

Minutes

Minutes of the 5th National Forum

Opening Welcomes

The Revd Sidney Graham welcomed the NCCA Forum members to the land of the Kaurna people.¹

Participants were welcomed by, the Revd Professor James Haire, President of the NCCA, as well as by the Revd Margaret Polkinghorne, President of the South Australian Council of Churches.

Present and Apologies

Apologies: Fr Matthew Attia (Coptic Orthodox Church), Archbishop Baliozian (Armenian Apostolic Church), Mr David Cohen (Treasurer), Revd Sealin Garlett (NATSIEC), Pastor Brian Houston (Assemblies of God in Australia), the Revd Peter Overton (Churches of Christ), Ms Maureen Postma (VCC), Archbishop Saliba (Antiochian Orthodox Church) and Bishop Suriel (Coptic Orthodox Church).

Present: (*see Participants roll p. 29*)

Appointment of Committees

04.07.01 It was resolved that

1. the following persons be appointed as a Steering Committee for this National Forum: Loretta Wholley (Chair – Roman Catholic Church), James Haire (President), David Woodbury (Salvation Army), Archbishop Mor Malatius Malki Malki (Syrian Orthodox Church, Joan Hendriks (NATSIEC), Peter Carnley (Anglican Church) and John Henderson [General Secretary - staff];
2. the Steering Committee be asked to make any proposals it deems necessary regarding the ordering of business;
3. the following be appointed as a Nominations Committee for this National Forum: Gordon Wegener (Chair - VCC), Michael Brown (Roman Catholic Church), Marie Wilson, Sonia Berberian, Margaret Rodgers (Anglican Church) and Caesar D’Mello/ Graeme Mundine [staff];
4. the Nominations Committee be asked to bring recommendations for membership of the commissions, committees, networks and working groups based on the recommendations of the member Churches.

Business to be Considered

04.07.02 It was resolved that

the deadline for resolutions moved by member Churches be 1pm on Monday, 12 July;

04.07.03 It was resolved that

comment be sought from the Financial Controller prior to action being taken on any recommendation or motion that has financial implications, with the mover of any such recommendation asked to indicate what the practical implications are likely to be.

¹ Sidney Graham’s mother is the oldest living member of the Kaurna people.

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04.07.04 It was resolved that

the Executive be authorised to approve the Minutes of the National Forum.

Program/Timetable

The President explained the procedures for reports and business to be used during the Forum. Reports were to be taken as read, questions taken on notice. The use of the coloured sheets available for submitting Questions, New Recommendations, Amendments and Notices/Messages was also explained.

04.07.05 It was resolved that

the proposed timetable and procedures be adopted, subject to such variations as may be approved in the course of this National Forum;

President's Address

The president presented his address 'At the Cross Roads: Setting the Scene I'
(see appendix D)

Report of the General Secretary

The General Secretary presented his address 'At the Cross Roads: Setting the Scene II & III' (see appendix E)

More Welcomes

The Revd Dr Samuel Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and Mr Mathews George, Asia Desk Secretary of the WCC, were welcomed and gave a brief response. This is Dr Kobia's first visit to Australia since becoming General Secretary of the WCC. He spoke with warmth of the Australian invitation at his election in Geneva, and reflected on his visit the Immigration Detention Centre in Baxter the day before Forum.

Ms Koila Costello-Olsen brought greetings from the Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education & Advocacy, Fiji. She expressed thanks and told the Forum the Centre looks forward to working with us in the future.

Archbishop Adrian Smith from the Solomon Islands Christian Association spoke of the brokenness in the Solomon Islands. He expressed thanks to NCCA and CWS for being with the Solomon Islands in the most painful experience the Solomon Islands have been through, gratitude for the assistance that has been given.

The President acknowledged past-President Revd Dr Lance Steicke and thanked him for his work with the NCCA. Lance gave a response, and thanked the President.

Mr Rakesh Peter Dass gave greetings from Christian Conference of Asia and congratulated the Forum on the Covenanting Agreement. He encouraged the NCCA to continue its work with Indigenous Australians and encouraged the Forum to ensure that young people are more involved in the structure and working of the NCCA.

The President welcomed Bishop Ian George (Anglican Church), former Chairperson of CWS.

The Revd Robyn Cave from the Conference of Churches Aotearoa, New Zealand had the opportunity to give greetings from CCANZ. Robyn mentioned their CD of 5 stories and challenged us to a closer ecumenical relationship of friendship. She also presented Jon Inkpin with the CCANZ resource for DOV.

Pastor Ray Coombe from the Australian Union Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists thanked the NCCA for being invited to share in the Forum. He spoke of his experience of dialogue within the NCCA and with some members of the NCCA. Commented on Ted Boyce's talk regarding schools emphasising the importance of Christian Schools. He also commented on the importance of dialogue. Ray challenged us to look at other non-NCCA ecumenical bodies and hoped that his presence challenges us.

Mrs Coralie Wright from Australian Church Women brought greeting and thanks from ACW for being included in the Forum. She spoke briefly about the history of ACW.

Mr Tom Slater gave greeting from the Australian Evangelical Alliance Inc. He addressed the Forum briefly explaining of what the Australian Evangelical Alliance does.

Mr Digby Hannah brought greetings from Gwen Milne and other members of the Baptist Union of Australia who have attend NCCA events, e.g. Safe as Churches.

The President thanked each guest after they spoke and asked that greetings from the NCCA be taken back to each Church or organisation.

The representatives of the Bible Society in Australia, Mr Jorge Rodriguez, and the World Day of Prayer, Ms Lillian Deane, were also present and welcomed.

Greetings to the Forum

Prior to dinner on the Sunday evening the President read out greetings from the Governor General, His Excellency, Major General Michael Jeffery, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, the Governor of South Australia, Her Excellency Marjorie Jackson-Nelson, the Lord Mayor of Adelaide, Mr Michael Harbison, who was represented at the Cathedral service, and the Premier, the Hon Mike Rann, MP, who was represented at the Forum lunch on Tuesday by Ms Frances Bedford, MP, the Member for Florey.

NCCA Executive Review Report

At the Cross Roads: 10 Years of Travel
Denis Stanley (Catholic), and Loretta Wholley (Catholic), presented the Executive Review Report.

Reflection and overview of the work of the NCCA.

Erica Mathieson (Social Justice Network), Graeme Mundine (NATSIEC), Elizabeth Harrington (entrance of Catholics to NCCA and what it has meant to the Catholic Church), and Eira Clapton (how we have worked together) spoke on arranged topics.

They asked us to write down and consider the following questions during the deliberations of the Forum:

1. Are the four objectives of the NCCA still relevant today?
2. How can we best use our resources?
3. How do Churches "own" the NCCA?

NCCA Executive Review Report (continuation of the process)

At the Cross Roads: Setting our Direction

Stephen Ogden (Anglican) led the session. He began by giving reflections and insights. For much of the process Forum members gathered in small groups and reflected on the Forum and NCCA. Reflections and suggestions from small groups were presented to the Forum, and will be taken to the Executive. (*see appendix J*)

Guest Speakers

Keynote Speaker: the Revd Dr Sam Kobia, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches

Living in a World of Change – Focus Session I (*see appendix F*)

Introduced by the President.

The President expressed thanks from the Forum and offered a gift in appreciation and a blessing. Sam responded.

The President acknowledged Mathews George, Asia Secretary of the WCC, (travelling with Dr Kobia) and offered a gift in appreciation of the time he has spent with us. Mathews responded and thanked us for our hospitality.

Speaker: Professor Lowitja O'Donaghue

Lowitja O'Donaghue launched the CD (DOV) Whispers of Peace.

Song "Let's do Justly", from the CD, was performed by Robyn Mann and Digby Hannah

Address: Living in a World of Change: Focus Session II (*see appendix G*)

Jill Tabart (Uniting) presented Lowitja with a gift and expressed the Forum and DOV's gratitude for her contribution.

Speaker: Dr Ted Boyce

Living in a World of Change - Focus Session III (*see appendix H*)

The President presented Dr Boyce with a gift and thanked him for his presentation.

Christian World Service Australia (Incorporation)

Peter Carnley (Anglican) presented the reasons for the need to incorporate and stressed this would not take CWS away from the NCCA. It does give legal definition and is a means of containing legal liability within the group. Directors can be made responsible to CWSA and at the same time it would give directors security against personal liability. (Refer to appendices 4, 5 and 6 of the Executive report in the Forum Working Papers). We should welcome accountability and best practice. We should not look upon us as being forced by Government to take this step. He continued with supporting comments and reference to support within Scripture for the decision to incorporate.

Gregor Henderson (CWS Chair) introduced the proposed Constitution – NCCA Christian World Service Limited. (*see appendix M*)

CWSA - Questions & Answers

Gregor responded to questions given on notice

1. technical questions re the constitution;

2. how will it effect partnerships with state ecumenical bodies etc? (Current intention is no change.);
3. is it possible for the General Secretary to be National Director of CWSA, to strengthen the relationship with the NCCA? (As now the CWSA everyday running will be by the CWSA Director. It is not the current thinking that the General Secretary would be the CWSA Director. Current thinking is that the new structure would free up the General Secretary from oversight of CWSA staff.);
4. what would be the public statement protocol? Defining this protocol will be one of the first jobs of the company.);
5. should there be a change to the NCCA constitution re public statement clause re CWSA? (Seen as unnecessary);
6. re Quorum. (Corporations act states 30%, did not see any reason to change the percentage even though the NCCA constitution says 50% for the NCCA); and
7. will there be an opportunity to have general comment, question, discussion and debate? (The President said we will do this at a later session when we have the answers to these specifically (green sheet) asked questions.)

CWSA – Discussion/Question Session

1. What kind of transfer of property would occur? Transfer property across? (Stamp duty would be too big a cost factor. Property will stay with the NCCA.);
2. Who will own the *Christmas Bowl* name? It is registered under the NCCA limited and is the registered name of two tax-deductible funds.);
3. How much of CWS needs to be incorporated? (It is all inter-related.)
4. What would be the impact of the relationship between NCCA & CWSA if the move to Canberra happens? Discussions on this are incomplete. NATSIEC have agreed to work with the NCCA in this. CWS are keen on the principal of NCCA relocating, though are not convinced that some operations would be better run from Canberra.);
5. Is it true that under current operations there is legal liability? (The buck would stop at the Executive.)

Comments from Forum members

1. Structure and membership – members of the NCCA are the Churches. The members of CWSA are not the Churches but individuals. They sign as individuals not as representatives. We haven't discussed the theological implications of this.
2. Limits the ability to fulfil its purpose as the NCCA. It is no longer 'us' acting together.
3. Links between NCCA and CWSA – NCCA will have no power over what CWSA will do. CWSA will not be open to direction by the NCCA.
4. Good will sometimes fails us – the constitution must bind us together. General Secretary of NCCA should remain as National Director of CWSA.
5. CWS and Christmas Bowl – will be competitors alongside all the other agencies for dollars and tendering for government funds.
6. There has been no theological discussion about this.
7. Who will make the decision about whether Christmas Bowl will remain with the NCCA?

Sandy Yule made several responsive comments, including that the theological basis was raised at Executive.