

National Council of Churches in Australia

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020-2021



National Council of
Churches in Australia

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NCCA PRAYER

God of life, unity and peace,
 you have called us to be your people.
 Bring us to closer unity with you
 within the household of your Church.
 Direct our steps as we journey
 In the National Council of Churches
 in Australia,
 that we may become what you have
 called us to be;
 and that together we may walk
 in newness of life:
 new and old, east and west,
 indigenous and all
 who have gathered in this land
 from the corners of the earth.
 We ask this in the name of Jesus
 and through the grace and communion
 of the Holy Spirit. Amen



National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) was formed in 1994 as an unincorporated association, succeeding the Australian Council of Churches established in 1948.

NCCA was incorporated in June 2016 as a company limited by guarantee and it has 18 member churches:

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,
 Syrian Orthodox Church,
 The Salvation Army, and
 the Uniting Church in Australia

PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

"MAY THEY ALL BE ONE"

Jesus prays for our unity. John 17: 20
"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one".

Jesus prays that we will "become completely one". (vs. 23). Jesus knows that this will make the Gospel more readily believed.

Our history shows that disunity makes the Gospel harder for people to hear.

In my role as President of the NCCA I see many instances of this movement of the Holy Spirit, encouraging our deeper unity in a dangerously divided world.

The leaders of the Days of Prayer and Fasting have become friends on this same journey, thanks be to God.

Our unity requires that we bend a little towards each other.

So, then the Cross of one is our Cross to carry too; the joy of one is a joy we share; the longings of one are our longings too!

Thus together, as the saints convey, we humbly trust that God always has more to teach us and we always have more to learn!



This movement of the Spirit is showing us that our deeper unity is needed for the healing of many divisions.

"Abide in me" Jesus says to us in John 15 and every day!

Jesus is our unity. The way forward is for each of us to stay as close to Jesus as we can. Then practice the discipline of asking ourselves about our proposed words and actions - "will this build unity?"

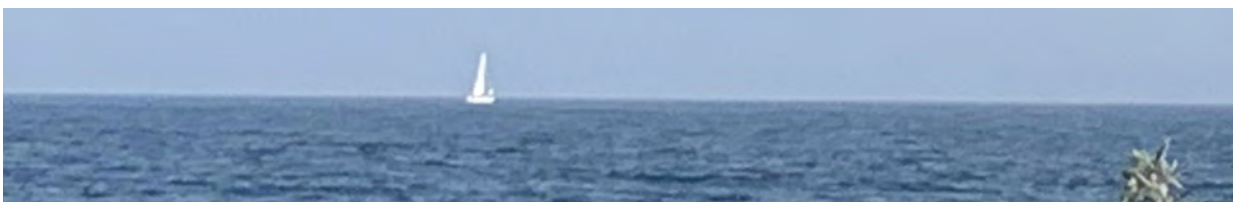


May I convey my gratitude to our Board and Staff for their faithful service throughout this demanding year.

Please be assured of my loving prayers as the NCCA's journey goes on.

With Jesus in our midst we know, yes, "Behold, I make all things new!" (Rev.21:5)

Bishop Philip Huggins
NCCA President (2016-2021)



A PRAYER FOR THESE DAYS

Gracious God,
We give thanks anew for our call to unity.
In Jesus' prayer, may we all be one.
We seek your grace, aware as we are of the consequences of division, so we can better build unity.
Guide us to be more aware of whatever hinders true harmony.
Help us make our best contribution to national unity and care for one another, especially amidst the anxieties of the current Coronavirus.
We pray our NCCA can better fulfil our unifying purpose in these troubled times.
Fill us with your Holy Spirit so we listen well, deepen friendships and are truly helpful.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

GENERAL SECRETARY

God-given time

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

As someone born, in Australia, during Vatican II and soon after the death of Pope John XXIII, I have grown up with the fruits of the subsequent decades of committed striving for Christian Unity among our Church traditions, even when not fully aware of my inheritance and the significance of our shared birth right as a child of God (Galatians 3:26).

It is a wonderful gift to be working with the NCCA and it has been a blessing to work with our Churches in the Council full-time during this second year of our global pandemic.

This year I have truly been aware of the term 'catholic' in our shared Nicene Creed and Apostolic Creed, meaning 'worldwide' and global. It is probably a stretch for some theologians to claim the term 'catholic' as synonymous to the concept of 'ecumenical' but it has been worthy of my reflection.

Meantime we have been reminded of our calling to be 'apostolic' in this time of a renewed viral pandemic and this has been a pastoral call to each one of us to minister to the isolated, lonely, vulnerable and our own fellow Christian ministers struggling with a loss of identity when traditional ministry had to change significantly this second year from a mere

"getting through" to 'not understanding where we are going and who we will be'. Rather we were asked to respond by "being there for others". (Mark 10: 35-45).

The inevitable acronym 'WWJD' (What Would Jesus Do?) in our trying times has seen us, at difficult junctures with limited resources requiring God-given creativity to work with and for the unemployed; the vaccine-hesitant, the households facing rental stress with risk of homelessness; people dealing with food shortages, mental health, family violence, social connection needs.

We were called through our shared creeds as a 'catholic and apostolic Church' to reach beyond to our 'God-given family' (Galatians 3:26-29) to those strangers in our neighbourhoods and communities in need: including temporary residents like international students, refugees and asylum seekers and those in our Pacific and Asian region suffering greater amount of illness and deaths from COVID-19 and facing unequal access to COVID-19 vaccinations.

We all found this second year, much, much harder than the last. But we have been reminded of our call as a 'catholic and apostolic Church' and we are faithful. God can use every and all time that we give.

Liz Stone





STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS 2019 - 2022



Encouraging relationships



Connection and fellowship



Witnessing together



Enabling and resourcing

FOCUS AREAS

A

Building stronger relationships with members, key partners & the public

B

Coordinating member networks for mutual support & participation

C

Being a prophetic voice in society and to one another

D

Ensuring a strong, sustainable & relevant organisation

BASIS

National Council of Churches in Australia 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 toward the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service, to the glory of One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

NCCA LTD BOARD

The NCCA Ltd Board met virtually in July, September and October 2020 and then again in February, April and June 2021.

As at 30 June 2021, NCCA Directors were:



Bishop Philip Huggins

NCCA President



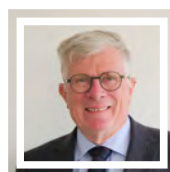
Rob Floyd

Uniting Church in Australia



Anne Hywood

Anglican Church of Australia



Rev John Gilmore

Churches of Christ in Australia



Geoff Officer

Catholic Church in Australia



Thomas Ling

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia



V Rev Fr Abanoub Attalla

Coptic Orthodox Church



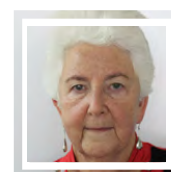
Felicity McCallum

First Nations Advisor



Fr Anastasios Bozikis

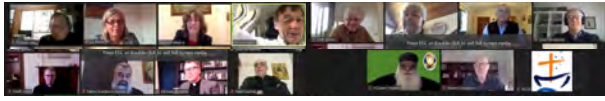
Greek Orthodox Church Diocese of Australia



Ann Zubrick

Religious Society of Friends Australia (Quakers)

NATIONAL CHURCH LEADERS



The NCCA General Secretary facilitates meetings of National Church Leaders. These meetings are for support, getting to know one another and topical discussion.

In 2020-2021 with the take up of online facilities, these have become more frequent.

National Church Leaders met on 22 September and 11 November 2020 and on 23 March and 22 June 2021.

MEMBERS

The NCCA attended:

Assyrian Church of the East

St Nisbis College

Theological College Opening Ceremony
28 Feb 2021



above - Bishop Mar Benyamin Elya, Principal with NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone

WELCOME

Rev Rob Nyhuis

National Chair
Churches of Christ
in Australia



Rev Sharon Hollis

Assembly President
Uniting Church in
Australia



FAREWELL

We have been blessed to work with:

Dr Deidre Palmer

Uniting Church in
Australia



**"Rejoice always, pray continually,
give thanks in all circumstances; for
this is God's will for you in Christ
Jesus."**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Prayer for Justice for All:

God, you have given all peoples one common origin.

It is your will that they be gathered together as one family in yourself.

Fill our hearts with the fire of your love and with the desire to ensure justice for all.



OUR CHURCHES

Responding with prayer, resources and speaking out for justice

Lutheran Church of Australia

Reconciliation Action Plan



The Anglican Church of Australia

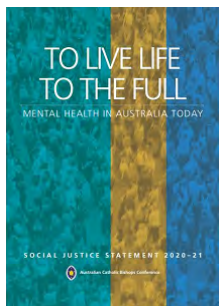
National Anglican Family Violence Project



Catholic Church in Australia

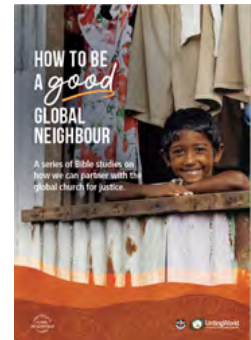
To Live Life to the Full:
Mental Health in Australia
today.

The 2020-21 Social Justice
Statement from the
Australian Catholic
Bishop's Conference
(ACBC) Office for Social
Justice.



The Uniting Church in Australia

Child Safe resources
in community
languages &
How to be a good
GLOBAL
NEIGHBOUR



OUR PRAYERS



Through the year we prayed for:

Peace and security in times of unrest and disruption in:

Myanmar, Jerusalem, Syria, Armenia, and
Ethiopia

Medical and vaccine assistance during COVID-19 surge in:

India, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea,
Indonesia

National Prayer to end the Pandemic

Let us pray

*"Gracious God, trusting in your providence and presence,
we continue our prayers for an end to this pandemic.
We pray for your strengthening of those dear souls
offering costly leadership during this crisis.
We pray for all who are ill.
We pray for those anxious about getting ill.
We pray for those full of grief and remember those who
have died.*

*We pray for your grace to continue sustaining us as we
do what we can to end this pandemic.*

*Your compassionate, peaceful and creative response to
many crises is our example, as we read the Gospels and
seek to live in Holy Spirit.*

*As we worship in resurrection faith, we offer our
heartfelt prayer in your Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ
our Lord. AMEN.*

ASSEMBLIES

Reconciliation as mission for Australian Churches

29 October 2020



Sharing and discussion focussed on the importance of relationship building and yarning and why they are central to our churches reconciliation with our First Nation Peoples.

Facilitated by:

- Rev Glenn Loughrey, Anglican Church of Australia
- Lucy Davis, The Salvation Army
- Pastor Darren Garlett, Seventh-Day Adventist Church
- Marilyn Wall, Lutheran Church of Australia

Reflection in a time of Pandemic

19 May 2021

During 2020, the church delegates of NCCA's Faith and Unity Commission (F&U) identified a desire for reflection and sharing about the impact/consequences of disruption and preparing for the future led by the Spirit (John 15:8)

Led by representatives from The Salvation Army and Lutheran Church.

The Salvation Army



Major Clayton Spence

The Lutheran Church of Australia



Dr Chris Materne

Prof Wendy Meyer



NCCA AGM Panel Presentation

Young Adult- Christian Youth Summit

28 October 2020

Facilitated by:

- Aaron Glover, Director, Lutheran Youth of QLD
- Christopher Knott, QLD Baptist
- Melissa Ledwich, Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, Youth Evangelisation Office

The panel were part of a Queensland Churches Together group that organised a Youth Summit in 2018.



The NCCA granted funds to a Queensland Churches Together group to produce resources that were accessible to all churches.

The video resources can be found on the NCCA Young Adult & Ecumenism webpage:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/partnerships/resources-for-youth-summit>



ROUNDTABLES

NCCA in partnership with the Doing Justice Team of the Anglican Diocese of Southern Queensland (ASQ) ran two virtual Roundtable discussions with funding assistance from a 2019 grant of the Glenburnie Program Fund administered by NCCA.



Climate and Environmental Justice Roundtables were:

- 29 July 2020
- 16 September 2020



Workshop

April 2021, following the Climate and Environmental Justice Roundtables, a further workshop was held, in partnership with ASQ.



OUR ACTIONS

In addition to working with our networks on the care of creation, the NCCA was actively involved in speaking out for the voiceless and standing in solidarity with those left out. The following is a small sample of the range of issues we addressed during the year.



Bell ringing

Earth Overshoot day, 22 August 2020.

Right, General Secretary Liz Stone with Fr Tru MSC.



MEETING THE FOUNDERS OF i4giveday



"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you"
Ephesians 4:32

March 4 Justice



Marching in Sydney for gender equality, on Monday in black, 15 March 2021

#Enough is enough.

#NoChildLeftBehind Campaign

NCCA supports the Refugee Council's joint statement directed to the Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Minister for Families and Social Services Anne Ruston

#EndCOVIDforAll Campaign

NCCA President, Bishop Philip Huggins added his signature to this letter and become an Ambassador in the campaign



ACRT

The Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT) has been very active during the last year.



Over this period, we have focused on advocacy in several key areas:

- Seeking appropriate government support and fair treatment for refugees and asylum seekers in Australia on temporary visas, impacted in a number of ways, including being unable to work, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Advocating to government for fair and humane treatment of refugees from Afghanistan who are seeking asylum here in Australia but have not been granted residency and are now unable to return to Afghanistan.
- Advocating to government to have a special humanitarian intake of refugees from Afghanistan

One highlight was a visit by the Taskforce to Federal Minister Alex Hawke's parliamentary office to begin the process of building relationship, expressing our concerns, and offering our willingness to work together for a better approach to refugee resettlement which includes stronger community participation and sponsorship.



ACRT representatives in the office of UNHCR Resident Representative, Canberra.

I am greatly appreciative of the faithful and committed participation of the members of the Taskforce. Many of them are actively involved in supporting refugees in the community and share their experience and expertise with us. I am also thankful for the excellent support provided by Liz Stone and other NCCA staff.

Rob Floyd, ACRT Chair



ACRT representatives at Parliament House with Dr Deidre Palmer, UCA President (front left) and Jeremy Jones, ECAJ (back centre-right)

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/acrt-2>

ACT FOR PEACE

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. It is also a member of the Church Agency Network in Australia and a member of the ACT Alliance, a coalition of churches and faith-based organisations working together in more than 120 countries.



In FY21 Act for Peace was pleased to welcome our new Chair, Ms Ginie Udy, and progressed plans to appoint a new Director.

Act for Peace also finalised our new Strategic Framework, which focuses on complementing the knowledge, skills and expertise of displaced people and our local partners; responds to the growing global displacement crisis; and builds on Act for Peace's unique expertise in order to make the most significant impact we can in the next five years.

Janet Cousens, Chief Executive Officer



ACT FOR PEACE

A year of COVID, conflict and climate related disaster

FY21 was a tumultuous year for many of Act for Peace's partners as they responded to the impact of COVID-19, many working in countries which also experienced increases in civil war and localised conflict, and the devastating impact of climate change.



Pamodi* and her husband fled to India during the Sri Lankan civil war. With support from our local partner, OFERR, they were able to return to their land in Sri Lanka and begin to produce enough food to eat, as well as a surplus to sell to earn an income. (Credit Act for Peace)

* name changed to protect privacy.

Strong partnerships and an ongoing commitment to collaboration ensured that well designed programs and organisational strengthening activities delivered vital services to communities

CHRISTMAS BOWL

Even though COVID-19 meant many churches are unable to meet in person in 2020, more than 1,200 congregations across Australia shared God's love through the Christmas Bowl.



Blessing of the Christmas Bowls ceremony at St James Church in Sydney before the pandemic. (Credit Act for Peace)

Act for Peace focused on collaborating with partners to alter program plans accordingly, to increase resourcing, and to advocate for change.



A training course run by Act for Peace's local partner in Jordan, DSPR., to help refugee women start their own businesses to provide additional income for their families. (Credit Act for Peace)

Advocacy initiatives drew on the experience of our partners, and continue to contribute to the development of sustainable outcomes.



Faizah* and other women in her community are learning to make organic fertilizer and pesticides to help them grow their own food..(Credit Act for Peace)

* name changed to protect privacy.

We remain grateful for our community of individuals, churches and other institutions who partner with us as we pursue peace with justice and dignity for communities threatened by conflict and disaster.

We look forward to the years ahead, and to continued partnership with the Australian church community and with our local partners. Janet Cousens, Chief Executive Officer

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE *act*alliance

<https://www.actforpeace.org.au/>

FAITH AND UNITY

Due to COVID restrictions the Faith and Unity Commission met once, on 8 and 9 April 2021. This was a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners present in Melbourne and others online to allow all to participate.

The Faith and Unity Commission oversee the preparation of Australian worship resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, held in the Southern Hemisphere in the week between Ascension and Pentecost feast days of the Western Churches.

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/faith-unity>

FIRST NATIONS

First Nation Advisor

Felicity McCallum was appointed to the NCCA Board as First Nation Advisor, She is an Awabakal woman and faithful Catholic. It has been a blessing to have her insight and scholarship available.

MEDIA RELEASE

- for 26 January

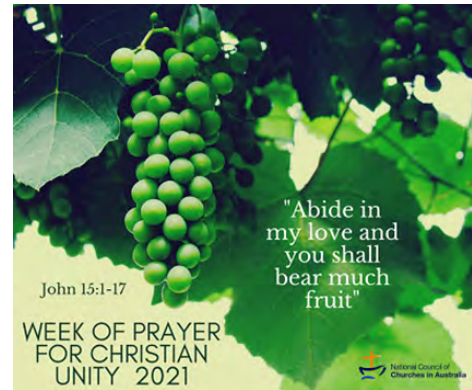
19 January 2021

Uluru Statement from the Heart

Writing to the Prime Minister, Hon Scott Morrison, President of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), Bishop Philip Huggins suggested "that for this January 26, you might announce a reconsideration of the **Uluru Statement from the Heart.**"



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



16 - 23 May 2021

An Assembly, Reflection in a time of Pandemic was proposed for May 2021, during the WoPCU and based on its theme:

"Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit" John 15:1-17

Reconciliation as a mission for Australian Churches



This was an opportunity to yarn and learn of the importance of relationship building. It took the form a guided discussion with the assistance of representatives from four Churches.

RECONCILIATION WEEK

To walk this way

A reflection on Reconciliation by Felicity McCallum, NCCA First Nation Advisor

"There is something irresistible about the place of forgiveness and reconciliation".

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/first-nations>

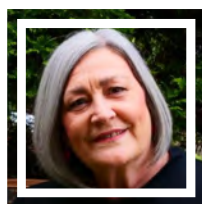


SAFE CHURCH PROGRAM

The Safe Church Program (SCP) is an initiative of the NCCA.

It is our core business to strengthen relationships across churches and Christian communities and with government agencies and other bodies to create safer organisations.

STAFF



We said goodbye to National Coordinator Laura Lindsay-Cregan (above left) in November 2020, along with Administrative assistant Deb Duncan (right).

The NCCA is very grateful to Emma Parr, having stepped into the role of Program Coordinator in 2021 from April - June.



NCCA SCP Resource Hub

The Resource Hub was launched together with a new look website page in October 2020.

Safe Church Awareness training workbooks were updated for each state and PDF copies are available for purchase through the SCP online shop.

<https://www.ncca.org.au/departments/safe-church-program>

CPSL and NCCA partnership

A formal six-month partnership agreement between the NCCA Safe Church Program and Catholic Professional Standards Ltd (CPSL) was completed in August 2020.



The partnership:

- delivered five joint webinars (three in the series on Grooming Awareness, and two in the Managing High Risk Individuals series)
- reached more than 450 participants from at least 18 different Christian groups.
- resulted in the pilot delivery of an adapted Introductory Session for Leaders.

NCCA Child Safety Framework



In the 2019-2020 period we engaged the services of Child Wise to consult with NCCA Safe Church Program members to develop our National Framework for Child Safety.

The Framework encompasses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Royal Commission recommendations and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The resource was launched in October 2020 and is now available on the Program's online shop.

<https://www.ncca.org.au/national-child-safety-framework/national-child-safety-framework>



AEON

Australian Ecumenical Officers Network

Representatives from Tasmania, Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australian, Victoria and New South Wales and Western Australia meet to share and exchange ideas.

AVECA

Australian Volunteer Emergency Chaplain Alliance

The Alliance allows for the practical engagement of the Churches with Federal and State governments and community and raises the value and importance of spiritual care in community recovery.



AVECA supports capability and capacity building through coordinated and networked resources in the churches

- Victoria's VCCEM
- Tasmania's TCCEM
- New South Wales' DRCN
- ACT's ACTDRCN
- South Australia's D&DRMSA
- emergency ministries in QLD, NT and WA.

INTERFAITH

The NCCA continues to join in discussions with other faiths through the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews (ANDCMJ).

PACIFIC, ASIA & INTERNATIONAL

The NCCA meets with:

- Pacific Conference of Churches-PCC
- Christian Conference of Asia - CCA
- World Council of Churches - WCC

During the continued pandemic, all interactions have been online.



Above, Bishop Philip Huggins joins online prayers for Myanmar with members of the Christian Conference of Asia, (CCA).

ECUMENICAL FUNDING

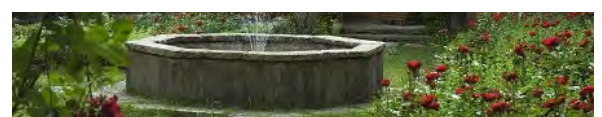
RONALD WILSON ECUMENICAL LEADERSHIP FUND

The Ecumenical Leadership Fund assists young people eager to enlarge their ecumenical experience and leadership skills. It helps those who have exhibited leadership potential to develop their gifts and focus their vision.

No new applications were received In the financial year 2020-2021

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about/ecumenical>

The NCCA is still holding approved funding for the previous year, granted for attendance at the Receptive Ecumenism Conference in Sigtuna, Sweden which has been postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. A new date has been announced for 2022 and the funding remains available for the applicant.





FUNDS

GLENBURNIE PROGRAM

The funding program takes its name from a property in Western Australia.

Funding from this program is intended to "provide resources for the churches and the community on issues relating to a just, participatory and sustainable society."

For more information on the Program guidelines and the application form please visit the NCCA website:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about/ecumenical/item/178-glenburnie-programme>



Glenburnie Program
Towards a Just, Participatory
and Sustainable Society

In the financial year 2020-2021 funding was given to one project:

NSW Ecumenical Council

\$25,000

The Family and Domestic Violence program of NSW Ecumenical Council Inc. To conduct workshops in local parishes for clergy and lay persons in leadership positions to provide information about identifying and responding to parishioners who are living with family or domestic violence.



ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DEVELOPMENT FUND

A tax-deductible fund set up to assist Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples by giving small, usually one-off grants for community development projects. For more information visit the NCCA website page:

<https://www.ncca.org.au/about-us-1/development-fund>

In the financial year 2020-2021 funding was given to three projects, all experiencing delays and disruption due to ongoing COVID restrictions. Each has advised that completion is expected by the end of 2021.

The three projects funded are:

SURRENDER CO VIC

\$3,467.00.

Indigenous Leadership Development- Christian Coaching with Young Emerging Leaders Project



UNITING ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS – SOUTH AUSTRALIA

\$5,000.00

The Vision, History and Theology of the UAICC.



ST OSWALD'S ANGLICAN CHURCH GLEN IRIS, VIC

\$5,000.00.

The School and Parish Aboriginal Awareness Education Project



St. Oswald's
ANGLICAN CHURCH
GLEN IRIS

MARTUNG UPAH APPEAL

This is the major fundraising appeal of the NCCA. Income received from this appeal allows us to fund the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Development Fund.



<https://www.ncca.org.au/martung-upah-appeal-2>

ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

National Council of Churches in Australia

*"And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus
Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us."
(1 John 3:23 NRSV)*



www.ncca.org.au



(+61 2) 9299 2215



Secretariat@ncca.org.au



Locked Bag Q199
QUEEN VICTORIA BUILDING
NSW 1230

NCCA's audited financial statements for 2020-2021 are available on request:
secretariat@ncca.org.au

ABN: 47 000 391 104