

**National Council of Churches in Australia**  
**Report of Delegates to the 12<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia**  
**Chiang Mai, Thailand, 31 March – 6 April 2005**

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The General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) meets every 5 years, gathering together delegates from member Churches and National Councils, and guests and observers from ecumenical partners and related organisations. The Assembly in Chiang Mai was a time of sharing together in worship, fellowship, and discussion. It was also an opportunity to speak out on public issues affecting the Asian region, including

- Globalisation in situations of ‘unpeace’
- Violence: people’s security and welfare
- Post Tsunami: healing and reconstruction
- Abuse and misuse of the environment

The focus of the Assembly was the theme: **“Building Communities of Peace for All.”** This also forms the backdrop for the next 5 years of work

The Revs John Henderson & Tara Curlewis, Ms Vicki Walker, and Mr John Ruhle represented the NCCA. Through a representational issue involving youth presence, only 3 of our delegates could vote. Funding for our delegation came variously from the NCCA budget, NATSIEC, CWS, and the Uniting Church. We are grateful for this support.

As the NCCA is a funding partner for the CCA through Christian World Service, Mr Charlie Ocampo was also present as a non-voting ecumenical partner. Other Australians were also present as delegates from member churches, and as co-opted media staff and an observer for the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of Sydney since the Coptic Church is considering membership in the CCA.

#### CELEBRATIONS

The General Assembly welcomed and celebrated the appointment of Dr Prawate Khid-arn as the General Secretary elect, to follow Dr Ahn Jae Woong. We welcomed 3 new members: The Armenian Apostolic Church Diocese of Australia & New Zealand, the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau command, and the Nepal Christian Council. This means that the Armenian Apostolic Church now joins the Anglican Church, the Churches of Christ, and the Uniting Church as Australian members of the Conference, along with the NCCA.

The Prime Minister of Thailand, His Excellency Dr Thaksin Shinawatra, greeted the Assembly in person. On Sunday, we worshipped in local congregations, and a number of delegates preached. There were also special prayers and a letter to the Vatican after the death of Pope John Paul II, which occurred during the Assembly.

The Assembly considered and approved a proposal to relocate the CCA offices from Hong Kong to Thailand and in principle it took up the generous option from the Churches of Christ in Thailand to purchase prime land in Chiang Mai. The CCA General Committee will work through the implementation of this decision over the next 12-18 months.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE CCA

Among the objectives of the CCA are:

- Protection of human dignity
- Care of God’s creation
- Development and promotion of relationships with people of other faiths in Asia

- Development of effective Christian responses to the various issues and challenges faced by Asian societies

The CCA reflects its deep commitment to the equality of women and men in the church and society through its 3 programme clusters: **Faith, Mission & Unity (FMU)**; **Justice, International Affairs, Development & Service (JID)**; and **Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice & Youth Empowerment (EGY)**, all of them oversighted and supported by the **General Secretariat (GS)**.

#### FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE CCA

- Continuation of advocacy for the voiceless
- Build awareness of the negative impacts of Globalisation
- Increase involvement in inter faith dialogue
- Greater emphasis on women, children, and youth issues
- More effective governance and programme evaluation

#### AUSTRALIA AND THE CCA

Australians have participated in CCA since its formation. We have much to contribute to CCA, particularly in the areas of:

- Evaluation and organisational processes
- Modelling of equality in the participation of women and men
- Assisting in programme activities for Indigenous peoples
- Encouraging theological schools in Australia to develop links with CCA and help in the development of distance theological education
- Continue to pursue the issue in Australia of ecumenical education for theological students

The CCA offers a richness to the Australian Ecumenical movement through

- Helping build relationships between Australian member churches
- Building an awareness of issues within Asia that directly and indirectly affect Australia

Further details of the CCA's programmes and activities are available at [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)

#### AUSTRALIAN ENGAGEMENT WITH CCA

Three Australians were elected to Committees of the CCA:

- Revd Professor James Haire (UCA) – General Committee
- Ms Kate Tretheway (UCA) – Faith, Mission, and Unity
- Revd Michael Hillier (Anglican) – Justice, International Affairs, Development, and Service

Those present at the Assembly propose that CCA's Australian members adopt a collective approach to Australian representation on CCA Committees, as it is not possible for every Church to be directly represented between Assemblies. Currently the Churches of Christ and the Armenian Apostolic Church have no one on committees.

We were also concerned to facilitate reporting back so that all member churches are kept informed and can contribute between General Assemblies. Since CCA is essentially an ecumenical activity, we felt that a lot could be gained through establishing an informal CCA network in Australia, initially involving all those who were present at the Assembly. The delegates asked the NCCA to establish and manage this network.

We also proposed that the NCCA act as a 'broker' for Australian representation at CCA. This would mean that in the event of an elected member being unable to participate in a meeting, the NCCA would arrange for an alternate to attend, using the list of nominations prepared at the Assembly meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

*Revd John Henderson*

*Revd Tara Curlewis*

*Ms Vicki Walker*

*Mr John Ruhle*

*5 March 2005*

ATTACHMENT – 'NCCA delegates 2005.jpg'

*Caption:*

*NCCA Delegates at the CCA Assembly in Chiang Mai, 31 March – 6 April 2005*

*L-R: Ms Vicki Walker, Revd John Henderson, Revd Tara Curlewis, Mr John Ruhle*

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This report is available for general distribution, particularly the NCCA Executive and State Ecumenical Councils. It will also be modified for inclusion in In Unity and publication on the NCCA website.