

NATSICC News



The Newsletter of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council May 2011

The Spirit of the Lord...



The Bishops Committee and NATSICC 2010

MEETING WITH THE BISHOPS COMMITTEE

The NATSICC Council travelled to Sydney to meet face to face for the first time in 2011 from 2-4 May.

We acknowledge the Gaddigal people that walked and cared for the land upon which we met.

Catholic Missions kindly hosted the meeting in their boardroom of their newly renovated building in North Sydney. A big thanks to Jenny Collins-White, Martin Tuelan and the team at Catholic Mission for making us feel so welcome.

Archbishop Hickey
Bishop Heenan
Bishop Prowse
Elizabeth Delaney
John Lochowiak
Melissa Brickell (Victoria)
Cameron Harris (Youth)
Dolly McGaughey (Torres Strait)
Cathie Wilson (Northern Territory)
Lisa Buxton (New South Wales)
Kerry O'Callaghan (Australian Capital Territory)
Craig Arthur (National Administrator)

Apologies were received from Ronita Barratt (Tasmania), Kathleen Callow (Western Australia) and Thelma Parker (Queensland). Thelma, our Chairperson was unable to attend due to her mother being very ill. All of our thoughts and prayers are with Thelma and her Mum at this time.

John Lochowiak chaired the three day meeting and the NATSICC councillors worked well as a team, and ensured we covered all the issues brought to the table.

NATSICC meets with the Bishops twice per year to discuss issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics.

A reminder - * Please forward anything you would like the council to raise with the Bishops to your local NATSICC Councillor.

Some of the agenda items from the meeting are in Bold with discussion following immediately following.

Referendum on inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in the Constitution

The Apology by the Federal Government to the Stolen Generations was a positive gesture on the path to Reconciliation. It seems logical that the next step be the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution.

Only 8 of the last 44 referendums have been successful and this particular vote will require bipartisan support from the parliament and the Australian public.

Gestures such as these are important but effectively overdue. There is a movement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities calling for more focus to be placed on gestures of 'Practical Reconciliation'. Issues such as the ongoing Intervention in the Northern Territory, income management of Aboriginal people and the widening GAP in living conditions and life expectancy need urgent attention.

The council advised the Bishops that consultation with the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was most critical.

There has no concrete information on the exact working or intent of the inclusions, so it is hard to make a stance until we know more.

Formation of Priests going into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities

The shortage of priests in Australia means that more and more foreign priests are going in to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

As part of our Elder's Story sharing program, NATSICC is in the process of consulting with Elders nationally to determine the skills that priests need to develop positive relationships within communities.

The Bishops feel that it is very important that Priests are well trained when going into communities and will continue to work with NATSICC as well as their own dioceses and ministries to ensure that communities are served effectively and appropriately.

The Language barrier seems to be a major hurdle as English can sometimes be the third or fourth language of the community and the Priest.

NATSICC councillors can cite many situations where migrant Priests have successfully served in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Much of this can be attributed to the personality of the priest and the cultural sensitivity and understanding displayed.

The council believes successful priests should be utilised in the training of new priests to propagate positive attitudes, methods and cultural competency.

On the other side of the issue is the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the Church Hierarchy.

The council posed the following question to the Bishops

Committee - *'What is the best way to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the church structure?'*

There are several options and roles that are available for community leaders to become Church leaders. One of the major roles we discussed with the Bishops is that of a **Catechist**, a role that has become somewhat maligned in Australia. Victorian Councillor and member of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Melbourne Melissa Brickell, herself a Catechist, stated that although the Catechist role is an important role in church life, she does not feel the role is seen by many as one having any stature within the Church structure.

However, in developing countries, the Catechist is the community's point of contact with the Church and has much responsibility and recognition.

The role of the Catechist as described by the Most Reverend Donald W. Wuerl (Archbishop of Washington):

" In practical terms, the high regard the parish has for its catechists, both volunteer and career, rests in no small part on the fact that without them a very important dimension of the parish's ministry would be greatly diminished. Catechists are recognized for the valuable and very practical teaching contribution they make to the life and mission of the church at the parish level.

There is a deeply theological reason for our esteem and our appreciation. The actual day-to-day living out of this mission may appear to be routine because we are so familiar with it. Catechists share in one of the essential ministries of the church – teaching the faith. Yet, seen in a larger context, the role of the catechist is much more than simply presenting course material to a specific group of people with all the challenges that represents. This parish activity is a vital part of a great continuum of testimony that traces its origin and identity back to the very beginning and into the very heart of the church.

The shortage of Priests in Australia is being felt acutely in rural Australia and combined with Deacons, the role of the Catechist could be redefined and applied in communities.

The Northern Territory Intervention

The Bishops asked NATSICC if any progress had been made on the ground level following the Intervention. Councillors shared some stories and experiences that are happening in the community, in particular regarding income management. Some Councillors felt that in many cases the lives of those in the Northern Territory are worse since the intervention.

We cannot speak on behalf of everyone affected by the intervention, but wanted to show solidarity with our people in the Territory.

2012 NATSICC National Assembly



Mass in Alice Springs 2006

Planning is well under way for the 2012 NATSICC National Assembly in Melbourne.

The first task was to settle on a venue. It is not an easy task as we try to keep all delegates on site to enable people to talk, share and debate the day's happenings. There are not too many venues that can hold 250 people and provide the facilities that we need, such as open spaces and room to move.

With those concerns in mind and following extensive conversation, consultation and suggestions from the ACM in Melbourne,

the council decided that Bell City in Preston will host the event. The Darebin Arts Centre will also host some events and workshops.

The NATSICC Youth Assembly will be held at the same time and at the same venues.

We want this event to be the best Assembly ever with positive input from our communities and strong recommendations for NATSICC to go on with for the following three years.

The date has been tentatively set for 1-5 October 2012. Although it is nearly 18 months away, it will be here before we know it so start your planning and saving and we will see you there in 2012!

We hope to see you all there in 2012!

NATSICC
TELEVISION



NATSICC TV will be based at www.natsicc.org.au and will showcase the good news stories from around Australia. We want to highlight the positive things that Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are doing in our communities.

Additionally, all NATSICC projects and events will be recorded and shown on NATSICC TV. This is a result of a youth recommendation that more young people would access the reports if in video format.

Elder's from the Northern Territory and Queensland have

been interviewed and given the opportunity to tell their story. Elders Nationally will be asked to share their stories as time goes on.

The potential of this platform is unlimited. It is hoped that NATSICC TV will give ministries the opportunity to record their Masses and events. It will make the world 'smaller' in that we can share our ways of doing things with each other and with other Indigenous people all over the world.

We are utilising the 'YouTube' platform to host our videos.

If you have a project that you would like featured on NATSICC TV, drop us a line and we will do our best to come out and show the world the good work you are doing.

The technical side of the project is under way and we will let everyone know when NATSICC TV is 'on the air'!

NATSICC Projects

NATSICC Assemblies are a wonderful opportunity for the community to gather and talk about faith, culture and the challenges that lay ahead.

An important part of the Assembly is listening. The workshops and discussions are designed to encourage conversation on the future direction of the incoming NATSICC council. The new councillors have three years to implement the vision and hopes of the Assembly delegates.

At the Brisbane event, there was much talk about practical ways that NATSICC can serve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Community. This

included 'Closing the Gap', nurturing leadership skills in our youth and promoting the positive perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the church to the wider community.

The past year has been spent designing programs that address these recommendations, securing funding and consulting with the community.

The resulting series of programs are unique in the history of NATSICC and signal an exciting new era in the way the council does business and serves its people.

SafePlace

One strong recommendation noted from delegates was for programs addressing the 'Closing the Gap' Issue. There is a disproportionate 'Gap' in life expectancy, health, education and economic situations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and non Indigenous people in Australia.

One glaring 'Gap' is the rate of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. According to the National Indigenous Health Equality Council, in 2006, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infant deaths had fallen to 10 out of every 1000, while the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rate stayed stable at 4.4 of every 1000. That means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have almost twice the chance of losing an infant to SIDS.

Many of these deaths are attributed to poor or no sleeping equipment.

We created SafePlace to combat the rate of SIDS or SUDI (Sudden Unexplained Deaths in Infants) by providing items such as cots, mattresses and wraps to parents, ensuring the safest possible sleeping environments for their baby.

The program will call on private and corporate donors to purchase these items from the Safeplace web site and have it sent to the family in need. This is unique because monetary donations can sometimes be queried as to how much actually reach those in need, but with a system like ours, the donor will know that 100% of the donation gets to those in need.

NATSICC is strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by engaging them to make some items, such as muslin wraps and paying them a fair price for their work. The larger items will all be approved by the 'SIDS and Kids' organisation and will also meet Australian Standards.

Corporate partnerships have been formed to assist the council in reaching our goal of making the program National. Initially we will focus on the Northern Territory with the intention of expanding nationally.

Please add me to the NATSICC News Mailing List.

Name: _____ Address: _____

Email: _____

NATSICC Secretariat 80 Payneham Rd, Stepney SA 5069 or email craig@natsicc.org.au



Cross Cultural Sporting Program



A grant from the South Australian Catholic Education Office has been received to run the pilot program in Adelaide.

Our project aims to increase the level of cultural understanding and bring about generational change in the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Refugee populations interact by bringing Youth

from both groups together in an environment where they can express themselves through the medium of sport and story telling. Refugee and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth will come together on a fortnightly basis to train in either football or soccer. Prior to the session, the host group (either football or soccer) will meet together to plan the session with their coordinator. At the conclusion of the session a mentor will talk to the group.

Mentors/role models from both Soccer and AFL will attend some of the training sessions and speak with the group informally. There will be time for questions afterwards.

Mentors will also be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Afghani/Sudanese Community leaders. The focus of these mentors will be their struggles coming to Australia/growing up in western society, faith systems and how they help in everyday life, methods of integrating into contemporary society whilst staying true to their culture. Similarities in the lives of the groups will also be discussed in an open forum.

Written English can be a problem for both groups, which is why we have focused on a verbal based program. We have an interpreter in place for both groups.

The program hopes to Empower youth via the sharing of the skills and faith that they possess. There is no medium available that says to the youth - 'You have skills that are unique and we value them.'

In many cases, sporting ability provides the sole source of self esteem for these youth and other than playing the sport, this skill and confidence is not utilised in an extended way. It will be a great opportunity to make friendships with each other in a very healthy and good environment.

Elder's Story Sharing



We have been in Darwin, Canberra and Queensland interviewing Elders about their early interactions with the Catholic Church.

It is very important that we record these stories before they are lost. Many wonderful stories have been shared so far.

We were interested in hearing about the ways in which priests have been successful in becoming a part of the community. The success stories gives us a good basis for showing the Church ways that priests can be trained to better serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and how we can help to make them welcome.

The interviews will be shown on NATSICC TV and we will continue to interview Elders in most States and Territories in the coming year.

NATSICC & Catholic Mission Submission to United Nations

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples requested feedback regarding mineral extraction and development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lands.

NATSICC and Catholic Missions filed a joint response that detailed our major concerns, possible benefits and negatives to communities affected and what we believe are principal steps to avoid negative impacts.

We reiterated the articles of the UN's own Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous peoples document that highlight the importance of consultation and acknowledgement of the connection that Indigenous people have with the land.

The full document is available for download at www.natsicc.org.au in the Resources section

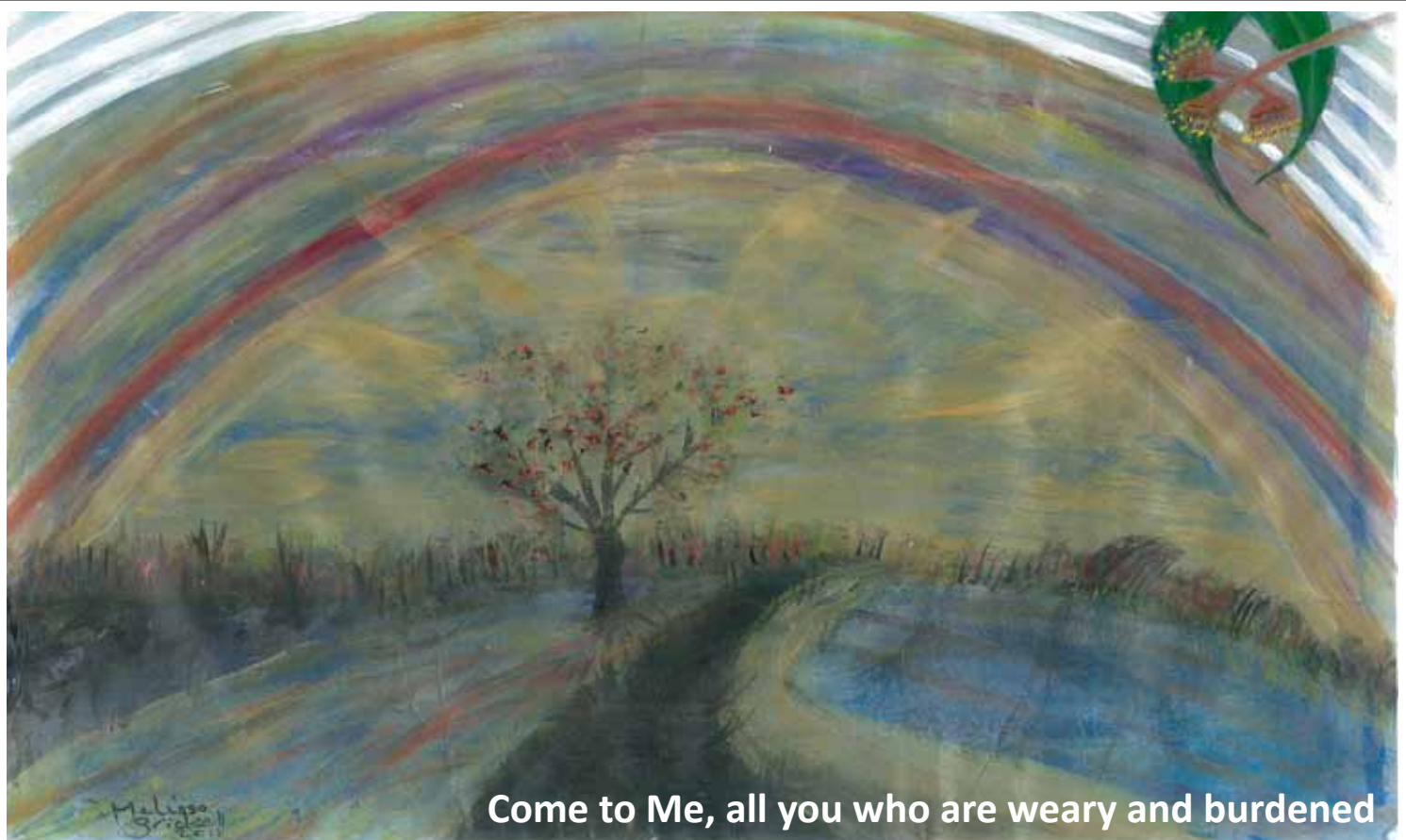


Following calls for nominations, NATSICC is happy to announce that the successful recipients of the 50% Pilgrimage Sponsorship are:

Renee Leigh (NSW), Crystal Opum (WA) and Sabrina Stevens (Qld). In addition, the Council is also partially sponsoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pilgrims from Santa Teresa and Lismore.

World Youth Days are a wonderful opportunity for young people to gain a sense of perspective and belonging on a global scale. NATSICC formed a partnership with the Broome Diocese and designed a pilgrimage that includes Fatima and Lourdes, paying homage to Our Lady. This group of outstanding young people are the 4th we have sent to the event.

We wish the Pilgrims all the best for their exciting journey of faith and hope that it will help form new leaders in their communities.



Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened

**2011 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Sunday Liturgy Resources now available
at www.natsicc.org.au**

NATSICC SECRETARIAT

80 Payneham Rd. Stepney SA 5069 | 08 8363 2963 | 0402 019 536 | craig@natsicc.org.au