graeme Mundine 0419 238 788**

**Delegate list follows.**

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

Salvation Army

Serbian  
Orthodox Church

Syrian  
Orthodox Church

Uniting Church

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**International delegates:**

- Ms **Hera Rere Clarke**, WCC Central Committee member, New Zealand, Anglican
- Ms **Renée Grounds**, United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, United States
- Dr **Hanna Grace**, Egypt, Coptic Orthodox
- Rev. Dr **Mindawati Perangin-Angin**, WCC Central Committee member, Indonesia, Karo Batak Protestant Church
- Fr **Rex Reyes**, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, Episcopal
- Rev. Dr **Anthony Dancer**, Social Justice Commission of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia (*accompanying member*)

**Local delegates:**

- Ms **Georgie Corowa**, Coordinator, Queensland Churches Together Indigenous Peoples and Partnerships.
- Rev. **Sealin Garlett**, deputy chair of the NATSIEC Commission, Uniting Church in Australia

**WCC and NATSIEC-NCCA staff:**

- Mr **Graeme Mundine**, NATSIEC-NCCA (local coordinator)
- Ms **Maria Chavez Quispe**, WCC (team leader)
- Ms **Gabrielle Russell-Mundine**, NATSIEC staff

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