

Message from the General Secretary

During the past weeks, I have experienced wonderful opportunities for meeting with people.

The Catholic Diocese of Bathurst commenced their celebrations marking 150 years since the establishment of the diocese on Friday 19 June. They began with an ecumenical service at which the NCCA President, Rev'd Dr Mike Semmler preached, and Anglican, Uniting, Coptic Orthodox and Salvation Army participated. This Diocese is in covenant with the Anglican Diocese and the presence of Bishop Ian Palmer affirmed the strength of the friendship that grounds the covenant.

St Paul's Lutheran Congregation in East Sydney held a centenary Thanksgiving Service on Sunday 31 May. This church was, in a way, hidden. Entering the building, climbing upstairs, then entering the church – a beautiful, simple space with high ceiling, with the most beautifully crafted wall hangings adorning the walls and altar. Truly this is a sacred space. The church community was welcoming and hospitable, for old and young – all seemed to be at home. The Governor, the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC, not only participated in the service, but spent time with the community chatting to all. Not only the place, but the community spoke to me: Where you stand is holy ground!

Australian Catholic University held the first Annual Inter-faith Breakfast at Old Parliament House in Canberra on Wednesday 17 June. This was a wonderful opportunity for meeting friends from our member churches, but also from the Jewish, Muslim and Baha'i communities – as well as an opportunity to speak with a number of politicians, reminding them of the presence of NCCA.

Dr Stepan Kerkyasharian AO spoke on Faith and Leadership in Modern Australia. Within his text, I found a number of challenges. The Western world needs to rethink its social agenda, especially the role of religions and faiths in our society. Many of our social structures and ideologies either have been dismantled or denigrated so that people, especially the young, shun them.

He suggested that while all religions talk of peace, of fellowship and of an aspiration or obedience to the highest and purest ideals of human co-existence, they approach achieving peace differently. He observed that often religious leaders espouse the similarities of their faiths and religions in an effort to engender harmony. But questioned, 'Is that the reality of everyday life?' He proposed that we need to recognize, and affirm the differences: "My religion is different to yours. My faith is not the same as yours. But, I accept your right to have a different religion, a different faith". That! I respectfully submit, is the message that truly generates a harmonious multipath co-existence.'

And finally, I acknowledge the release of Pope Francis' highly anticipated encyclical, *Laudato si'* or *Praise be to you: on the care of our common home*, which has been received with great joy. The concern for the whole of God's creation which this document addresses is shared by member churches of the NCCA.

Elizabeth Delaney sgs



Interfaith gathering at NSW Parliament House – **Religions for Peace**, 1 June 2015. Elizabeth with Patrick McInerney, Ashleigh Green and Jeremy Jones.



Lorraine Murphy, Jeremy Jones, Sr Elizabeth and Sandie Cornish, at e-conference on **Religion: Catalyst for violence or peace?**, 23 June 2015. Photos courtesy of Jeremy Jones.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Act for Peace

We're for Australian Aid

Now, more than ever before Australia needs strong support behind the life-changing work of aid. The Federal Budget released in May 2015 saw the biggest ever cut to Australian aid which was just one of a string of successive cuts in the last few years. Australian aid makes an incredible difference in the lives of people across our region, and across the world.

The Campaign for Australian Aid, which involves the church and other aid agencies and many supporters, came together at the start of this year. It started with over 20,000 people all over the country standing up for this life changing work to send a clear message to our politicians urging them not to cut aid. Participants signed the 'Save Australian aid' petition, emailed Joe Hockey and their local member. They also made a big splash on social media, especially on budget night when #AustralianAid trended nationally on twitter.

Sadly, Joe Hockey announced the biggest ever cut to Australian aid on budget night and Australia will now fall even further from meeting our fair share on foreign aid. It is vital that we continue to show our political leaders that we need to do our fair share and help to reduce the immense and unnecessary suffering caused by extreme poverty.

Thank you for your continued support of Australia aid. Together we can build a fairer future for everyone.

Safe Churches Network



National Council of Churches in Australia – Safe Church Network, would like to invite church representatives to attend the 'Safe as Churches?' Conference on September 9-10 2015. This will be our 7th conference and the theme will be around 'Building Resilience'.

The NCCA Safe Church Network's "Building Resilience"

days are designed to provide networking and professional development opportunities for people involved in the prevention of and/or responding to church related abuse and misconduct issues, including Church and congregation leaders; Safe Ministry Units; Professional Standards Directors; ethics field workers and committees; Safe Church Training Workshop presenters; and Regional ministers / Archdeacons / Presbytery Ministers.

Our guest speaker is Elizabeth Hall, who since 1981 has been involved with working in the area of child protection in the UK and until recently the Safeguarding Advisor for the Church of England and the Methodist Church.

We will also be having an update on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from the Chair of the Commission, The Hon Justice Peter McClellan AM, on the Thursday afternoon 10th September.

More information about the conference can be found here: <http://www.ncca.org.au/departments/safe-church-network/safe-as-churches>

The Masterclass event on the Tuesday 8 September is currently full; however we are taking names as we seek ways to accommodate more people.

Please contact the Safe Church Program team with any questions about this conference: scta@ncca.org.au.



OUR CHURCHES

Day of Prayer and Fasting for Refugee Sunday

Archbishop Philip Freier invited churches across Australia to pray and fast as a concrete sign of unity with those whose suffering is marked on Refugee Sunday (21 June).

Here's one example of how this was received: Rev. Dr Julia Pitman, Minister at St Paul's and Armitage Uniting Churches in Mackay in Central Queensland, wrote to tell us that this call to prayer and fasting for Refugee Sunday 21 June and the Act for Peace Ration Challenge featured in her column on ecumenical faith matters in Mackay's local paper. Thank you, Julia!

Assyrian Church of the East

The election of the Catholicos-Patriarch has been postponed until September. Please continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly – commencing Sunday 12 July

Please pray and intercede for the forthcoming 14th Triennial Assembly. The opening service will also include the installation of the new President of the Uniting Church in Australia, Stuart McMillan.

OUR STAFF



I'm Cameron Haig, and I started working for the National Council of Churches in Australia – Safe Church Program at the end of November 2014. There are three areas of the Safe Church Program, the Safe Church Training Agreement, Safe Church Network and the Safe as Churches? Conference and Masterclass days.

Before joining the NCCA, I had over 10 years' experience as a Baptist Pastor, predominately focussing on Youth and Young Adults ministry. Within the work that I have done, I have spent time developing leaders and ensuring that volunteers are equipped and trained to provide ministry in a safe manner. I have been a Pastor in both New South Wales and Victoria, and currently work out of the Victorian office of the NCCA.

The Safe Church Program is currently updating the Safe Church

Training Agreement Standards to better reflect the current environment and legislative changes that have recently occurred. This update will hold the program in good stead, as the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse brings recommendations in the next 2 years. This update will also include an emphasis on vulnerable people, including those facing Family Violence. The Agreement currently has 39 Dioceses/Synods/Denominations across Australia as members, including many outside of NCCA Member Churches.

If you would like to know more information about the Safe Church Training Agreement, or would like to meet with me, please don't hesitate to get in contact with him, chaig@ncca.org.au or 03 9650 6811.

The Safe Church Network meets regularly to discuss, share resources and provide advice to the NCCA Executive on Safe Church Matters. This has included discussions on resources for this year's Child Protection Week, September 5 – 12. The Network has also been assisting in the planning of the Safe as Churches?7 Conference, happening during Child Protection Week, on Tuesday 8 to Thursday 10 September. More information on the conference can be found earlier in this newsletter.

STATE COUNCILS



The new President of the VCC is **Mr Ashok Jacob**, a member of the Mar Thoma community of Faith in Melbourne.

EVENTS

June

12 – World Day Against Child Labour

14 – National Refugee Week

21 - Refugee Sunday (including Day of Prayer and Fasting)

18 June-17 July Ramadan

July

3 - NCCA Anniversary

5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday

5-11 – NAIDOC Week