

New approaches to refugees?

On August 21 a Brainstorming Day, funded and organised by Christian World Service, brought together about 20 participants from church and secular refugee support groups, media, and academia, to wrestle with the challenge of promoting more compassionate and creative community and government approaches towards refugees and asylum seekers.

Reflecting on recent sobering research on community perceptions and fears, participants discussed opportunities for reconfiguring the refugee debate. This involves promoting real solutions (local and global) and building unconventional alliances by stressing shared interests and goals so as to establish common ground between refugees and asylum seekers, their advocates, politicians and the broader community. There are alternatives to polarisation, harsh rhetoric and fear. Let us look for opportunities and inclusion!

*John Ball, Manager,
National Program on Refugees
and Displaced People*

Farewell to Caz

As anyone who has had the fortune to meet Caz Coleman would know, she is a person who brings warmth, enthusiasm and a creative approach to every challenge that comes her way.

Caz has worked tirelessly as the Victorian Officer of the Program on Refugees and Displaced People. She coordinated the highly successful Journey on the Wind program, enabling personal interaction and further understanding between refugees and asylum seekers and rural Australians.

Caz has been a central advocate on various coalitions working on issues such as the East Timorese Asylum Seekers, and the Permanent Protection for All campaign.

Whilst she has not moved far away, working now in the Uniting Church Synod Justice and International Mission Unit, we will all miss her laugh and her perceptive insights.

Annie Feith

Solomons Indigenous leadership the cornerstone of intervention

Indigenous leadership in Solomon Islands is critical for the future of the country.

A statement by the five church leaders, who form the Executive of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) said, "Whatever the form of intervention by outside parties the issue of Solomon Island leadership cannot be provided by outsiders.

"Outside intervention can only be constructive if facilitated by ethical Solomon Island leadership. Our international neighbours who want to help us must adequately comprehend the nature of our problems. To fail to understand underlying issues and relationships will result in inappropriate offers of help.

"Some of our problems are directly the result of indiscriminate assistance and inappropriate relationships which have fuelled corruption and strengthened the hand of corrupt politicians."

As a core partner of SICA, and in recognition of the crucial role it will play in any future attempts to rebuild Solomon Islands society, the

National Council of Churches in Australia, through CWS, echoes SICA's call for a measured and sensitive response to the present situation in the Solomons.

"Strategic engagement with key community and church leaders is essential to provide the leadership that is so desperately required at this time", said Mark Hobson of the NCCA's Christian World Service.

SICA and CWS have continued to work in partnership – almost A\$100 000 has been given from the Christmas Bowl to support SICA's initiatives.



Matthew Wale being interviewed by Jemima Garrett, ABC Radio's Asia Pacific program

Photo: Colleen Hodge, ECP



The Christmas Bowl 2003



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