

# 2023-2024 Annual Review



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*

**This past year we have been praying for:**

- The Voice Referendum, and a commitment to the journey of healing with First Nations
- A just peace in Israel and Palestine
- Kanaky - Nouvelle-Calédonie
- Iraqi Christians - for their safety and future in country
- for those displaced by ongoing war and violence, especially Sudan, Myanmar, Ukraine

We continue to pray for the countries in the WCC Weekly Prayer Cycle, our State and Territory ecumenical colleagues, our partners in the Pacific, Asia and worldwide.

# President's reflection



This year the NCCA celebrated 30 years of activity. Built on the foundations of bodies that have gone before, we are a continuing witness of churches committed to each other and engaged together for the sake of the Australian community.

The close of 2023 came with levels of great sadness for many of us. This was in part due to the depth of the impact of the defeat of the Voice referendum for our Aboriginal peoples which was underestimated. The NCCA is keenly aware that the First Peoples of Australia struggle, at times, to be heard and understood. An important event in 2024 was the Indigenous Theological Conference, *'Finding our Tribal Voice'* held in Melbourne in February. The conference closed with a series of statement from the non-indigenous church leaders who attended the conference and made commitments to listen to the voices of Australia's Indigenous people, with care, sensitivity and openness.

The second sadness that continues to be with us is the way that the war in Gaza is resulting in terrible suffering for the civilian community and it seems that peace with justice is a long way off. The war and the taking of sides has resulted in the break down in the formal inter-faith dialogues in Australia. It is good that some local conversations continue and we long for a space where we peoples of different faiths can dialogue with care, understanding and openness.

In June, the 11th National Forum of the NCCA provided an important opportunity to reflect on the past and to shape ourselves for our continuing journey. We were inspired by Rev Dr Jerry Pillay's keynote presentation *'Christianity Matters'*, the text of which is available on the NCCA Website. He describes the poly crises we are facing and referenced the statement from

*May the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in your faith that the power of the Holy Spirit will remove all bounds to your hope.*  
Romans 15:13

the 2022 WCC General Assembly: *"We live and witness in a world which is at the same time God's beautiful creation and broken by ecological crisis, war, pandemic, systemic poverty, racism, gender-based violence, human rights violations, and many other sufferings"*.

He then addressed how we as Christian communities can respond and address such overwhelming matters with these words, *'The hope that we find in the love of God and in the Resurrected Lord of Life can counter our temptation to disillusion and despair. Based on this hope, our public witness and advocacy for peace, justice, and reconciliation present a moral compass and call to conscience for the world. They demonstrate to everyone that life and love will triumph over death and greed.'*

This provided a very helpful background to our exploration of the future priorities and points of focus for the NCCA. We explored opportunities for the future in an environment of confidence in each other and in our faith in Jesus Christ. Such confidence is captured in an affirmation we make to each other as Christian communities; **'we are better together!'**

Yes it may seem slogan like, and it is also an affirmation that in our work for justice, peace and compassion we are better together. The 11th Forum identified priority points of focus for the future and affirmed values that guide us in our work.

The work of the NCCA includes Act for Peace, our participation in the Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network and engagement with the Christian Conference of Asia and partnership with the World Council of Churches and State Ecumenical bodies.

In closing let me express my appreciation to Elizabeth Stone, NCCA General Secretary, for her gracious and positive leadership of the NCCA team. Thanks also to the rest of our staff for the ways they support the NCCA. Thank you also to the members of the NCCA Board for their wisdom, insightfulness and commitment to the NCCA.

**Rev John Gilmore**  
**NCCA President**



During the 11th National Forum in June 2024, participants reaffirmed our calling to be on a pilgrimage of hope together, in common witness, proclamation and mission that is rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ. More than ever our churches and Christian communities are to be a source of unity in our world, for humanity and for creation.

Together we affirmed a **Vision** for the next three years:

*The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) is a communion of national churches sharing a common faith in Jesus Christ and together contributing a future of hope, justice and peace for all people in the land now called Australia.*

And we affirmed our **Mission**:

*As Christian communities of Faith, Hope and Love, committed to following Christ and serving to the glory of One God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit:*

*The NCCA brings churches together in Australia to encounter each other with openness and respect and through praying together, listening and learning from each other, seek to address the common concerns of our communities, acting for peace with justice.*

**Our 2024-27 strategy is built on three key pillars:**

**Purpose Pillar 1 – Deep Listening and Accompaniment**

AIM To listen deeply to the Holy Spirit present amongst us, listen to each other across our Churches especially to young people, First Nations, to the voice of the poor and the cry of the earth, to people of other faiths and people of goodwill so as to discern when and how we are being called to act together to give witness to the Gospel message of love and hope.

**Purpose Pillar 2 – Prophetic Voice (Ecumenical Advocacy)**

The connection between Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 is that through the deep listening and accompaniment activities that initiatives and actions for transforming situations of injustice will emerge. AIM Bring together policy and advocacy work being done by Church and Christian organisations and unite our voices in messages of hope, love and reconciliation in working for justice and peace.

**Purpose Pillar 3 – Ecumenical Formation, Education and Communications**

AIM To raise awareness of the importance of ecumenism among the members of our churches and embed it as integral to proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

There is much to do and new groups to form in order to energise our mission and purpose. I thank those ‘giants’ on whose shoulders we stand as we go forward in a new triennium.

***“I feel blessed to be with the NCCA supporting our national churches in striving for visible unity and common witness to God’s saving love, compassion, mercy and justice in and for our Australian communities.”***

**Liz Stone**  
**NCCA General Secretary**



**Christian Unity - John 17: 20-23**

*‘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. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

Ensuring a strong, sustainable & relevant organisation

# COUNCIL

## DEVELOPMENT



Ensuring a strong, sustainable & relevant organisation



**Rev John Gilmore**  
Churches of Christ in Australia

## NCCA LTD BOARD

As at 30 June 2024, NCCA Directors were:



**Rob Floyd**  
Uniting Church in Australia



**Anne Hywood**  
Anglican Church of Australia



**Geoff Officer**  
Catholic Church in Australia



**Thomas Ling**  
Chinese Methodist Church in Australia



**V Rev Fr Dr Abanoub Attalla**  
Coptic Orthodox Church



**Ann Zubrick**  
Religious Society of Friends Australia (Quakers)



**Commissioner Miriam Glyuas**  
The Salvation Army Australia



**Bishop Bartholomew**  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

**Enabling and Resourcing**  
Goal – Sustained member confidence in the value of NCCA

### NCCA President

Rev John Gilmore (Churches of Christ) is President and Board Chair, since October 2021.

### The Board of Directors

The NCCA Ltd Board has provided strong support and guidance, steering the NCCA through the past year. They met virtually in July and October 2023, and then again in February, April and June 2024. In November 2023, a retreat was held in Sydney to discuss outcomes from the stakeholder survey which would inform the work of the upcoming Forum.

We welcomed new Director - Bishop Bartholomew of Charioupolis (Greek Orthodox Church) in November 2023.

### General Secretary

Elizabeth (Liz) Stone was appointed to the role of General Secretary in May 2020. In September 2023, the Board renewed her contract for a second three-year term.

### Staffing

Ms Noelene Osora, Executive Assistant/Communications marked nine years with NCCA in May 2024.

Oliver Slewa, joined us in January 2024 for a 12 month term as Policy and Project Officer.

### Finance

Management of the NCCA finances is undergoing a transition from being part of the Act for Peace financial management system to administration by an external accounting firm. We thank Ms Analee Yang for her faithful service in administering NCCA's finances for over 14 years.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

The strategic plan 2019-2024 had four areas of activity:

- Encouraging Relationships
- Connection and fellowship
- Witnessing together
- Enabling and resourcing

## 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.

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

### Member Churches as of June 30 2024

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

Ensuring a strong, sustainable & relevant organisation

## 3 decades of Ecumenical Leadership

### NCCA General Secretaries



**Revd David Gill**

Uniting Church in Australia 1994 - 2001



**Revd John Henderson**

Lutheran Church of Australia 2002 - 2008



**Revd Tara Curlewis**

Uniting Church in Australia 2009 - 2014



**Sr Elizabeth Delaney**

Catholic Church in Australia 2015 - 2018



**Elizabeth (Liz) Stone**

from May 2020  
(Interim General Secretary 2018 - 2020)

### NCCA Presidents

**Archbishop Aghan Baliozian**

Armenian Apostolic Church 1994 - 1997



**Archbishop John Bathersby**

Catholic Church in Australia 1997 - 2000



**Revd Dr Lance Steicke**

Lutheran Church of Australia 2000 - 2003



**Revd Prof James Haire**

Uniting Church in Australia 2003 - 2006



**The Rt Revd Richard Appleby**

Anglican Church in Australia 2006 - 2009



**Bishop Michael Putney**

Catholic Church in Australia 2009 - 2013



**Revd Dr Mike Semmler**

Lutheran Church of Australia 2013 - 2016



**Bishop Philip Huggins**

Anglican Church in Australia 2016 - 2021



**Revd John Gilmore**

Churches of Christ in Australia 2021 -



# Our beginning



- 1946 Eight Australian Churches formed a national ecumenical body in 1946 called the World Council of Churches – Australian Committee.
- 1960 That was re-named at the first national conference of Australian churches in 1960, as the Australian Council of Churches.

# Our 30 year journey



- 1994 **INAUGURAL FORUM - Canberra**  
*'From cooperation to commitment: vision, priorities, machinery'*  
National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) was formed in 1994 as an unincorporated association, succeeding the Australian Council of Churches.

- 1996 **2 ND FORUM - Brisbane**  
Keynote paper:  
*'Christ's call to Australia's churches in today's Asia'*

- 1998 **3 RD FORUM - Sydney**  
Paper by Dr Mary Tanner: *'Beyond the Limits of the Landscape that we know'*

Adoption of **Declaration of Intent** towards Australian churches growing together

- 4 TH FORUM - Melbourne** 2001

- 5 TH FORUM - Adelaide** 2004  
*'At the Cross Roads: Living in a World of Change'*  
Adoption of **Australian Covenanting Together** document

- 6 TH FORUM - Brisbane** 2007  
*'Life Together'*

- 7 TH FORUM - Canberra** 2010  
*'Shaping Our Ecumenical Footprint'*

- 8 TH FORUM - Melbourne** 2013  
*'Mission Shaped Ecumenism: What is the Call of God for the Church?'*

- 9 TH FORUM - Sydney** 2016  
*'Remember, Rejoice, Renew'*

NCCA was incorporated in June 2016 as a company limited by guarantee, and currently has 18 member churches. (see page 4)

- 10 TH FORUM - Canberra** 2019  
*'Living and Walking In The Holy Spirit: Called To Transforming Discipleship'*

- 11 TH FORUM - Adelaide** 2024  
*'Messages of hope in a complex world'*

NCCA logo refresh  
2006



2024

Over four days in June 2024, NCCA members gathered at the U-City Function centre, Adelaide, to engage as a Council. Through prayer, reflection, discussion, and discernment, we sought to renew the Council's purpose and focus.

## Guest Speaker & Ecumenical Guest

We were honoured to host Rev Prof Dr Jerry Pillay, the 9th General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

Rev Pillay is a Reformed pastor of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and former Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria.



Pictured above:

**FRIDAY 21 June**  
Rev Dr Helen Richmond leading us in grace, before Friday dinner.

**SATURDAY 22 June**  
NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone during reporting session.

**SUNDAY 23 June**  
Preparation for Sunday Vespers - Orthodox Pentecost

**MONDAY 24 June**  
Bishop Mar Stephanos, Leader of the Mar Thoma Church, shares news of his Church in India.

## Forum Theme:

Messages of *hope* in a complex world.

'Let us hold on unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.'  
HEBREWS 10:23

Pictured right:

1. Rev Dr Jerry Pillay (WCC) with Rev Sharon Hollis (UCA) and Bishop Daniel (Coptic Orthodox Church).
2. Rev Mark Kickett (UCA), Rev Dr Jerry Pillay, John Lochowiak (Catholic Church) and Bishop Mar Stephanos (Mar Thoma Church)
3. Rev Dr Jerry Pillay with NCCA's Rev John Gilmore and Liz Stone
4. Prof Anne Patel-Gray, Sat. morning reflection
5. John Lochowiak - Kaurna, Welcome to Country
6. Rev Dr Jerry Pillay, Keynote
7. Anna Phan - discernment session

## Celebrating in Worship and reflection together

*For where two or three are gathered  
in my name, there am I among them.”*  
Matthew 18:20

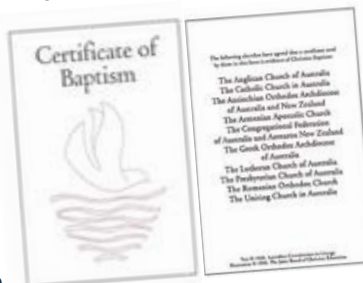


Left and right: Selected moments of the Ecumenical service at Pilgrim Uniting Church, Adelaide. Rev John Gilmore gave the address and Liz Stone explained the meaning of the NCCA Mantle



### Affirming and celebrating: **‘Australian Churches Covenanting Together’**

A tangible expression of Australian Churches Covenanting is the Ecumenical Certificate of Baptism. It is available from many church booksellers and recognised in many NCCA member churches.



Left: A copy of the Ecumenical Certificate of Baptism.

Church Leaders were invited to renew the Declaration of Intent from ‘Australian Churches Covenanting Together’.

## DECLARATION OF INTENT

As member churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia

We **RE-AFFIRM** our commitment to one another as partners on the ecumenical journey;

We **BELIEVE** that we are being blessed in our generation to witness the action of the Spirit in drawing the Churches in a common search for a fuller expression of unity;

We **REJOICE** in all we have in common and **GIVE THANKS** for the richness of our diversity, through recognising that our disunity is a hindrance to the Church’s mission;

We **RECOGNISE ONE ANOTHER** as Communities of Faith, Hope and Love, committed to following Christ and pledged to serve God’s kingdom;  
We therefore **MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER** to engage in an ongoing process of growing together (covenanting), not knowing what visible form unity, which is God’s will and gift, may take, but believing that, by taking the steps to which we now commit ourselves, we shall be led to grow ever more deeply into that unity.

(from Australian Churches Covenanting Together document 2004)



Above: Images taken during Sunday Choral Eucharist service at St Peter’s Anglican Cathedral, North Adelaide, where Rev Prof Dr Pillay gave the homily and Archbishop Geoff Smith, (Anglican Primate) led the service

Above: Church Leaders Re-affirm their commitment to unity during the Ecumenical service at Pilgrim Uniting Church, Adelaide.

## Communication and Engagement

Goal – A more engaged, diverse and active membership

### Member Engagement

The NCCA's focus for the year has been directed to organising and holding the the 11th National Forum. It brought together representatives from many of our member churches.

### National Leaders of Churches

The NCCA facilitates up to three meetings each year. These have been hybrid meetings in Sydney and online. It is hoped that the Forum discussions will give impetus to these meetings going forward.

### Members

The NCCA farewells Rev Sharon Hollis as she completes her term as Assembly President of the Uniting Church in Australia.

We look forward to working with Rev Charissa Suli as she takes up the position for the next three years.

### Member involvement

The NCCA was present for number of significant events in the life of its member churches.

These include:

- November 2023 - ACBC Bishop's Plenary
- March 2024 - Consecration of Bethel Mar Thoma Churh, Sydney
- April 2024 - Holy Mass and March to the Khachkar - 109th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide (Diocese of the Armenian Church of Australia and New Zealand)
- May 2024 - Service for Coptic Orthodox Easter (Coptic Orthodox Church)
- June 2024 - Visit of WCC General Secretary to churches in Melbourne and Sydney.

### Prayer

We bring together representatives from member churches for prayer. Throughout the year, online ecumenical prayers took place at time of need for peace, including:

- Lunchtime Prayer for the Week of Christian Unity - May 2024
- Prayers for Refugee Week - June 2024

*"We give thanks for the people who have served on the Boards of the NCCA, and on commissions and working groups...We are indebted to our staff, as well as the staff of Act for Peace and the life of the State Ecumenical Councils. The NCCA has no meaning without all of us working together.."*

Rev John Gilmore,  
NCCA President



Above: Proclaiming the Gospel (Armenian Apostolic Church, Chatswood).



Anti-clockwise right:

1. Outgoing President, Rev Sharon Hollis with incoming President, Rev Charissa Suli at the UCA Assembly, July 2024.
2. Liz Stone (NCCA), David Rose (NSWEC) and Fr. Thomas Varghese (Mar Thoma Church) at the consecration of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Sydney
3. Liz Stone (NCCA) speaking at the consecration of Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Sydney

Building stronger relationships with members, key partners & the public

## Communication and Engagement (Hebrews 10:24-25)

### NCCA Engagement

#### Networks

From last year's roundtables, Communities of Practice have been established, including the **Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce (ACET)**.

The **Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT)** is actively advocating for asylum seekers and vulnerable refugees, aiming to refresh and strengthen networks among member churches and Church practitioner networks for sharing experiences, resources, and expertise.

#### Communications

The fortnightly Newsletter continues to be well received by over 1,200 subscribers and is often forwarded.

Facebook remains the only social media platform in use by both the NCCA and the ACRT. These are used for sharing the NCCA newsletter links, and occasionally for sharing reflections and seasonal prayers. The ACRT frequently post content highlighting issues of significant concern.

A new NCCA website is currently under development and is set to launch by the end of 2024. With input from a working group made up of church members, we aim to create an online hub where members can connect and share biblical and devotional resources to enrich their spiritual lives.

Top right, anti-clockwise: ACRT members meet February 2024, Melbourne (top and left images). Faith leaders meet, October 2024, Sydney. (L-R) Pastor Ray Minniecon, [Buddhist nun], Liz Stone (NCCA), Rev Sharon Hollis (Uniting Church)

Below: member representatives at the National Forum, June 2024



#### Interfaith Engagement

NCCA has been involved in a number of initiatives to promote relationships with people of other living faiths in Australia.

##### Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews meeting (ANDCMJ)

The ANDCMJ has convened at least once a year since its founding in December 2001 by the NCCA, the Executive Council for Australian Jewry (ECAJ), and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). The primary goal of these meetings has been to enhance understanding and foster relationships among the groups involved.

ANDCMJ needed revitalization before the October 2023 events in Israel and Gaza, emphasizing the importance of ongoing dialogue.

##### Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO)

APRO is a key multi-faith group to promote interfaith harmony and community cohesion. It includes representatives from NCCA, ECAJ, ANIC, Buddhist and Hindu councils, Sikh Council, and Baha'i representatives.

APRO was a consultative group for the Australian Government discussions on issues of legislation against religious discrimination. APRO members were actively engaged in education and awareness-raising programs in the lead up to the Voice referendum in 2023.

## Support and Participation

Goal – More opportunities for Member Churches to engage and participate together

### FIRST NATIONS

The NCCA continued our support for the constitutional referendum on the Voice to Parliament, underpinned by the three pillars of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart – Voice. Treaty. Truth.

During 2023, NCCA managed an education and awareness-raising hub on our website that was regularly accessed and promoted. It contained resources on the Voice Referendum which included Indigenous Christian leaders talking with congregations and webinars about the issues of inequality, reconciliation and unity that the Voice to Parliament would address.

In early 2024, the University of Divinity School of Indigenous Studies formed a National Indigenous Ecumenical Network. However, the closure of the School in mid-2024 has left the relationship with the NCCA still to be addressed.

### FAITH AND UNITY COMMISSION

Between July 2023 and June 2024, the Faith and Unity Commission continued its significant work in fostering ecumenical collaboration.

In July 2023, the Commission finalised the statement “The Churches in Australia and the Care of Creation”, marking a milestone in addressing environmental stewardship.

Meetings were held in hybrid formats, with one meeting each in Melbourne and Sydney during 2023.

A face-to-face meeting in Melbourne in April 2024 focused on Indigenous spirituality, incorporating insights from the Tribal Voices Conference and contributions from Rev'd Canon Glenn Loughry.

Resources for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by the Victorian Council of Churches.

### National Ecumenical Reference group

In response to invitations from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the NCCA General Secretary convened a National Ecumenical Reflections Group to address documents related to the Plenary Council in July 2022, the Oceania Regional Consultation in February 2023, and the Synthesis Report on the First Synod on Synodality in March 2024.

This was an enriching experience of reflection and dialogue speaking into the national, regional and international levels of another church for the participants.



Top right, Prof Stan Grant speaks, 'Tribal Voices Conference' February 2024  
Below, anti-clockwise: Entry procession, 'Tribal Voices' opening service; and Faith and Unity members meet in Melbourne, 2024 (both pictures)



Coordinating member networks for mutual support & participation

## Support and Participation (Matthew 18:20)

### SAFE CHURCH PROGRAM

The Safe Church Program (2005-2023) concluded at the start of 2024, representing a significant ecumenical effort by the NCCA to enhance child safeguarding training and procedures in churches across Australia over 18 years.

It included NCCA members and non-member churches, supporting all denominations in safeguarding efforts.

We thank the churches and organisations in the NCCA Safe Church Program, along with the leaders and volunteers, for their ongoing commitment to safeguarding training and strategies for children and vulnerable adults in Australia's churches.

We honour Churches for their dedication to creating safe and welcoming spaces for everyone.

### ECUMENICAL NETWORKS

#### Australian Ecumenical Officers Network (AEON)

There are three meetings of State and Territory council officers held annually by the General Secretary, two online sessions and one in-person gathering.

In the past year, the ecumenical organisations in South Australia and Tasmania have been un-staffed, while New South Wales has cut staff to part-time.

#### World Council of Churches (WCC)

NCCA hosted the WCC General Secretary, Rev Prof Jerry Pillay, a guest to the 11th National Forum in Adelaide and his

subsequent visits to both Melbourne and Sydney.



Various initiatives have been undertaken, including revitalizing relationships with the Pacific Conference of Churches, national church councils in Pacific Island countries, and the Christian Conference of Asia.

#### Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC)

Affirming the strengthened partnership with PCC, NCCA applied for membership and was elected a member of PCC at the 12th General Assembly in November 2023.

#### Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network (PCPAN)

NCCA has been facilitating meetings of the PCPAN through financial support from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to Act for Peace, NCCA's international aid agency.

The PCC hosted the PCPAN meeting in Nadi, Fiji, from March 19-21, 2024. Key issues discussed included:

- Pacific regional strategy
- Diversity, equity, gender equality and inclusion
- Humanitarian response
- Disaster risk reduction / effective management of aid
- Climate change / displacement and planned relocations

#### Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)

The NCCA President attended the 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia in Kerala, India, from September 28 to October 4, 2023. This was a time to renew relations with the CCA, and NCCA President Rev. John Gilmore was elected to the CCA Executive Committee for six years, to 2029.

Top right, anti-clockwise: Friends of Churches Together SA celebrate its achievements. David Rose, NSWEC General Secretary with former NSWEC General Secretary, Fr Shenouda Mansour (on left). Australians, Rev John Gilmore, Fr Abanoub Atalla and Oliver Slewa, at the CCA 15th General Assembly in Kerala India.

PCC General Secretary, Rev James Bhagwan, at the 12th General Assembly in November 2023, with Rev Tevita Havea (PCC Moderator) and NCCA General Secretary, Liz Stone.

## Ecumenical Advocacy

**Goal – A collective ecumenical voice contributing to policy and societal discussions**

The NCCA supports various task forces and networks that operate as communities of practice and specialized 'wisdom' groups.

### ACET

#### **The Australian Churches Ecological Taskforce (ACET) .**

This taskforce has been formed from roundtables involving Communities of Practice.

The Taskforce facilitated the sharing of resources among member churches, encouraged divestment from fossil fuels, and prepared impactful submissions, including those addressing the Climate Change Amendment Bill (November 2023), the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act reform (March 2024), and the Net Zero Economy Authority Bills (April 2024).

In January 2024, ACET wrote to Minister Bowen advocating for a fair and ethical transition to net zero, particularly raising concerns about forced labour in solar panel production, to which the Minister responded positively in April.

### ACRT

#### **The Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce (ACRT),**

Formed in 2013, the ACRT is an ecumenical group of 12 volunteers from NCCA Member Churches. It holds monthly online meetings and an annual in-person gathering.

ACRT hosted a national webinar for Refugee Week 2023, concentrating on refugees' access to tertiary education, and developed ecumenical worship resources for Refugee Week 2024.

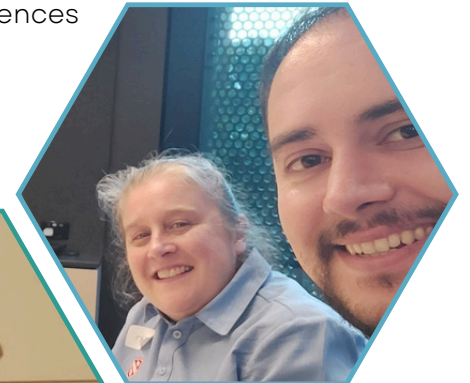
The ACRT held an in-person meeting in Melbourne in February 2024 to discuss strategic plans for the year. Key submissions in 2024 highlighted women's experiences in immigration detention and another critiqued the proposed Migration Bill for not meeting international obligations and imposing punitive measures on vulnerable individuals.

These submissions provided crucial information to encourage church members to engage in advocacy.

## Government & Policy

The NCCA supports churches and advocacy groups in their efforts to promote justice and peace. Together, we have engaged in several government policy consultations, inquiries, and legislative reviews.

The NCCA's Policy and Projects Officer, with a legal background in migration, settlement, and domestic violence, has made a significant contribution to NCCA through public statements.



Anti-clockwise above:

- ACRT co-chair, Major Karen Elkington with Oliver Slewa, (NCCA Policy & Project officer).
- (left) ACRT co-chair, Rev Dn Sandy Boyce (Victorian Council of Churches) with Sr Brigid Arthur.
- Liz Stone (NCCA) with Rev Sharon Hollis (UCA) in front of Parliament House, Canberra. Part of the Micah Women's Delegation.

Being a prophetic voice in society and to one another

## ACT FOR PEACE

**Vision:** A world where everyone belongs.

**Purpose:** To create, together, a world where people uprooted by conflict and disaster have a safe place to belong.

Act for Peace (AfP) is the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia, founded by Australian churches and inspired by Jesus' example.

Elijah Buol OAM was appointed CEO in February 2024. As an active Anglican Church member, he works with senior leadership and the Board to advance Act for Peace's ecumenical initiatives. His background as a former refugee provides him with unique insights from his childhood experiences of displacement due to conflict.

Act for Peace collaborates closely with local partners to support initiatives that are led by the community, aimed at reducing displacement while fostering safety, dignity, and a sense of belonging for those who have been uprooted.

### CHRISTMAS BOWL

The Christmas Bowl celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2024, honouring a journey of faith, love, and compassion.

The Christmas Bowl was founded by Reverend Frank Byatt in 1949. Guests reflect on those in need by contributing the value of their Christmas meal. This initiative continues to spread his message to congregations across Australia and is central to the organization's work with churches.

For more about AfP and the Christmas Bowl visit: <https://www.actforpeace.org.au/>

Below: AfP infographic from the 2024 Annual Report, showcasing the work map of countries and programs across more than 20 nations.



- Anti-clockwise above:
- AfP infographic from 2024 Annual Report, outcomes of partnerships
- Refugees in Ethiopia, vocational training 2023 (Credit:EOC-DICAC)
- AfP Christmas Bowl logo

### NCCA FUNDS

The NCCA administers the following funds:

#### RONALD WILSON ECUMENICAL LEADERSHIP FUND

Grants from this fund support young people in enhancing their ecumenical experience and leadership skills, helping them develop their talents and refine their vision.

#### GLENBURNIE PROGRAM



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

#### REFUGEE SUPPORT FUND

The Refugee Support Fund makes grants available to enable assistance for vulnerable groups that are unable to access Australian Government support and assistance or can only access limited government-funded programs and services that meet their needs.

#### ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DEVELOPMENT FUND

This fund assists Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples by giving small, usually one-off grants for community development projects.

#### Martung Upah Appeal

The Development Fund projects are funded through the Martung Upah Appeal.

More information on these funds can be found on the NCCA website - [www.ncca.org.au](http://www.ncca.org.au)

# Annual Review

## 2023-2024

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1994-2024



ABN: 47 000 391 104

NCCA's audited financial statements for 2023-2024 are available on request:  
[secretariat@ncca.org.au](mailto:secretariat@ncca.org.au)