

Appendix IV

PRIORITIES AND ISSUES RAISED WITHIN SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON THE NCCA'S VISION AND OBJECTIVES

[NOTE: Specific strategies suggested by the small groups are inserted in italics.]

1. Specific on-going priorities from the ACC

- * Faith and Unity
- * Christian World Service
- * Aboriginal and Islander people

a] Objective [b] iv) was highlighted: "acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Islander people". Specific issues raised were:

- * What do we do with the Aboriginal and Islander vision statement?
- * That two positions on the Executive be reserved for representatives of the Aboriginal and Islander people.

It was recognised that fresh approaches ought to be adopted in respect of these three priorities.

2. Evangelism/evangelisation

* A total commitment in proclaiming the gospel is called for. This should involve supporting one another personally, in family life, in our society and world. This involves Christ being at the centre of all we do, as well as approaching them in an holistic way.

* Objective [a] ii) is central to the NCCA's role in taking up an evangelising role: "coming to know each other better in all respects, including the areas of spirituality, liturgy, theology, history, sociology and culture". This includes the NCCA sponsoring spiritual activities.

3. NCCA's advocacy role

* This was raised as an important one for the NCCA particularly on behalf of oppressed people, and especially women.

4. Relationships with people of other living faiths

* There is a lack of clarity of what this means. NCCA should enter into discussions within itself to clarify what is meant before entering into dialogue.

5. Deeper understanding

* The NCCA needs to be clearer about what objective [a] means: "to encourage and enable member churches to develop their existing relationship by..." It requires clarification about matters like faith, our relationship with the oppressed in Australia, and world-wide issues like the Middle East situation.

Courses in ecumenical theology, liturgy, ecumenism and spirituality should be mandatory in houses of formation and theological education.

The Society of Friends sponsors the Backhouse lecture on ecumenism.

Hold joint retreats and days of spiritual reflection.

6. Promoting the NCCA

- * This involves three aspects: public relations, the media and fund-raising.
- * Promotion of NCCA is critical at this stage among the decision-makers in each denomination,

among the denominations themselves in terms of their vision, story, culture, ethos, etc., and with the public.

Through church radio broadcasts and newsletters.

Public liturgical expressions of (the Australian Church for screening on television.

NCCA to advocate as a single voice with parliamentarians, for example, the Native Title experience.

7. Young people

* Several referred to the importance of the place of young people in the NCCA and in their role within the wider ecumenical movement.

Help young people come closer to the Lord, and to prepare themselves to be future Australians. Encourage the Inter-Orthodox Youth Network to have greater fellowship with young people across denominations.

Promote youth forums through the NCCA.

8. Relationships between State Councils of Churches and the NCCA

* State councils have been in existence for up to 25 years, and have a lot of experience, expertise and wisdom to offer the NCCA.

* How can state councils work cooperatively with the NCCA in terms of resourcing, networking, sharing wisdom, etc.

* Disappointment was expressed concerning the position state council staff are in at NCCA meetings, that is, in a non-speaking role [see constitution 9.07].

* State councils should be able to raise issues with and offer motions to the NCCA.

9. Upgrading of staff

* Raised in respect of Faith and Unity and Youth affairs.

10. NCCA meetings

* Official guests and observers be given the opportunity to speak.

* Time for greater reflection be allowed for in NCCA meetings.

11. Grassroots

Encourage our own people to experience and engage in ecumenical encounters.

Learn from parish-based rural ecumenical collaboration.

NCCA sponsor grassroots people involved in social and moral issues, sharing with each other, and feeding into the NCCA.

Personal contributions through meeting people amid getting to know each other.

Opportunities for church leaders amid people to attend each other's services and social functions, to preach and share fellowship.

NCCA foster and resource local grassroots activity through state ecumenical bodies.

Encourage people in mixed marriages to come together to talk.

12. NCCA and Commissions

That the NCCA be a model of church unity.

Use specific commissions of the NCCA to take up specific aspects of NCCA work.

Faith and Unity questions to be raised openly amid honesty and with integrity at all levels of church life.

Christian World Service and Australian Catholic Relief to work closely together to form a single entity with two appeals PROJECT COMPASSION in Lent and CHRISTMAS BOWL in Advent.

13. Specific concerns

Allow time for reflection in decision-making.

NCCA tint to lose its freedom to maintain a prophetic voice amid wisdom.

Encourage governing bodies of our churches to maintain financial commitment to NCCA.