

STRATEGIC PLANNING 2019 – 2022

Forum Consultation Document

1. BASIS¹

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.

2. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

NCCA's Objects and Purposes (a) to (g)² have been grouped into four strategic objectives as follow:

2.1 ENCOURAGING – building ecumenical trust, formation

- (a) 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 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.

2.2 WITNESSING TOGETHER – prophetic voice, public voice

- (b) 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 against injustice, violence and oppression
 - (iv) acting in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and
 - (v) working to uphold the dignity of all people and the flourishing of all creation.

¹ Clause 2 of National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) Constitution, as amended 3 November 2017

² Clause 7 of NCCA Constitution, *ibid.*

2.3 CONNECTION AND FELLOWSHIP

(c) 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

(d) Undertake joint activities as determined from time to time by the Member Churches.

2.4 ENABLING AND RESOURCING

(e) Establish any number of subsidiary companies for charitable purposes

(f) Act as the member of, establish and manage any number of overseas aid agencies, and

(g) Establish and act as a trustee of one of more charitable trust funds.

3. CURRENT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES UNDER EACH STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

3.1 ENCOURAGING – building ecumenical trust, ecumenical formation

- Faith and Unity Commission (2 meetings per year)
 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (between Ascension and Pentecost)
- National Church Leader meetings – previously known as Heads of Churches (2 per year)
- NCCA Assemblies (3 per year)
 - Young Adult Formation Roundtable 2018 (follow up from 2017 NCCA Assembly)
- Annual ecumenical studies seminar (June 2018 + 2019) – Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

3.2 WITNESSING TOGETHER – prophetic voice, public voice

- **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (NATSIEC) – currently not meeting and not staffed since 2015.**
- Act for Peace Limited
 - Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT)
 - Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)
- Safe Church Network – child safeguarding and implementation of recommendations of Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
 - 4 x NCCA Assemblies on RC recommendations 2018-19
 - Bi-annual Conference 2019

- Justice Network (incorporating Eco-mission Network mandate from 2018)
 - Research and publication – What do the churches say about peacemaking? (2017)
 - Eco-justice Roundtable (2018)
- Community Consultations
 - Sudanese and South Sudanese Church Leaders (2018)
 - Sudanese and South Sudanese Women Church Leaders (2019)
- *Emerging Issues*
 - *Family Violence (2019 Roundtable)*
 - *Elder Abuse*

3.3 CONNECTION AND FELLOWSHIP

- Member and Observer Churches meet at National Church Leader meetings
- NCCA Assemblies in 2018-19 attended by Member, Observer and other Churches

- Australian Ecumenical Officers Network (State and Territory Council officers)
- Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture (ACC&C) – Centre for Ecumenical Studies

- Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews (ANDCMJ)
- Australian Partnership of Religious Organizations (APRO)

- Christian Conference of Asia - member
- Pacific Conference of Churches – not an active relationship
- World Council of Churches – observer

- *Emerging*
 - Australian Volunteer Emergency Chaplaincy Alliance (formed under NCCA in 2018)
 - FRANC (2018) – Financial Representatives of Australian National Churches meeting
 - Insurance & Risk
 - Banking & Finance
 - Property (Development & Management)
 - Corporate Services (IT, Legal, HR & Procurement)
 - FIRM (2019) – Finance, Insurance and Risk Managers meeting

3.4 ENABLING AND RESOURCING

- NCCA Limited
 - Board of Directors

- Funds
 - Glenburnie Program – activities to promote ‘Just Participatory Sustainable Society’
 - Ronald Wilson Ecumenical Leadership – study assistance for young adults under 35
 - Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Development Fund – community development
 - Refugee Reserves – designated investments based on grants for Australian resettlement.

4. NCCA MEMBER ENGAGEMENT PROJECT: FINAL REPORT* (December 2018)

(*Document available to download from 10th NCCA Forum website)

4.1 RESEARCH PROJECT

Rev Janet Woodlock of the Churches of Christ was contracted by the NCCA Board in March 2018 to undertake a listening project with members in the lead up to the 10th NCCA Forum in order to inform strategic planning and directions for the Council. The Report was delivered at the end of December 2018 and the recommendations considered by the Board at their planning meeting on 29-30 January 2019.

4.2 KEY PROJECT RESULT AREAS

- a) Consult with NCCA stakeholders, especially representatives of member churches and National Church Leaders in order to identify key needs, hopes for NCCA, ways each member might contribute further to NCCA.
- b) Interview representatives of selected non-member churches.
- c) Interview selected other NCCA stakeholders, such as Chairs of the Commissions, senior staff, selected Board members, and State Council of Churches officers.
- d) Report findings to NCCA Board to assist in refining the NCCA strategic directions.

5. MAPPING OF REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS TO NCCA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

5.1 ENCOURAGING – building ecumenical trust, ecumenical formation

Recommendation Two:

That the NCCA Board task the Faith and Unity Commission to write a condensed 1500 word document explaining the key ideas of ecumenism, preferably for discussion and adoption at the next Forum.

The Board refers the recommendation to the 10th Forum for inclusion in the workplan of the Faith and Unity Commission in the next triennium.

Recommendation Thirteen:

That NCCA facilitate more engagement with young adults

- Explore receptive ecumenism with young adults based on the model of QCT
- Ensure that all its programs and activities consider input and the perspective of young adults

- Potentially consider quotes by young people in publications and communications
- Consider representation at Forum, Assemblies and the Board
- Invest in ecumenical formation and mentorship.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

Recommendation Six

6a) That the Board clarify, document and communicate how decision making operates at the Forum, the purpose of the NCCA Assemblies, and the role of the national church leaders' meetings.

6b) That the NCCA General Secretary continue to take the initiative to organise and support national church leaders' meetings.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

The Board is proposing constitutional amendments to the role and purpose of the NCCA Assembly in the appointment of the President (Clause 19.1) and General Secretary (Clause 6.1 Definitions) for the consideration of the members at the AGM on 30 October 2019.

There will be allocated discussion during the 10th Forum for reviewing the first three years of the new NCCA governance structure. The Board is proposing that NCCA use a General Meeting in the first half of the calendar year and the AGM in the second half of the year as opportunities for reporting to member churches on the business of the Council.

5.2 WITNESSING TOGETHER – prophetic voice, public voice

Recommendation Eleven:

11a) That the NCCA initiate a discussion with national church leaders about seeding new networks of specialist ministry leaders (eg FRANC, FIRM and Young Adult Formation in 2018) and seek feedback on a networking model more like a 'community of practice'.

The Board refers this for consideration at the 10th Forum.

11b) That the NCCA discuss with National Church Leaders connecting church indigenous ministry leaders.

Connecting church indigenous ministry leaders will be discussed at the 10th Forum.

5.3 CONNECTION AND FELLOWSHIP

Recommendation Three:

That one of the measurable priorities for the NCCA should be relationship-building activities with and between the member churches.

The Board agrees with this recommendation and intends to include this in revised Position/Role Descriptions for the President and General Secretary.

Recommendation Four:

4a) That the NCCA adopt facilitation of relationships and collaboration across the wider ecumenical movement as a strategic priority.

4b) As expressions of this priority, the NCCA might assist in organising AEON leaders with NCCA staff, and consider how to strengthen the ties with the WCC and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture into the future.

4c) That the NCCA recommend a conversation between AEON and an Act for Peace representative around mutual support.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

Recommendation Ten:

That the NCCA Board develop a long-term strategy to build relationships with non-member churches.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

5.5 ENABLING AND RESOURCING

Recommendation One:

1a) That the NCCA Board reflect on the NCCA Basis and Objects and draft a purpose, plan and list of priorities for circulation to the member churches for discussion at the Forum.

This planning document is to assist discussion on strategic direction and priorities at the 10th NCCA Forum.

1b) The Board might consider re-expressing the NCCA Basis and Objects in the form of a draft mission and vision statement for consideration by the member churches.

The Board refers this for consideration at the 10th NCCA Forum.

Recommendation Five:

5a) Following a process of clarification of the purpose and priorities of NCCA, that the Board invest in a communication review and new communication strategy. The time frame for this will depend on the progress of Recommendation One.

5b) The Board might consider staffing a communication position for NCCA (potentially sharing time and expense with a state council and/or Act for Peace and/or a member church) at some point in the future.

5c) That the NCCA initiate a conversation with the Bible Society around public faith.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

Recommendation Seven:

Board Development

- That the Board engage in self-reflection on its distinct purpose and the tasks of Directors.
- That the NCCA Board evaluate its skill needs and plan professional development training accordingly.
- That the NCCA Board consider adding communication to its skills matrix.
- That the NCCA Board develop an induction process for new Directors. This should include governance training for Directors who have no prior Board experience or relevant training.
- That the NCCA Board develop a recruitment and succession planning strategy, conscious of skill gaps identified and the need for age and gender diversity.
- That the NCCA Board develop a risk matrix and provide a regular risk report at Board meetings.

The Board has established a Board Governance and Development sub-committee and Terms of Reference were approved at the NCCA Board meeting on 20 March 2019. The sub-committee will pick up the points listed above.

Recommendation Eight:

8a) That the Board clarify the process for identifying potential NCCA Presidents.

Proposed constitutional amendment will commence this process of clarification (mentioned above at Recommendation Six, page 5).

8b) That the Board consider splitting the role of President if required to ensure both relational and governance functions are performed with excellence.

The Board Governance and Development sub-committee will review the existing Constitutional provisions – as Clause 38.1 provides for the President not to be Chairperson of the Board if unable or unwilling.

Recommendation Nine:

9a) That the Board identify and rank priorities for a future General Secretary role after developing a strategic plan, and draft a job description with clear organisational expectations.

The Board is in agreement with this recommendation and has formed an Appointment Committee to undertake this following the 10th Forum.

9b) That the Board consider investing in professional support for the General Secretary (examples: executive coaching, supervision, support groups, a professional development budget).

This is already available.

Recommendation Twelve:

At some point in the next triennium, that the Board discuss options to diversify NCCA income.

This recommendation was received by the Board.

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