

National Council of Churches in Australia Triennial Forum

The 7th National Forum of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) was held in Canberra, 9th – 13th July. Members of this triennial Forum elected Bishop Michael Putney, Bishop of Townsville, as President of the NCCA for the next triennium.

Bishop Putney reflected, *“It was a very humbling experience to be elected by the Forum of the NCCA to be their President. They are a remarkable group of leaders of Christian churches. It will be a great privilege to serve them in this role. This is particularly true because of the new vision for the NCCA which emerged at this forum.”*

Prior to this Forum the President of the NCCA had been elected by the Executive of the NCCA. Accordingly, Bishop Putney has been elected President by the Executive for a period of twelve months leading up to this 7th Forum. The role of the President has been filled by members of different churches. Previously, Archbishop John Bathersby was President for the 1997 – 2000 triennium.



Presentation of Bishop Michael Putney as President of the National Council of Churches in Australia during the 7th National Forum of the NCCA. Photograph by Gabrielle Russel-Mundine

Membership in the National Council of Churches in Australia continues to grow. During the Forum the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Indian Orthodox Church were received as new members at the Ecumenical Worship hosted by the Wesley Uniting Church on Sunday 11 July. This brings the membership of the NCCA to nineteen with members from eastern and western churches.

Members of the Forum considered aspects of the ecumenical document, *Australian Churches Covenanting Together*. Initially signed by the heads of churches in 2004, the new members of

the NCCA also committed to this covenant. The covenant supports and encourages churches cooperating in a variety of ways at a local level.

In setting the directions for the NCCA Executive for the next three years, the Forum focused on four areas: faith and unity, mission, social and public issues and indigenous issues.

The Forum proposed action on two specific issues: Australia's treatment of asylum seekers and the churches' response to the Kairos document issued by the Christian churches of Palestine. The NCCA will release media statements on both these two issues.

Reverend Tara Curlewis, the General Secretary of the NCCA, affirmed the work of the Forum, *"I believe that the Executive has a clear understanding of the directions in which we are heading for the next three years. Members are leaving with a real sense of energy and commitment as they return home."*



Participants in the 7th National Forum of the NCCA. Photograph by Gabrielle Russel- Mundine

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Catholic participants in the 7th National Forum of the NCCA