



SYNOD 2023 REPORT

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MEMBERSHIP

Chair	Kerry Povey
General Secretary	Rev Dr Andrew Williams
Member	Rev Judy Sanderson
Member	Lyn Callaghan
Member	Rev Brian Thorpe
Member	Lee-Anne Burnett
Member	Alison Dyall

REPORT

“A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE”

To be a Christian community for everyone, we must include our neighbours near and far. Working with our international partners is an important and meaningful way to engage with our international community. The relationships we share with partners in our region builds the faith of our local congregations in profound ways.

We particularly think of our partners in Sri Lanka and the community they serve who are struggling through the economic and governance crisis occurring in the country.

Key Focus Areas:

Governance and Risk Management

The International Partnerships & Development Commission has continued working to align with the External Conduct Standards established by the Australian Charities and Not-for-

profits Commission (ACNC). This is an ongoing process to review risks, update agreements and policies, and monitor compliance. In the past this function has been performed with the expert guidance of Geoff Bice. Unfortunately, his expertise is no longer available to the Commission however it is intended to continue to monitor compliance in this area.

All congregations are annually requested, as per ACNC guidelines and requirements, to report any donations made for an international benefit and feedback is provided on any risks identified. In the past support for congregations to improve compliance has also been provided where required. Prompt congregational responses to the annual request for these reports are greatly appreciated and they are urged to continue to submit annual reports when requested. The commission continues to explore ways to assist congregations to comply with these guidelines.

Each of the four key Synod partnerships has been improving its policies and updating partnership agreements in consultation with our international partners to ensure ACNC compliance.

UnitingWorld National

Without the support of the Social Justice Unit, regular communication with UnitingWorld is intermittent and less comprehensive. The Commission recognises the need to foster as much cooperation and coordination as possible. We appreciate Uniting World's guidance and support.

Synod Key Partnership Reports

The Commission has active engagement with four key international partners:

Sri Lanka

Our partner in Sri Lanka is the Methodist Church in Sri Lanka (MCSL). We provide support to the MCSL Preschool program. The five preschools we provide funding for are located in areas where families might not be able to send their children to preschool without the assistance provided. For some years, MCSL had two partners that provided funding. At this time, we are the only partner for these five preschools. The skills and learning the children gain from attending preschool help increase the likelihood that they will be successful when they enter school. Also, the children are more likely to engage in preschool learning if they have a nutritional breakfast (the children receive breakfast as a part of the preschool program.)

MCSR continues to be affected by lingering consequences of Covid-19, financial crisis in the country, and a shortage of staff. Consequently, they are having difficulty in providing the documentation required by ACNC as well as reports needed for us to continue our partnership with MCSR. We are working towards helping MCSR complete the reports and documentation required and hoping to visit our partner sometime in the near future to obtain a clear picture of how they are going and determine the best approach to assist them.

West Papua

The Black Pearl Network Australia continues to work closely with the Black Pearl Papua Foundation (BPPF, formerly BPNP) within our partner church network. There are four major areas of interest. Fourteen centres have been set up throughout the Papuan provinces to teach English and higher education opportunities are being developed. The Clean water program enables Papuan communities to introduce safe, reliable and economical fresh water collection systems and technology to the villages. A new Vocational Training Program in the areas of tourism and hospitality have been set up in two centres with the intention of giving Papuans the skills needed to reap the benefits of a growing tourist industry. Recently a new initiative in health monitoring and education has been approved in partnership with the Australian Catholic University.

There are currently 25 indigenous Papuans employed by BPN and its partner organisation BPPF across the Papuan provinces. During June this year, 18 teachers completed a 4-week professional development program in Perth utilising the expertise of Milner International College of English. Two other staff worked on other areas of professional development. The Trinity North and Floreat congregations worked together to coordinate and resource this project.

The Australian Papuan Cultural Exchange Program (APCEP) restarted in 2023 (after COVID) and will host two students per year in partnership with Milner International College of English. Small groups of BPN volunteers have travelled to the Papuan provinces during the past year to keep programs progressing smoothly and to develop our enduring partnership with our partner church there.

The Black Pearl Network is actively working to develop partnerships and pathways through which the existing projects will work towards self sustainability and ongoing Papuan funding.

West Timor

Nedlands Uniting Church continues to support 10 students at Artha Wacana Christian University (UKAW). Each scholarship provides 1000 AUD per academic year for three years

to students who otherwise would not be able to attend a university. Also, one academic is supported financially while she studies for her PhD program in Java.

One member of the Nedlands team has been teaching English to students in the English program during 2022 and 2023.

Three academics from UKAW will come to Perth in August/September for four weeks of intensive English study and cultural immersion as all staff are required by the Indonesian government to upgrade their qualifications from Masters degree to PhD in order for the university to improve its accreditation standing.

A visit to West Timor by one representative is planned in order to attend the graduation ceremony at UKAW, meet with scholarship students and their families, teach in the English program and build on the partnership between Nedlands Uniting Church and UKAW.

Timor Leste

Our partnership with Fundação Lafaek Diak (FLD - The Good Crocodile Foundation), based in Triloka village in the Baucau District of Timor Leste, continues to support their Mobile Health Clinic initiative. This service goes out from Triloka twice a week on rotation to 16 more remote villages which are spread widely in the Baucau and Vemasse Districts. The Mobile Health Clinic saw over 3000 patients during 2022.

A Memorandum of Understanding and a Letter of Agreement have been signed outlining our shared commitments and expectations. The annual Trek 4 Timor is the main fundraising event to cover our funding commitments along with some regular contributions from congregations and one-off donations.

Key Challenges

Some of the key issues the Commission is dealing with include:

- Fundraising –We continue to explore different methods to meet our commitments.
- Risk management and compliance – the Australian Government’s requirements for organisations sending donations internationally under its External Conduct Standards requires a continuing level of vigilance and an increased awareness across congregations.
- Maintaining Commission membership by people with a passion for the work of the IPDC

Planning

- The Commission has communicated with all congregations requesting them to advise us of any international donations or support they provide.
- The Commission will continue to review projects and to be a congregational resource to assist with compliance with ACNC Standards.
- The Commission will continue to support the development of sub-groups to focus congregational support for particular projects.
- The Commission will continue to reach out to congregations and schools to share news of our partnerships and engage support for the development work of our partners.
- The Commission is actively seeking new members with an interest in the area of overseas outreach in the Indo Pacific region

Kerry Povey, Chair