

‘We’re all people’

**Report and recommendations of the
Committee on Aboriginal Issues and
Ministry,
Lutheran Church of Australia**

'We're all people'

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*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer
slave or free, there is no longer male and female;
for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28 NRSV)*

Members of the Committee on Aboriginal Issues and Ministry,
Lutheran Church of Australia

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'We're all people'

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INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal Lutherans — background

From the beginning of the Lutheran presence in Australia, Lutheran missionaries tried to bring the gospel to Aboriginal peoples. In 1838 a party of mission workers from Berlin arrived in the Moreton Bay area of what is now Queensland. Later that year two missionaries from Dresden came to South Australia. They and two more who came worked among the Aboriginal peoples of Adelaide, Encounter Bay, and Port Lincoln. These early efforts — and later ones in the Coopers Creek area — faced considerable difficulties and ceased after some years largely because of language and cultural barriers and the negative impact of European society generally on Aboriginal peoples.

The Hermannsburg mission in Central Australia was established in the 1870s, Hope Vale in Queensland in the 1880s, and Koonibba on the South Australian West Coast in 1901. The Lutheran church began work at Yalata in the 1950s. In each of these cases, in spite of great difficulties, gradually Aboriginal groups became Christian, and in time the church expanded to other nearby areas.

The work of the Lutheran church in these missions has been extremely significant. Not only have these mission communities been richly blessed through the message of the gospel, but, in many cases, they played a key role in providing education, health, and social services when the government was unwilling to do so. In some cases, as in Hermannsburg, it was the Lutheran church, through its mission, that preserved the land for the Aboriginal community. In other cases, such as at Hope Vale, the Lutheran church was the vehicle which enabled the survival of the Aboriginal community. These missions also had a policy of preaching and teaching in the local language, a practice which helped considerably in the preservation of the local culture. As Everard Leske says in his recent work, *For Faith and Freedom*:

The Lutheran church and other denominations have expended considerable interest and effort on behalf of Australia's Aboriginal people when few others in white society were concerned. The more positive approaches of governments, linguists, anthropologists, and sociologists, had a good foundation on which to build. (p114)

Many Aboriginal leaders today, looking back on Australian history, discern paternalistic and even racist attitudes among early missionaries, attitudes which reflected some of the values of the white community of the time. Some European missionaries disregarded or opposed many beliefs and practices of Aboriginal culture and generally did not appreciate the spiritual significance of land for Aboriginal people. One exception was the Finke River Mission (FRM), which handed back the mission land to its traditional owners in 1982. When the missions handed over control to government or local community groups, the opportunity for the church to play a major role in the total life of the Aboriginal community was diminished.

We also need to recognise that Aboriginal people have played a major role in the Lutheran congregations where they live and in some cases within the wider context of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). Especially significant is the fact that Aboriginal men and women from Lutheran communities are now leaders in the fields of law, education, business, and administration. Many of these have been identified in the wider community as people who have both strong Christian faith and deep Aboriginal spirituality.

The great majority of Aboriginal people who became Lutheran through the missions continue to identify themselves as Lutheran. Now they have an opportunity to play an even greater role in the church. It is our hope that through this report and its

recommendations their voices will be heard afresh, and that they will not only be regarded as equals before God in our church but experience that reality in the life of the church.

Beginning of a reassessment

In the Year of Indigenous People (1993) some people in the LCA felt that the Lutheran church was not paying enough attention to current issues confronting Lutheran Aboriginal people. Important things were happening in Australian society (self-determination, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, Mabo, Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Native Title Act, Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation), but the church as a whole was not keeping up with developments or responding to them. Some people felt that the Lutheran church was living in the past and was resting on its laurels in relation to its work with Aboriginal people.

So a resolution was passed at the 1993 LCA General Convention to set up a President's Committee on Aboriginal Issues.

It has been observed that other denominations (eg Uniting, Anglican, Roman Catholic) seem to be facing contemporary Aboriginal issues and to be officially committed to reconciliation. Their church papers regularly report and discuss Aboriginal issues. Several denominations produced official documents dealing with particular Aboriginal issues.

The National Church Life Survey (NCLS) findings in *Views from the Pews* (1995) indicated marked differences between Lutherans and members of other denominations in attitudes towards Aboriginal people. (The NCLS was carried out prior to the Mabo decision.)

- More Lutherans than members of any other denomination thought that Aboriginal people need to seek to improve their own situation (54% compared to an average of 38%).
- Fewer Lutherans thought that the government needs to do more for them (2% compared to 5% average).
- A lot fewer Lutherans thought that we need to develop justice in ownership of land (4% compared to 15% average).
- Fewer Lutherans than members of any other denomination, except one, thought that racism in us all needs to be reduced (21% compared to 30% average).

Canberra meeting

The President's Committee initially met in Canberra in September 1994, where the committee had much fruitful discussion about its tasks. The terms of reference of the committee were to

- hear the concerns and aspirations of the Aboriginal members of the LCA
- examine ways to promote the greater inclusion of Aboriginal people in all aspects of the life of the LCA
- examine ways to enhance the cultural awareness of pastors, teachers, and lay people within the church
- promote the process of reconciliation within the community through gospel-centred debate on the issues of land rights, racism, and reconciliation
- make recommendations to boards and committees of the LCA on action which would promote the process of reconciliation and inclusion of Aboriginal members of the LCA.

Following this, the committee developed a set of questions concerning Aboriginal issues for wider consultation with Aboriginal communities. Some of those present at Canberra and some additional people met in July 1995, and received feedback from

consultations held in South Australia. The committee also heard from Pastor George Rosendale about the Queensland situation. Wider consultations were hampered by a lack of funds for the committee.

It is important for readers of this report to recognise that, in line with the above terms of reference, the aim of the committee was to reflect the voices of the Aboriginal groups and individuals we met, rather than to solicit proposals directly from the boards and committees of the LCA. We recognise that these voices may differ and that the Aboriginal communities in the LCA are quite diverse. We also recognise that the number of voices we heard may be limited. Nevertheless, we believe that our report represents a serious contribution from the Aboriginal members of the LCA which deserves to be heard.

A second committee formed

In October 1995, the General Church Council (GCC) asked Dr Norman Habel to convene a second group to make specific recommendations about the training of Aboriginal pastors and evangelists. In April 1996 an initial consultation was held in Adelaide with the seminary faculty, Aboriginal representatives, and some members of mission boards and mission staff. A preliminary set of recommendations was drafted at this consultation.

It was decided, with Dr Steicke's agreement, to combine these two committees. As Dr Habel's group was provided with a budget from the GCC, the joint committee was able to plan consultation with Aboriginal communities to discuss both sets of issues, and to appoint an administrative officer to help with organisational tasks.

Consultations in areas

The joint committee consists of three Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal members: Dr Norman Habel, Mavis Malbunka, Rev John Pfitzner, Rev George Rosendale, Ronda Schultz, and Bronwyn Sleep (with Colleen Tschuna attending in place of Bronwyn, who was unable to attend). David Schubert is administrative officer.

This committee, with limited time, limited personnel, and limited funds, has carried out its investigations by organising several meetings, by reading relevant reports, papers, and books, and by organising visits to the main areas where our church is involved in ministry with Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people have been involved in the work of the committee as much as possible.

In August 1996 members of the committee visited the West Coast of South Australia including Ceduna, Yalata, Port Lincoln, and Whyalla. In September members visited Queensland, including Cairns, Hope Vale, and Wujal Wujal. In November, members visited Central Australia, and visits have also been made to Ferryden Park, Adelaide. In each of these locations committee members met with Aboriginal people to seek feedback on matters relating to Aboriginal issues and ministry. The members also presented some more specific recommendations to gauge the reaction to these.

Further contacts

The committee has also made contact with the various boards that are involved in Aboriginal ministry across Australia. The Committee for Aboriginal Ministry in South Australia (CAMSA) have been conducting a major review of their work, and this has provided our committee with very helpful information. Our members have spoken with various members of that committee. In May 1996, members met with the FRM Board in Adelaide. On the recent trip to Queensland, members met with the Far North Queensland Lutheran Mission Committee (FNQLMC).

The committee has also put in a submission to the Organising Committee for the next LCA National Convention in Melbourne in 1997 to ensure that Aboriginal members and their concerns are included in the convention program. Many of the Aboriginal people consulted are keen to arrange a meeting of Aboriginal members in association with the convention.

A further consultation was held in Adelaide on 15-16 November 1996 to finalise as far as possible the recommendations through discussion with the Aboriginal people who had participated in the process over the two years. Fifteen Aboriginal people attended the meeting from Queensland, Central Australia, the SA West Coast, and Adelaide. Although the time was insufficient, considerable consensus was reached on the recommendations and further action needed. The final report has been drafted by the Adelaide members of the committee. A list of all the Aboriginal people consulted is given in the appendix.

Acknowledgments

We, the members of the committee, are grateful for the willingness of people to talk with us in the various areas we visited and their openness in discussing matters that were not always easy for them to talk about. We generally had the impression that our visit was welcomed and that Aboriginal people were pleased that the church was taking an interest in them and their concerns. We felt that in some cases our visit acted as a stimulus for people to take up certain local issues themselves. Some people consulted expressed the fear that once again the church may not take action to implement the recommendations of the committee.

While some non-Aboriginal church workers seem to have been suspicious of our committee, generally we have received cooperation, for which we are grateful. We thank all those who helped to organise our visits and who looked after us.

Our investigations have confirmed that many of the issues facing Aboriginal people today, and the church in its work with Aboriginal people, are complex and cannot be dealt with on the basis of simplistic approaches. It is important that non-Aboriginal people do not paternalistically try to supply answers to Aboriginal problems, but that Aboriginal people be given the freedom to run their own lives. Perhaps the greatest service non-Aboriginal church members can give Aboriginal members is to listen sympathetically and support Aboriginal initiatives. We are also aware that there are deep differences of opinion on some issues and that these differences will not always be able to be easily resolved. The committee is also very conscious that the history, situation, and needs of the Aboriginal Lutherans in Central Australia, North Queensland, rural South Australia, and urban centres are often quite different, and that some of the recommendations may not be appropriate in given areas, but need to be modified to be locally suitable.

Assumptions in this report

Our recommendations are based on the following assumptions.

1. All people are created equal and remain equal in God's sight. Christians are all equal in Christ because Christ has died for all and broken down the walls separating people.
2. There is no one 'Aboriginal voice'. It is important to recognise the differences between the views of people from different areas or with different experiences — although there are many common concerns.

3. We also need to respect the voices of those who have worked with Aboriginal people in the various areas — but at the same time, Aboriginal Lutherans must be allowed to speak for themselves and not only through mission representatives.
4. Culture is important to all people, and each culture carries its own values. From a Christian point of view there are good and bad aspects of all cultures, including Aboriginal cultures. All culture changes and develops over time.
5. At the same time, as Christians our attitudes and actions in all areas must be informed by the gospel, while recognising that faith is always a struggle because of pressures of the law.
6. There are many similarities between the issues facing Aboriginal communities and those facing society in general and all Lutheran congregations in particular. We are all in this together. At the same time, Aboriginal people face some issues that are closely linked to their culture and their history since European settlement.
7. Ministry in the wider sense is the responsibility of all church members, not just ordained pastors.
8. The church needs to minister to the whole person and to the whole of life.

Addendum: Numbers of Aboriginal Lutherans

It is difficult to know how many Aboriginal Lutherans there are. Part of the problem is that it depends on how we define 'Lutheran'. While easier to determine, strictly formal membership may not be particularly helpful. The following are rough estimates of the total numbers of Aboriginal Lutheran members plus contacts (all those who would call themselves Lutheran), supplied by workers in the areas.

Far North Queensland:	Coen	75		
	Wujal Wujal	350		
	Hope Vale	1075		
	TOTAL		1500	
Central Australia				6000
SA West Coast	Oak Valley	50		
	Yalata	250		
	Bookabie	40		
	Koonibba	100		
	Ceduna	400		
	TOTAL		840	
Whyalla				200
Port Lincoln				400
Port Augusta area	Port Augusta	200+		
	Cooper Pedy	20		
	Whyalla	70		
	TOTAL		290+	
Adelaide area				500
	GRAND TOTAL			9730+

The following totals from the latest LCA Statistical Report (1994) may provide a rough comparison:

Total baptised members of the LCA	98 191
Contacts under direct spiritual care (not included in membership list)	<u>44 636</u>
TOTAL	142 827

According to these figures the number of Aboriginal Lutherans is roughly 6.8% of the total for LCA members and contacts.

1. RECONCILIATION

Background to the concept of reconciliation

The concept of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians has become prominent especially as a result of the establishment of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1991. The 'Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Bill 1991' was debated in the House of Representatives on 5 June and passed the same day with unanimous support. The goodwill associated with the bill was expressed when Mr Robert Tickner (Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) and his opposition counterpart, Dr Michael Wooldridge, shook hands in the house following the vote. The same degree of support was shown in the Senate where the bill was passed without amendment on 16 August 1991. The bill received royal assent on 2 September 1991.

The preamble of the act states:

- Australia was occupied by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who had settled for thousands of years before British settlement at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788;
- many Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders suffered dispossession and dispersal from their traditional lands by the British Crown;
- there has been no formal reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians;
- by the year 2001, the centenary of Federation, it is most desirable that there be such a reconciliation;
- as a part of the reconciliation process, the Commonwealth will seek an ongoing national commitment from government at all levels to cooperate and coordinate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission as appropriate to address progressively Aboriginal disadvantage and aspirations in relation to land, housing, law and justice, cultural heritage, education, employment, health, infrastructure, economic development and any other relevant matters in the decade leading to the centenary of Federation, 2001.

Some significant events leading up to the establishing of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation were the following:

- in 1967 a referendum was held on the changing of the Australian constitution to allow Aboriginal people to be included in the census of Australia's population, and to allow the commonwealth parliament to legislate for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- in 1975 the federal government passed the Racial Discrimination Act, ratifying the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- in 1976 the Fraser government effected the passing of the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and brought it into operation;
- in 1979 the Aboriginal Treaty Committee was formed. The treaty movement began to wane from 1982 to 1984, and people began to recognise that the relationship between indigenous peoples and the wider community in Australia needed to be healed, for any compact or agreement to have lasting value;
- during the bicentenary in 1988, the then prime minister, Mr Hawke, raised the question of a formal agreement between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians;
- in 1990, the prime minister, Mr Hawke, and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Mr Tickner, announced the government's in-principle support for a reconciliation initiative. Mr Tickner released a discussion paper which focussed on the

- process as much as on any outcome. Discussion with the opposition parties produced cross-party support;
- in 1991 the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, under Commissioner Elliott Johnston, handed down its final report. The report's final recommendation (of 339) supported the concept of a process of reconciliation, which was being discussed at the time by the major political parties. The commission recommended:
 - That all political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided. To this end the Commission recommends that political leaders use their best endeavours to ensure bi-partisan public support for the process of reconciliation and that the urgency and necessity of the process be acknowledged.

The legislation setting up the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation stipulates that the council cease to function on 1 January 2001, the centenary of federation.

The council has submitted its first report to the federal parliament for the period 1991-94 under the title, *Walking Together: The First Steps*.

The council has identified eight key issues as being crucial to the process of reconciliation:

Understanding country: The importance of land and sea in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies;

Improving relationships: Better relationships between indigenous Australians and the wider community;

Valuing cultures: Recognising indigenous cultures as a valued part of Australian heritage;

Sharing histories: A sense for all Australians of a shared ownership of their history;

Addressing disadvantage: A greater awareness of the causes of indigenous Australians' disadvantage;

Responding to custody levels: A greater community response to addressing the underlying causes of the high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody;

Agreeing on a document: Will the process of reconciliation be advanced by a document or documents of reconciliation?

Controlling destinies: Greater opportunities for indigenous Australians to control their destinies.

What Aboriginal Lutherans say

In discussions with our committee Aboriginal people have revealed a range of attitudes towards the concept of reconciliation. It seemed to be a less important issue for people living in situations where Aboriginal people are in the majority and follow a more traditional lifestyle. The issue is more important for Aboriginal people living in situations where non-Aboriginal people are in the majority.

In most areas there did not appear to be much awareness of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and its work. Many people were unsure about the meaning of the word 'reconciliation' (especially where English is not people's first language) and what the process of reconciliation involves.

However, for some groups that we spoke with the issue was seen as being very important; one group chose it as the first issue they wanted to talk about. They saw it

as a necessary process and one that the church should support. They said that it would be good for the church to make a big statement (or statements) expressing commitment to reconciliation, explaining its importance and giving directions for action. 'That the church is even talking about reconciliation [by establishing the president's committee] is a big step.' 'People might want to say, "I'm not personally guilty for what happened, but I'm sorry about it".' 'Someone needs to say, "We're sorry this happened and we need to start working together in new ways".' In another group someone said, 'I feel reconciliation should be right up top'.

In one of our meetings involving Aboriginal people from various parts of Australia the following views were expressed:

- The church needs to work towards reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members, and also between different Aboriginal groups.
- There needs to be open acknowledgment that Aboriginal people were here long before white people came and that their laws, culture, and spirituality were already in place.
- Individuals living now shouldn't be made to feel guilty over things that were done by earlier generations, but at least there should be acknowledgment of what happened.
- The history about the Aboriginal people should be taught. We shouldn't keep putting it under the carpet. We need to teach reconciliation in our schools.
- We need to promote the New Testament law of love to all Australians, recognising the damage that has been done in the past. It is now the time for negotiating and for practising what we preach.
- Aboriginal people are always expected to make the change, but it should be both ways.
- The church should be taking a major role in the process of reconciliation. Things should be brought out in the open, then there needs to be asking for and giving of forgiveness on both sides. The following are things that the church could do: develop a theology of reconciliation; show the difference between the church's reconciliation and the government's process; set aside money for work in this area; hold reconciliation seminars.

It was mentioned that the government's Council for Reconciliation, and also other churches, have materials that could be used by our church.

In our consultations with Aboriginal people, even where 'reconciliation' (using this word) did not seem to be such a big issue, most people felt that there were things in the past that needed to be dealt with and that relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need to be improved.

We found that in some areas there is a generational difference in relation to this matter. Older Aboriginal people are grateful for what the church (the mission, white people) did in the past and they feel no need for a reconciliation process. However, younger people feel that there were also bad things in the past that need to be acknowledged.

In one group the following was said: 'There is a lot of bickering between Aboriginal people. There is hatred that has been brought out by what white people have done and this has been passed down. This hatred is now passed on to Aboriginal people. Some Aboriginal people will not do anything for a white person; they'll only do things for Aboriginal people.'

Some people felt that reconciliation between Aboriginal groups is as important as reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Among the people we spoke with there had been little thought about a reconciliation document or a reconciliation event or ceremony for our church (as has happened in other churches) and people were cautious about this.

In all groups where the issue was discussed there was recognition that although as Christians we are all reconciled with God and with each other through Christ, there are also things that are not right in relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Many non-Aboriginal people are prejudiced towards Aboriginal people and have misconceptions about them.

A number of groups spoke about the importance of acknowledging things that happened in the past if proper understanding, acceptance, and new ways of relating to each other are to occur. One group said that there needs to be an open and honest acknowledging of the history between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Another Aboriginal person said that 'the church should make a full admission about the truth of the past. Was the country settled or invaded?'

Acknowledging the past

In its report, *Walking Together: The First Steps*, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation refers to what anthropologist Professor W E H Stanner has called 'the cult of disremembering', the great silence imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, their position and their history. The report says that 'today, the cult is beginning to crumble. But the cult has left its mark in disadvantage and misunderstanding. Consequently, there are divisions in Australian society that will take years of constructive effort to overcome' (p 3).

The report goes on to reproduce parts of a speech given by Mr Patrick Dodson, chairperson of the Council, at the National Press Club in Canberra on 15 September 1993.

'The concept of *terra nullius* is much talked about but little understood, mainly because people don't know much of the history of this land and its peoples. It is clear that the first Europeans were aware that the country was occupied. They saw the people, but they didn't want to know them. They were told to take possession of the country with the consent of the natives. That consent was not sought nor given.

'Way back in the 1600s the pirate named Dampier, at Roebuck Bay, near my home town of Broome, saw people. He called them "miserable brutes", which set the terms of the future of the relationship. He and others that followed in his footsteps felt that the first Australians were a barbarous race, incapable of exercising any rights in the British system, and therefore unworthy of being accorded any rights at all. The legacy of this view has underpinned the relationship between indigenous and Australian authorities for the last 205 years. The legacy of *terra nullius* persists.'

Mr Dodson went on to describe this legacy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were dispossessed without any treaty, agreement or compensation; their treatment was justified by the doctrine of *terra nullius*.

'Historically it resulted in the inevitable dispossession of group after group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, without rights, without consultation, without negotiation, without compensation, and little in the way of equal human interaction.

'Most Australians do not know how much brutality and violence was required to ensure that the law was enforced on the ground. When Aboriginal people resisted, they were summarily dealt with. When our land was taken, we lost our economy, our lifestyle and our culture, all under the rule of law.'

After the arrival of British colonists, the advance party of the frontier was strange and lethal disease. When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples realised that the colonists were here to stay — and intended to take, not share, indigenous lands — the resistance began. During the first 160 years of colonisation, an estimated 20 000 Aboriginal people and 2000 Europeans and their allies were killed in frontier conflicts. The complete death toll of the colonisation years is difficult to estimate...

Violence and disease were followed by dispossession. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were relocated to reserves and missions. Their lives were stringently controlled. Many were made virtual prisoners. Nations were dissipated, communities fragmented and families were broken. Many people and communities are still trying to put the pieces together today.

Many elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage today can be traced directly to dispossession, which began soon after the first British settlers arrived, and has continued throughout Australia's history since then. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody strongly made this link. In the Royal Commission's final report, Commissioner Elliott Johnston QC stated that the legacy of a history of dispossession, brutalisation and the deliberate systematic disempowerment of Aboriginal people was of central importance to the issue of Aboriginal over-representation in custody.

'The consequence of this history is the partial destruction of Aboriginal culture and a large part of the Aboriginal population and also disadvantage and inequality of Aboriginal people in all areas of social life where comparison is possible between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The other consequence is the considerable degree of breakdown of many Aboriginal communities and a consequence of that and of many other factors, the losing of their way by many Aboriginal people and with it the resort to excessive drinking, and with that violence and other evidence of the breakdown of society. As this report shows, this legacy of history goes far to explain the over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody, and thereby the death of some of them.'

The terrible tragedy facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today is a legacy of history. A hallmark of this history is the failure in relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.
(pp 3-5)

Challenge to the church

Our committee feels that the issue of reconciliation needs to be addressed by the church. Both sides of politics in the federal government recently reaffirmed their commitment to the reconciliation process. It is an important issue for Australia as a whole. There are moral aspects to the issue. It is also a pastoral matter for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of our church, especially where they are members of the same congregation. The church has a special opportunity at present to make a contribution in this area because of the existence of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation leading up to the year 2001.

In making a commitment to reconciliation the church will need to recognise that a significant number of its non-Aboriginal members are suspicious or dismissive of the concept of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians or are openly critical of it. Some feel that reconciliation is not necessary, others that it is a matter of empty rhetoric that won't achieve anything. Some non-Aboriginal church members feel that the concept of reconciliation does not apply to members of the LCA because our church has a good record of working for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Some say that as fellow Christians Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the church are already reconciled in Christ, and nothing more is required. Some people dismiss the process of reconciliation by saying that they are not personally responsible for wrongs that were done in the past, that they have goodwill towards Aboriginal people, and that they resent being made to feel guilty for past wrongs. Some oppose reconciliation by saying we should not be dwelling on the past but should be looking to the future. We should forget what happened in the past and put it behind us. One can't help feeling that some people are simply frightened about facing something that may be difficult and uncomfortable for them; they prefer to avoid the issue. Some possibly fear that the reconciliation process will only serve to give more privileges to Aboriginal people, whom they see as already receiving too much, and that any concessions made by non-Aboriginal people will only lead to greater demands from Aboriginal people.

The church will have to try to help these people listen to what Aboriginal people are saying and begin to see things from an Aboriginal point of view. Non-Aboriginal members will need to understand that just as they remember and commemorate certain things from the past that are seen as being important to them, so there are things in the past that are important to Aboriginal people and that they remember. They also need to understand that healthy relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can exist only on the basis of a recognition of what happened in the past and an acknowledgment of the effects that the past continues to have on the way things are now.

In this connection the following quotation is relevant:

Australian history is sin-stained, and the present situation of our society is unjust. To accept that statement is, in the Christian view, to take a large step towards the healing of the hurt that has been done and the building of a more just society.

Past history is a fact, and it cannot be changed. The crimes of the last two centuries have to be owned by Australians — not as if we are personally guilty of what was done by our predecessors, but rather as acknowledging that our present situation (which includes very particularly the dominant position of the European population) stands in continuity with that sin-stained past, and is the direct result of it. Thus we Australians today cannot say that what was done in the past is no concern of ours. As people living in history, we bear the burden of the crimes of the past — just as we are enriched by the grace which was present also in the lives of our predecessors. True reconciliation can come about only if we humbly and honestly accept that burden.

Christian faith assures us that forgiveness and healing are freely available to those whose hearts are open to receive them. The crucifix, the central symbol of Christianity, is the pledge of this...

Acceptance of this forgiveness for the crimes of our history — not that we personally committed them, but we are part of the historical movement in which they occurred — this acceptance necessarily involves a real change of heart. The injustices of the present, which result from those past crimes, can no longer be simply tolerated

or ignored. Accepting forgiveness means responding to the call to work, in whatever way we can, to improve the situation of both Aboriginal and other Australians (since injustices imposed on one section of the population cause damage, in some way, to all, as has been explained above). Thus acceptance of forgiveness, far from causing gloom and hopelessness, brings energy and initiative and the desire to work for a better future. New life can spring up when we own our history in the spirit of faith.

(‘A Theological Approach to Reconciliation’, John Wilcken SJ in *Reconciling Our Differences: A Christian Approach to Recognising Aboriginal Land Rights*, ed Frank Brennan SJ, pp 69, 70)

An Aboriginal person at one of our meetings made the comment that it is ironical that the Lutheran church is not at the forefront of the reconciliation process, in view of the church’s theological emphasis on God’s reconciling grace. The concept of reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel. As Christians we ought to understand better than anyone else the importance of being reconciled with one another, and what God has done in Christ to make this possible, and we should be doing whatever we can to bring about reconciliation.

Recommendations

- 1.1 That the LCA publicly commit itself to a process of working for reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the church.
- 1.2 That the church prepare a range of resources to help church members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
 - think about and understand the need for reconciliation
 - learn about, understand, and acknowledge what has happened in the past between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
 - find ways of interacting and working together, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, with mutual acceptance and respect.
- 1.3 That the LCA establish a group, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership, to explain and promote the reconciliation process in the church, and to consider the possibility of some form of reconciliation event in 2001, the centenary of federation.
- 1.4 That the church publicise and promote in all its parishes the annual Week of Prayer for Reconciliation (27 May - 3 June).
- 1.5 That the LCA publicise accounts of programs or events involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the church working together, learning about each other, and acknowledging and overcoming past misunderstanding and distrust.

2. RACISM

Australian society and racism

Recent events in Australia have again shown that racist attitudes (misunderstanding, intolerance, prejudice, stereotyping, fear, hatred, distrust) exist in the Australian community.

At the same time it is clear that attitudes in the community generally have improved in recent decades, that there is generally less tolerance of racism, and that increasing numbers of people have goodwill to people of different cultural backgrounds (including Aboriginal people) and show acceptance of them.

In discussions with our committee Aboriginal people have shown that their awareness and experience of racism varies. Some Aboriginal people spoke of living in situations where racism is bad. Other Aboriginal people indicated that they did not see racism as a problem for them.

People's awareness of racism did not seem to be so strong in places where Aboriginal people are a majority of the population and where they follow a more traditional way of life. Aboriginal people who live in places where they are a minority (for example in towns or cities) are more conscious of racist attitudes and behaviour towards them on the part of non-Aboriginal people.

We heard from some Aboriginal people that racism is rife in the schools in their towns.

Some Aboriginal people spoke of how white people will acknowledge them and relate to them in some contexts but not in others.

The situation for Aboriginal people

In *Walking Together: The First Steps*, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has the following to say in relation to trying to improve relationships between Aboriginal people and other Australians:

Historically, the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community has been poor. From the first interactions, the relationship was based on erroneous European assumptions of racial superiority and cultural hierarchy. That is, Europeans believed their culture and their race to be superior to those of the indigenous Australians. This attitude has been reflected in government policies of segregation, protection and assimilation. At best, these policies were paternalistic and ineffectual. At worst, they were destructive of indigenous communities, families and individuals, and denied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples their basic human rights. Thousands of children were taken away from their parents, and people's lives were stringently regulated by authorities. Even today, as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody pointed out, most Australians have no idea of the 'pin-pricking domination' to which indigenous people are subjected daily. This can be reflected in undue scrutiny and stereotyping while doing tasks that most Australians take for granted: banking, renting a house or flat, shopping. The past policies, based on racism and ethnocentrism (the belief that one culture is superior to all others), still have a legacy in modern institutions. For example, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody found that a key factor in many of the deaths was the lack of a sense of duty of care for indigenous people among the police, medical and correctional authorities.

Another point of misunderstanding is indigenous identity. Negative stereotypes, supported by constant negative images in the media, were a factor in some of the deaths in custody. In a number of cases, authorities have assumed that an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is drunk, when in fact they are suffering from a life-threatening medical condition. This kind of stereotyping often has fatal consequences.

Also connected with identity, is the question: who is a real indigenous person? As well as being discriminated against because of their race, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are denied their identity because they have cross-cultural relationships in their family tree. Many indigenous Australians, for example, who are fair-skinned are not regarded by others as 'real' indigenous people. This is hurtful, and denies the person their identity — an identity which is not based on pigmentation, but on culture, ancestry, history, language, outlook, sense of belonging, spirituality and a range of other elements. (pp 102,103)

What Aboriginal Lutherans say

Some Aboriginal people we consulted spoke about how, even in the church, they are made to feel like second-class citizens. They do not feel that they are treated as equals. They are sometimes treated in a paternalistic and patronising way. White people do not always show acceptance of them. Aboriginal people feel they are put down.

In one group it was said that 'people who want to interact with Aboriginal people have to take a risk. They risk victimisation.'

In another group people spoke of how racism is still experienced by Aboriginal members, 'not only in society but also in the Lutheran church. The church needs to be honest and understand its racist past and racist attitudes continuing today. A process of education is needed throughout the Lutheran church to understand and combat the dynamics of racism.'

In one of our meetings with Aboriginal people from various parts of Australia the following views were expressed:

It is possible to identify the good things that have come with Christianity; but there has also been paternalism and racism.

Paternalism always has two sides: a father can be dominating but loving.

Some of the early missionaries were racist and held racist assumptions.

Paternalism is troubling. It can produce gratefulness. But it can also produce resentment which leads to ultimate rejection.

There is some recognition of paternalism by white people, but not enough.

Mabo is important because the legal system is now recognising that a lot of past practice was racist. The church needs to come to terms with Mabo.

Terra nullius was based on the attitude that Aboriginal people were like animals.

The missionary attitude was that Aboriginal people were innately inferior.

Aboriginal people internalised the missionary views.

The Lutheran church is not as aware as it should be of changes that have happened and that need to happen. There has been more progress in other churches such as the Catholic and Uniting churches.

The attitudes expressed by church people come from culture, not the gospel.

The gospel says that we are all equal and made in the image of God. The culture leads us to believe that Aboriginal people are inferior.

Of all denominations Lutherans should be more accepting of all people, because they know that salvation is through grace and not works. However, the church

for Aboriginal people has become a place for people who 'have their act together'. In that situation grace becomes meaningless.

From the beginning there were white people who were protecting Aboriginal people and agitating on their behalf.

The churches, too, have played a significant role in working for Aboriginal people. The reform tradition from the past needs to become dominant in the future.

Aboriginal people built up this country, helping to make the white pastoralists wealthy by working without pay. Now these farmers label poor Aboriginal people as bludgers.

The church alienated the educated Aboriginal people who were talking about land rights. This began in the 1980s. The church couldn't accommodate revision and keep people in the church.

The wider Lutheran church is still yearning for 'the good old days' in relation to its Aboriginal missions.

In the last twenty years the situation has changed, with people now having pride in being Aboriginal. The people were changing but the church didn't keep up.

At another one of our meetings Aboriginal people made the following points in relation to racism:

Racism is more than prejudice; it's the belief that some people (races) are inferior beings.

There is false representation of the position of Aboriginal people in Australian society — Aboriginal people pay taxes too! There is talk about money spent on Aborigines — what about the billions spent on new fighter planes?

The church needs to speak out strongly against racism as being against Bible teaching. All people are equal in God's sight (Peter's vision in Acts 10 — nothing is unclean!).

The church brought the gospel, but the missionaries did not always treat Aboriginal people as being equal. On the other hand, the missionaries have sometimes been blamed for government racist policies and actions. Lutherans have perhaps been paternalistic rather than racist.

There is still ignorance that has to be overcome.

Racist attitudes and remarks about Aboriginal people include such things as: They are no good; they have no moral fibre. They are ignorant; you can't tell them anything. They are lazy, bums, bludgers. They are stupid; they can't think for themselves. Aboriginal people are called names (Abos, etc). Even the term 'Aboriginal' is a term that's been given by whites.

The church needs to recognise that cultures are diverse. They also need to recognise the contributions of the Aboriginal people who helped the missionaries, who made mission possible. They need to recognise the history of the people, apart from the missionaries, who founded Aboriginal churches.

To overcome prejudice, misunderstanding, and distrust we need programs and contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the church. We need not only printed materials (white ways) but direct contact, direct communication. We can use art and videos. We understand each other when we get to know each other. Aboriginal history should be taught in Lutheran schools.

Why aren't Aboriginal people on church boards and committees? Are they seen as being ignorant, illiterate, second-class? Is the problem financial? Has there been experience of poor attendance? Is this a western mode of operating? Is there a better way of hearing Aboriginal voices? Should there be a policy of affirmative action?

Challenge to the church

From our observations of Australian society and the church, and from our discussions with Aboriginal people, we feel that racism is a problem that the church needs to

address. In taking up this matter, the church will need to recognise that many of its members will not be aware of the problem or will deny that it exists.

Recommendations

- 2.1 That the church speak out strongly against racism, affirming the equal value of all people in God's eyes, and stressing the importance for people, in the power of the gospel, to show acceptance and respect towards one another.
- 2.2 That the church prepare materials to help its members understand the problem of racism, recognise racist tendencies in all of us, and overcome racist attitudes and behaviour.
- 2.3 That the church develop materials and programs to help its non-Aboriginal members understand, appreciate, and value Aboriginal people, their culture, and the contributions that Aboriginal people have made and continue to make in Australian life and in the life of the church.
- 2.4 That the church facilitate programs of exchange and interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the church, so that they can come to know, understand, appreciate, and accept one another better.

3. LAND RIGHTS

Background to land rights

The issue of land rights, which has existed at least since the 1970s (see the Fraser government's Aboriginal Land Rights [Northern Territory] Act of 1976), has become more prominent again in recent years as a result of the so-called Mabo decision handed down by the High Court on 3 June 1992.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, in its report entitled *Walking Together: The First Steps*, says the following about Mabo:

The decision was an important step in the recognition of the fundamental rights and position of indigenous peoples in this country. It overturned the centuries old lie of *terra nullius* which stated that Australia was land belonging to nobody, and was therefore there for the taking. It changed the face of land rights issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from one of social welfare to one of recognition of legal title to land. Council chairperson Patrick Dodson said soon after the decision that: 'The decision should be welcomed by all sectors of society, because finally Australia has moved in its law-making away from what Justice Brennan described as "a time frozen in racial discrimination". Australia is in step with other Commonwealth countries that have acknowledged the land ownership rights of indigenous people.'

However, the decision has thrown up numerous challenges to the process of reconciliation, not least of which is the conflict within the Australian community that has become greatly apparent. (p 46)

The so-called Mabo decision had its origins in May 1982 when five residents of Murray Island (Mer) in the Torres Strait (including Eddie Mabo) commenced an action in the High Court.

They were seeking a declaration that, upon annexation to Australia, pre-existing land rights were not lost. The Meriam people did not want to participate in the Queensland land rights scheme, which would have involved the declaration of deeds of grant in trust. Deeds of grant in trust are subject to regulation by the Queensland Parliament and the Minister. The plaintiffs did not want this legislative imposition on land their families had held for countless generations. They wanted recognition of their rights as individuals as well as members of their communities.

In 1985, the Queensland State Government sought to stop the action being successful by passing legislation, which was later declared to be inconsistent with the federal Racial Discrimination Act (1975). The case had earlier been referred to the Queensland Supreme Court for findings of fact. After this had been completed, the case was referred back to the High Court.

The High Court handed down its judgment on 3 June, 1992. By this time, three of the original plaintiffs, including Eddie Mabo, had died. In a six to one majority decision, the Court held that the people of the Murray Islands retained native title to their land. This native title was not extinguished by the annexation of the islands to the colony of Queensland in 1879, nor by any subsequent legislation. The High Court decided the Murray Islanders were entitled 'as against the whole world, to possession, occupation, use and enjoyment of the lands of the Murray Islands'. In reaching the decision, the Court overturned the concept of *terra nullius*, and established that native title had always been part of Australia's common law, albeit unrecognised until then. One judge, Justice Dawson,

dissented from the majority decision because he believed the issue of indigenous land rights would be more appropriately dealt with by government than the courts. Three justices held that native title holders could claim compensation for wrongful extinguishment of their title by inconsistent Crown grant. Four justices held that no compensation was payable.

The court's findings can be summarised as:

- on acquisition of sovereignty (that is, at the time of European settlement), the Crown acquired a 'radical title'; however, this did not wipe out existing native title;
- after settlement, government could extinguish native title by legislation or by granting interests in land (such as freehold and some leasehold interests);
- native title is determined according to the laws and customs of the people connected with the land in question (membership of the group is dependent upon biological descent and recognition by traditional authority);
- native title is extinguished when the group ceases observation of the laws and customs that bind them to the land, or on the death of the last member of the clan;
- native title may be surrendered to the Crown, but is otherwise inalienable (if native title is extinguished, the Crown becomes the absolute owner);
- in the case of the States, the power of the Crown to extinguish native title by legislative or executive action is subject to overriding Commonwealth legislation (the Racial Discrimination Act 1975); and
- the Court rejected the doctrine that Australia was *terra nullius* at the time of European settlement.

Through these findings, and explicitly elsewhere in its judgment, the High Court made it clear that its decision would have implications in other parts of Australia. Justice Brennan rejected a defence submission that, because of the cultural and racial distinctiveness of the Meriam people, their claim should be distinguished from the land rights claims of other indigenous peoples. He believed to do so would base land rights claims on racially and ethnically discriminatory grounds, denying other indigenous peoples the capacity to claim traditional land ownership.

There were a number of questions left unanswered by the Court's decision. These included which precise areas of land were subject to native title, which peoples were the legitimate native title holders, and the precise definition of native title rights, particularly where they may co-exist with other rights in the land. These and other uncertainties are being worked out through Federal, State and Territory legislation, through litigation, and through research. Another important question raised by the decision is the position of indigenous law. The Court has recognised indigenous land law, so where does this leave all other aspects of indigenous law which are not recognised by the Australian legal system?

The last words on the Court's decision should be left to Justice Brennan. In his lead judgment, he eloquently draws out some of the legal and moral issues related to the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

'As the Government of the Australian Colonies and, latterly, the Governments of the Commonwealth, States and Territories have alienated or appropriated to their own purposes most of the land in this country during the last 200 years, the Australian Aboriginal peoples have been substantially dispossessed of their traditional lands. They were dispossessed by the Crown's exercise of its

sovereign powers to grant land to whom it chose and to appropriate to itself the beneficial ownership of parcels of land for the Crown's purposes. Aboriginal rights and interests were not stripped away by operation of the common law on first settlement by British colonists, but by the exercise of a sovereign authority over land exercised recurrently by Governments. To treat the dispossession of the Australian Aborigines as the working out of the Crown's acquisition of ownership of all land on first settlement is contrary to history. Aborigines were dispossessed of their land parcel by parcel, to make way for expanding colonial settlement. Their dispossession underwrote the development of the nation.' (*Walking Together: The First Steps*, pp 46–49)

Native Title legislation

The Native Title Act was the federal government's legislative response to the High Court's decision. It was passed by the Senate in December 1993 after a lengthy and sometimes stormy passage through parliament. The act

- recognises native title
- lays down some principles relating to native title
- allows governments ways to validate past acts which may be invalid because of native title
- provides a future regime in which native title rights are protected and conditions are imposed on acts affecting native title land and waters
- provides a process by which native title rights can be established and compensation determined
- provides for a range of other matters, including the establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Land Fund.

The federal Coalition did not support the act nor any amendments that were debated in the Senate. Their position was that the act was too complex and unworkable and that it needed substantial amendment if not complete replacement. Since coming to power in 1996 the Coalition has put forward plans for wide-ranging amendments to the Act.

In December 1996, after our committee had concluded its consultations with Aboriginal people, another important development took place when the High Court handed down its ruling in relation to the so-called Wik case involving several Aboriginal communities in north Queensland, in which the court ruled that pastoral leases do not automatically extinguish native title but that in certain circumstances native title can co-exist with pastoral leases. The ruling has received a very negative response from state and territory leaders, most of whom have called for federal government legislation to extinguish native title on pastoral leases.

What Aboriginal Lutherans say

The meetings of our committee with Aboriginal people have shown that the situation of Aboriginal people in different parts of Australia in relation to land ownership varies a lot. Some people have title to their land and feel that it is no longer an issue for them. Others have lodged claims under the Native Title Act, sometimes against rival claims. For some it is a crucial issue, while others have little interest in the matter and are hesitant about getting involved.

Many Aboriginal people feel that it has become a complex and difficult area. Some feel that it is a dangerous matter ('really touchy').

In most areas we heard reports of how claims under the Native Title legislation have caused tension, rivalry, and conflict within Aboriginal communities. Some Aboriginal

people had suggestions of how this might be avoided, but said that governments would not listen to them.

However, it has been clear from our talks that the issue of land is important for Aboriginal people, because it is a focal point in relation to how the history of this country should be viewed and how Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will relate to each other in the future. Issues such as reconciliation and social justice are tied up with the issue of land.

At our first consultation with Aboriginal people (Canberra, September 1994) the issue of land rights was a prominent topic for discussion, and the following points were agreed on:

- that the church cannot ignore this matter; it needs to address it
- that the church needs to say that land rights are important for Aboriginal people
- that the church needs to understand why land is important for Aboriginal people (spirituality, identity, relationships)
- that the church needs to study what the Bible says about land
- that the church needs to keep up with government legislation and have input into its formulation
- that the church needs to educate its members so that they understand the issue of land rights
- that the church needs to correct people's wrong ideas about land rights
- that the church needs to publicly state its position.

One of the small groups that discussed the matter of land rights at this meeting made the following additional points:

- What does the church think about land rights? We know what the government thinks but not what the church thinks.
- Aborigines feel that non-Aboriginal land owners in the church don't want land for Aborigines.
- Aborigines feel that the church is letting them down in this area.
- Christian Aboriginal people want the church to be with them on this issue. They feel that the church doesn't want to get involved.
- Non-Aboriginal church people seem to feel that land rights is not their concern.
- The church could help to put the history straight by telling people what really happened.

The meeting in Canberra was attended for half a day by Noel Pearson, who was at that time executive officer of the Cape York Land Council. In the long discussion that the meeting had with Noel, the following are some of the points that he made:

The land is important to Aboriginal people. Their physical conditions are related to their spiritual wellbeing.

There is no contradiction between a spiritual connection with the land and Christian spirituality.

The church needs to come to terms with Mabo.

There is much reservation in the wider church regarding the Aboriginal need for land and native title. Farmers in the church (who are often most opposed) should understand and respect more than others the Aboriginal connection with land. Information about land issues will help. Church people should understand the concept of reconciliation better than others.

The church should make a full admission about the truth of the past. Was the country settled or invaded? It is unreasonable to perpetuate the view that the

country was peacefully settled when there are places with names such as Battle Camp.

We all 'invent' the past, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. The historical truth is coming out. The legal system is coming to the truth. At the political level the government is ready to admit certain things too.

In the last twenty years the situation has changed, with people now having pride in being Aboriginal. The people were changing but the church didn't keep up. Most Lutherans are politically conservative and are landowners in rural Australia. It is important for young people to be more up-to-date about land rights.

Reconciliation is also needed within Aboriginal communities between families who are fighting. There are disputes within communities over land. There is a need to respect both the traditional owners and the new communities.

Aboriginal people want the biblical view on land. They are already drawing the connections between the gospel and the issues facing them.

At another consultation with Aboriginal people in November 1996 the following points were made in relation to land rights:

City people don't understand the land claims process.

Aboriginal people see other denominations involved — why not Lutherans?

Some Aboriginal people will fabricate land claims. Some don't know the dreaming.

The church can help to convey the message of the importance of land to Aboriginal communities. They could use people like Noel Pearson.

It is important that church members throughout Australia understand the issues of land rights. We need to build up trust and help people learn about Aboriginal communities.

The church should lobby to have the Northern Territory Act changed so that it creates less division.

The church should be supportive of land rights and of the people, but should not try to mediate or take sides. It's hard for a white pastor to be seen as neutral in attempts to mediate conflicts. If he's seen as supporting one side, the other family won't come to church.

Challenge to the church

We distributed to various Aboriginal people the church's draft statement on land rights, 'Aboriginal People and the Land'. However, we received no responses from Aboriginal people about their reactions to the statement. We don't know what this lack of reaction means. In view of the fact that Aboriginal people are now insisting on speaking for themselves instead of having white people speak for them, it would be good for the church to consult with Aboriginal people about what the church should be saying about land rights.

We feel that the church needs to address the issue of land rights. It is an important moral issue that involves not just Aboriginal people but our whole nation. The church has a responsibility to its members to help them understand and think through the issue from a gospel perspective.

Recommendations

- 3.1 That the church publicly state its support for the principle of land rights for Aboriginal people.
- 3.2 That the church establish a consultative group of Aboriginal people to advise church leaders in relation to land rights issues.

- 3.3 That the church prepare materials to help its members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) understand the issue of land rights (the traditional importance of land for Aboriginal people; the history of land rights; the present legal situation; theological perspectives), to clear up misunderstandings, and to help members view the issue from a gospel perspective.

4. INVOLVEMENT OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH

Problems in church life

In all places that our committee visited people spoke about problems in church life: declining interest in the church; declining church attendance; little contact with the church (except when there are funerals); people not coming to the sacrament; people sometimes going to other churches; dissatisfaction with church services; Aboriginal people not feeling accepted by white people; young people being lost to the church. There was sometimes recognition that some of these problems exist also among non-Aboriginal members of the church.

Appreciation for what the church has done

However, we also found that in areas where our church has a history of working with Aboriginal people, the people still identify as being Lutheran and feel an attachment to the church. People are grateful to the church for what it did in the past and still does today. In some cases it is clear that Aboriginal people have a close relationship with and a high regard for non-Aboriginal church people who have worked with them and shown a commitment to them, sometimes over a long period of time. People often still have a personal faith even if they don't come to church much.

People at our meeting in Canberra (September 1994) acknowledged many ways in which the church has been helpful to Aboriginal people, including the following: brought the gospel; gave help in times of need, also material help; conducted church services, funerals, weddings, baptisms, confirmations; gave counselling; saved people's lives; fought the government to establish reserves; in payback situations mediated peace without killings occurring; visited people in hospital and brought people private communion; was always there for people and was reliable. Aboriginal people spoke of having had good experiences of the church in the past.

Difficulties experienced by Aboriginal people in the church

However, the same meeting identified some areas of concern in regard to the relationship between the church and Aboriginal people: there is misunderstanding by non-Aboriginal church members (stories of atrocities against Aboriginal people in the early days have never been told); there are patronising attitudes on the part of non-Aboriginal church people; Aboriginal people are not always accepted by the congregation as a whole; more cultural awareness and sensitivity is needed; more church workers are needed; more leadership training for Aboriginal people, with appropriate training styles, is needed.

We heard that in some places (West Coast of South Australia and far north Queensland) some Aboriginal people have a sense of grievance about certain things the church is perceived to have done in the past, and this is affecting their attitude to the church now. Some kind of official acknowledging of what happened, and a working through of the issues involved, may be needed to help heal past hurts.

In places where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are members of the same congregation, we found that relationships between the two groups are seldom as good as they could be. The two groups tend to remain separate, with little interaction between them. Leadership positions are in the hands of non-Aboriginal people.

We heard from Aboriginal people that often they do not feel comfortable in church; they feel they are stared at and subjected to particular scrutiny. They often feel that they are

not welcomed and are not fully accepted by the non-Aboriginal members. On the West Coast a woman said that people are put off from going to church at an early age. They feel, 'This is not my church, not my place, but I go because I'm told to'. She told how she had wanted to help in the congregation by teaching Sunday school but was told no. She said, 'I've never felt I've fitted in, or that I could do it right, or that I was good enough. It's too rigid. So I haven't got involved. I've got my own way of doing it, but this wasn't acceptable.' She and others in that particular group said that what is needed in the church is respect for people, understanding of them, communication with them, and valuing them. There needs to be utilising of people's skills. They said that although they don't always feel comfortable in church, they don't want their own Nunga church; they want it to be 'all in one'. 'But often we feel we're not wanted.' People need to be made to feel welcome and wanted and valued. They said that there needs to be ground-level interaction: I accept you for who you are and what you are. We need to get rid of all attitudes of superiority. We're all on the same level. We're all human beings. They said that in Ceduna the Pentecostals are better than others at mixing with Aboriginal people and treating them as equals. It was suggested that people who want to interact with Aboriginal people have to take a risk; they risk being victimised by other non-Aboriginal people. In regard to Aboriginal people taking leadership roles it was said that people have to feel strong enough first. This can be a slow process. People start to think, 'They accept me as I am. Maybe I'll get more involved.' The trouble with white people is that they want quick fixes. People need time. Aboriginal people need time to adapt to the fact that people are saying, 'Hey, you're a human being'. People are not used to it.

In another group that we talked with, one person said that reconciliation is needed in the churches. He said, 'I feel ashamed in church to walk up to people. They're ashamed too.' He said that there is a need to 'bring understanding of both cultures together'. 'In earlier days things were better; we mixed.' Another person in the group spoke appreciatively of how the local congregation had tried holding some services in places out in the open where Aboriginal people might feel more comfortable. However, the Aboriginal people 'want to be one; not separate'. The group spoke of the reticence and embarrassment that Aboriginal people often feel. 'Aboriginal people have that shame; the past history still exists there inside' (a reference to children having been taken away from their parents and people having been killed). They said that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people need to be brought together more to share ideas. There is a need for greater involvement of Aboriginal people in the church — on committees and in decision-making.

Some of the Aboriginal people we met with spoke of things that have happened in church that have turned Aboriginal people off. One group spoke of how people have sometimes felt that they have been preached down to at funerals, that the occasion has been used as an opportunity to preach damnation, not the gospel. In another place people complained about judgmental preaching.

In one of the towns that we visited, the pastor (non-Aboriginal), who appeared to have developed good relationships with Aboriginal people in the town, spoke of how the congregation has wrestled with providing a proper ministry for the Aboriginal people. He said, however, that they have had little success and that he didn't know what the answers were. He said that non-Aboriginal members of the church had tried to do things at times (eg help with transport to and from church), but they got discouraged when Aboriginal people didn't stick to agreements and when their efforts didn't seem to be appreciated.

Aboriginal mission boards and committees

The question arose in some of our discussions with Aboriginal people of whether it is still appropriate to use the word 'mission' in relation to the church's ministry to Aboriginal people. Some groups felt strongly that as Aboriginal people they no longer want to be seen as objects of mission. Our committee feels that the church needs to be sensitive to the fact that the word 'mission' sometimes has negative as well as positive connotations for Aboriginal people. For some Aboriginal people the term has connotations of paternalism. One group stressed that 'the Aboriginality of the Lutheran church is not in missions, although this has been the history'. There are not missions any more but congregations, with people as members who happen to be Aboriginal.

In some groups that we talked with, and in conversations with individuals, there was discussion about whether the present administrative structures in regard to the church's work with Aboriginal people in South Australia and Central Australia are the most appropriate. In particular there was discussion about the location of the Committee for Aboriginal Ministry in South Australia (CAMSA) and the Finke River Mission (FRM) Board (both are seen as being located in Adelaide, where they normally meet — a long way from the geographical areas that their work relates to) and about the composition of these bodies (CAMSA has one Aboriginal member and the FRM Board none).

Our committee was aware that that there had been discussion in CAMSA about the possibility of setting up regional committees that would have also Aboriginal members. In groups on the West Coast where we discussed this idea some people strongly supported it and there was generally a positive response to it.

In discussions with people from Central Australia we found some expression of opinion that the FRM Board is too far removed from the field and that it would be better to have a committee based in Central Australia, also with Aboriginal members (if not a majority of Aboriginal members), similar to the Far North Queensland Lutheran Mission Committee. If necessary, the committee could have some representation also from outside the Northern Territory. Our committee was informed that it is currently a practice of the FRM Board not to have Aboriginal people as members of the board. However, we feel that it is time to review such a practice. We feel that in principle administration of a particular ministry should be locally based and in the hands of people involved in that ministry. At a time when more and more Aboriginal people are involved in administrative positions with government bodies and community groups and organisations, it reflects badly on the church that Aboriginal people are so poorly represented on the boards and committees that are responsible for its work of ministry among Aboriginal people.

We are aware that it has sometimes been argued that the present board structure is a 'white' structure and that therefore only non-Aboriginal people should be involved in it, since Aboriginal people will not feel comfortable having to work within it. Our committee feels that it should not be assumed that Aboriginal people are unable or unwilling to work together with non-Aboriginal people in a particular administrative structure. However, if Aboriginal people are involved and it is found that they are uncomfortable with a particular way of operating, we believe that discussions should take place to work out new ways of doing things that will better suit also the Aboriginal members of the group.

Aboriginal involvement in decision making

It was of concern to our committee to find that Aboriginal people are generally poorly represented on decision-making bodies in the church, at the local, district, and general church levels. Many of the Aboriginal people we spoke with feel that there should be greater involvement of Aboriginal people in decision making, especially where

decisions are made that affect them, even though they were aware that it would not always be easy for them to operate in areas where non-Aboriginal people would be in the majority and where white people's ways of doing things would be used. More than once Aboriginal people said that it would be important to have more than one Aboriginal person on a committee dominated by white people; it would be too hard for people if they were on their own. Our committee could see that there was plenty of leadership potential among the Aboriginal people we met with. At one of our meetings Aboriginal people pointed out that all the ATSIC regional councillors in Ceduna were educated at Concordia College and that in Queensland many Aboriginal people who went to St Peters College are holding top jobs. It appears that the church is not making enough effort to use the talents of its Aboriginal members. The church's unwillingness to involve Aboriginal people more in decision making could be seen as reflecting a continuing paternalistic attitude towards Aboriginal people.

At one of our meetings involving people from various parts of Australia Aboriginal people emphasised that they must be allowed to speak for themselves rather than having non-Aboriginal people speak for them. One person said, 'We respect what some white Lutherans have done for us in the past when we had no rights. But now we Aboriginal Lutherans need to speak for ourselves. Sometimes white Lutherans want to do things we don't agree with. We need to work together and listen to each other and share.' At the same meeting it was said that in the past the church sometimes failed to take account of differences between Aboriginal people from different areas. 'We have to raise people from within each area to do the work and have a voice for their own people. We need to give people a chance to share ideas to help each other. Aboriginal people are grown-up, free members of the LCA. The church needs to listen to Aboriginal people themselves, rather than practise paternalism. We all need to talk and work together as equals.'

Facilitating contact between Aboriginal people

In some of our meetings Aboriginal people spoke about how they had appreciated opportunities on various occasions to get together with other Lutheran Aboriginal people from other areas. One person from the West Coast, who had been at our first consultation (Canberra, September 1994), later spoke at a meeting in Ceduna about what a good experience the meeting in Canberra had been and how well people from different areas had related to each other. In various groups that we spoke with, people spoke of how it would be helpful for them to have more opportunities to meet with people from other areas — to get to know each other and develop relationships, to share ideas, to discuss common concerns, and, if necessary, to make joint representations to church authorities. One person from the West Coast, who spoke in favour of more interaction between people from different areas, said that it would be good, for example, for Aboriginal people from South Australia to see an Aboriginal pastor from Central Australia conducting a church service. This would be a good role model for people and might encourage someone to think about becoming a pastor.

Our committee feels that the church could be doing more to encourage and facilitate contact of various kinds between Aboriginal members of the church from different parts of the country. In some cases greater use could be made of regular events (such as general conventions) to bring Aboriginal people together. Wider contact between Aboriginal people could help them to gain greater confidence and build up their self-esteem. It would also provide a wider forum for Aboriginal people for the discussion of common concerns and could be a source of useful advice to the church in relation to matters of importance to Aboriginal people.

Our committee feels that the church should make special efforts to give Aboriginal members of the church the opportunity to meet Lutheran visitors from overseas,

especially when the visitors are themselves members of or have had close association with indigenous people in other countries. Similarly, where appropriate, the church should include an Aboriginal member (or members) in representations from our church to Lutheran churches overseas. Experiences of this kind would be enriching for the people involved and would increase their ability to make a contribution to the life of our church.

A vision for the church

At our first meeting with Aboriginal people in Canberra (September 1994) the group did some brainstorming about what an inclusive church would feel and look like. The following are some of the responses:

- The church would do away with mission boards. Instead there would be something like an Aboriginal ministry advisory group with majority Aboriginal representation and with real power.
- Aboriginal people would be able to hold any position within the church. There would be a policy of affirmative action.
- The church would keep in touch with what Aboriginal Lutherans want.
- Aboriginal people would feel welcome and comfortable, accepted as equals.
- Aboriginal people would be involved in decisions about mission money.
- The church would be concerned about Aboriginal community problems and would work in partnership with people to address the problems.
- Liturgy and worship would be more relevant to Aboriginal people; they would have freedom to decide what suited them.
- People would be sensitive and willing to make adjustments.
- The church would be inclusive of young Aboriginal people and their needs.
- Everyone would be consulted.
- There would be Aboriginal parish workers.
- Aboriginal workers would get payment and entitlements.
- Aboriginal people would be able to sit anywhere they wanted to in the church.
- People would never think about the differences between them ('we're all people').
- There would be mixing with each other outside of Sunday worship.
- People would keep their connections with the wider church.
- White people would volunteer to spend time in Aboriginal communities.
- Aboriginal symbols would be used within the church.

Recommendations

4.1 *Aboriginal involvement in congregational life*

- That the LCA provide resources (in the form of personnel, materials, or programs) to help congregations that have Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members find out — better ways of providing an appropriate ministry to all members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
- ways of facilitating greater contact and interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members and creating better relationships between them
- ways of making the church more welcoming and inviting for everyone, especially Aboriginal people
- ways of listening to Aboriginal members, consulting with them, including them in decision making, and involving them more fully in the life and work of the congregation.

4.2 *Aboriginal mission boards and committees*

- That the LCA no longer use the word 'mission' in relation to the ministry provided to Aboriginal people;
- and that the LCA review the present administrative structures in relation to its work with Aboriginal people with a view to providing structures that are locally based,

that have majority Aboriginal membership, and that operate in ways that are congenial to Aboriginal people.

4.3 *Aboriginal involvement in decision making*

That the LCA adopt and promote a policy of including Aboriginal people more fully in decision making in the church at the congregational, district, and general church levels, especially (but not only) in bodies responsible for the church's ministry among Aboriginal people.

4.4 *Facilitating contact between Aboriginal people*

That the LCA facilitate meetings and other forms of contact between Aboriginal members of the church from various parts of Australia; and that the LCA arrange for Aboriginal people, as opportunities arise, to meet with Lutheran visitors from overseas (especially visitors that are themselves members of indigenous groups or have close acquaintance with indigenous peoples) and to make visits to Lutheran churches in other countries.

5. CONFIDENCE BUILDING AND LEADERSHIP

Background

Time and again Pastor George Rosendale has said, 'We first need to fix our people up'. George was referring to the fact that many Aboriginal people, including those in the LCA, have low self-esteem and lack the confidence and skills to take a leadership role locally or in the Lutheran church at large.

This lack of confidence and leadership skills is partly the result of the Aboriginal experience in white Australia. For generations Aboriginal people in Australia were treated as intellectually and culturally inferior. For generations they were denied the same level of education, freedom, respect, and justice as other Australians. For generations they have not been given the power and knowledge necessary to become recognised Australian citizens.

Generations of treatment as inferior human beings has led to an internalisation of this attitude and a sense of malaise among many Aboriginal Australians. Loss of culture, language, land, home country, and in many cases even family, left large numbers of Aboriginal Australians personally disillusioned and spiritually insecure. After being told for generations that 'we are useless, ignorant and worthless we came to believe that we were'. Lutheran missions sought to give people spiritual hope through the gospel and limited education through their schools. The wider context of injustice, racism, and oppression, however, left most Aboriginal communities without the confidence and skills to become leaders or ministers in the Lutheran church.

In recent years, more Aboriginal people have been educated in such a way as to assume leadership positions within the wider Australian community. Few, however, have assumed leadership positions in the LCA. Aboriginal people from Lutheran communities who gain advanced management and communication skills are quickly appropriated by government bodies or commercial enterprises.

In visits made by our committee, Aboriginal Lutherans echoed the feeling that they were often treated as inferior and second-class citizens in the church. 'The missionary told us what to do. We never dared question his authority or knowledge.' Many also regretted that few recent clergy sought to change the situation and encourage Aboriginal people to overcome the injustice of their history and gain the skills necessary to become more active in the ministries of the church.

The Aboriginal story

Several areas were identified where encouragement, support, and training of Aboriginal members of the church is desirable. The first of these is support and training for Aboriginal members to tell their stories in ways they feel appropriate. By first learning to tell their stories, many felt that they would begin to build their confidence and benefit from reflection on their experiences.

Telling the Aboriginal stories of the Lutheran church would also benefit the church at large if, somehow, these stories could be heard by other Lutherans. Some groups emphasised that they have not had a chance to tell their story. This telling involves both sides of the story, including, for example, how the Lutheran church 'rescued Hope Vale' from an early demise but how some church policies restricted Aboriginal development.

At the final consultation of our committee people stated that they often felt put down or ashamed to tell their stories. They did not believe they would be taken seriously because of their limited communication skills in English. For some the stories were very

painful — children taken from their parents, abuse, people poisoned, massacres, etc — and very hard to relate. Yet telling them may help to bring about healing and reconciliation. The use of audio and video-tapes on location was suggested as an option. The telling, however, has to reflect Aboriginal ways of telling.

Some wanted their story to be told to the wider church in ways that would be appropriate, especially using groups of storytellers. There was strong support among some groups for intensive programs in which an accomplished storyteller/musician would help a given community develop its story and train a group of storytellers to present the story in an appropriate way to congregations of the wider church.

This story might be told using Aboriginal musical groups, art, drama, or storytelling. Whatever the form chosen, it would both serve to build one area of confidence in a given community and also communicate something of the Aboriginal story to other communities of the Lutheran church.

Worship and church leadership

Quite a few people lamented the decline in the number of Aboriginal people participating in worship. Some said they would feel 'shame' if they now returned to regular worship. Yet all would attend the funeral of a known person and expect it to be held in the church.

There were some complaints about how 'old people' or 'the pastor' had made worship restrictive, boring, irrelevant, or uncomfortable. Some youth felt excluded by the style of music, songs, and message. In Hope Vale it was reported that 'we have great joy as a community on Saturday evenings at the dance but no joy on Sunday morning at worship'.

Part of the problem, it seems, is that Aboriginal members, and especially the youth, have been given relatively few training courses that would encourage them to take leadership roles in worship. Programs or courses are needed to enable people to participate in planning and leading worship, whether through song, story, or some other form. A few complained that, while they were given some basic training in Lutheran doctrine and worship, they were not given the opportunity to build the skills and confidence needed to lead in any area of worship.

There is a difference of opinion as to whether worship should embrace aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture, or reflect only the forms introduced by Lutheran missionaries and pastors. Good training courses in worship could explore this question and examine existing efforts to link Aboriginal culture and Christian worship in a way that is consistent with the gospel.

One group spoke of how it would be good if Aboriginal people could be given encouragement and help to be more open about their Christian faith and to share it with other Aboriginal people. People would also benefit from training in teaching the faith to children, in working with young people, in counselling skills and pastoral care. Women would particularly benefit from this kind of training, because in many cases they are the ones holding families together and keeping the congregation alive.

In several contexts, people expressed a concern that potential Aboriginal leaders in the church were not identified or encouraged, but were all too often 'put in their place' when they expressed interest in taking initiatives. Differing forms of leadership need to be recognised as part of the culture of given Aboriginal communities. Nevertheless, for the Aboriginal voice to be heard in the church, more Aboriginal leaders are needed who are respected in the Aboriginal community and can speak confidently to the wider

Lutheran community. More Aboriginal leaders from the church are also needed to represent the church and their Aboriginal Christian community in the wider Australian society.

Community involvement

Aboriginal Lutherans are also concerned about the social forces which threaten to break down rather than build their respective communities. Family breakups, suicides, alcoholism, interfamily feuds, health problems, unemployment, and similar social crises have a marked impact on the local church as a community. Church leaders, it was said, must be involved in social issues which threaten the community.

Given this situation, other religious groups offer a strong appeal to those disillusioned with the church or society. Government programs often do not seem to solve the basic problem, which is deeper than secular values. Some feel that the Lutheran church has abandoned its people by not maintaining both educational and social guidance in the community.

Others recognised that more Aboriginal people need to develop both personal and social work or counselling skills to help their own community rather than rely on the Lutheran church. At the same time, people wanted the opportunity to explore what it means to be an Aboriginal and a Lutheran in contemporary society.

Recommendations

- 5.1 That the relevant District authorities of the LCA appoint one or more appropriate and qualified person(s) to develop and conduct leadership courses in each of the Aboriginal communities of the LCA, and that these courses be community-specific and include such things as:
 - confidence building through storytelling, music, and other culturally relevant forms
 - leading worship, teaching Scripture and Lutheran teaching
 - the gospel and Aboriginal culture
 - motivation, management, community building, and pastoral care
 - Aboriginal spirituality.
- 5.2 That these authorities also encourage and support Aboriginal members to take TAFE, university, and other courses available in areas such as management, education, counselling, and social work.

6. TRAINING FOR MINISTRIES

Background

This section is concerned both with the training of Aboriginal members for Lutheran ministries, and with the preparation of non-Aboriginal pastors, teachers, or parish workers who may serve Aboriginal members in various ministries.

The history of training Aboriginal people for service in the church has varied considerably from region to region. To a large extent this training has been the responsibility of the respective mission boards rather than of the seminary of the LCA. To some extent this has led to a two-track system of entry into the ordained ministry. Some Aboriginal members have said that the time has come for the seminary to take a more active role in guiding the training of all Aboriginal pastors.

Until recently, pastors who served Aboriginal communities were designated missionaries. The role of the traditional missionary carried with it a particular authority, orientation, set of skills, and expectations which may no longer apply. Understandably, many missionaries reflected the paternalistic attitudes of their time. Today, those called to serve Aboriginal communities do so as pastors in parishes of the LCA, not as traditional missionaries. It was considered important by many that pastors in Aboriginal communities, whether Aboriginal or not, have the same status and privileges as other pastors of the LCA.

In some areas, people were not so concerned about whether or not they were ministered to by an Aboriginal pastor, as long as the pastor was the right kind of person. 'It doesn't have to be a Nunga minister working with Aboriginal people. Take that pressure off [the expectation that Aboriginal people be served by Aboriginal pastors] and people might come forward in their own time when they are ready.' The crucial issue was not whether a pastor was 'black or white', but sensitivity to Aboriginal history and culture.

Preparation for ministry

In the consultations of our committee, the need for more Aboriginal people to enter the ministries of the LCA was frequently mentioned. It was recognised, however, that the forms of ministry appropriate in a given Aboriginal context may differ from the form suitable in other Aboriginal communities of the LCA where traditional aspects of Aboriginal culture still play a significant part in local leadership.

The Finke River Mission has established a recognised training program for local ministries, using course materials which have been submitted to the seminary for review. This program has a successful history of training Aboriginal pastors in their local language for service in local communities. A few Aboriginal members from the Centre expressed the hope that in time Aboriginal pastors from the Centre could receive additional training and participate more widely in the life of the LCA. Continued in-service training through the seminary was also emphasised as very important.

Some of those who went to Nungalinga Aboriginal College, Wontulp Bi Buya, and elsewhere, found it difficult to be away from their home place for extended periods of time. It was suggested, therefore, that preparatory course units might be taught on location before further training in another location. Such basic units could give people greater confidence when studying outside their home support system.

There was some difference of opinion about the relative merits of the program at Nungalinga College, especially because of the absence of specifically Lutheran components and orientation. It was recognised, however, that this program was an

excellent opportunity for Aboriginal members interested in various forms of ministry to interact with Aboriginal Christians from other regions, to complete basic courses in Scripture and theology, and to explore with others the communication of the gospel in Aboriginal contexts.

It was also pointed out that Aboriginal people would probably be more likely to complete such programs if they were able to study as a group rather than individually. A group given preliminary training in their home community could then study together at Nungalingya or elsewhere. Another valuable suggestion was that groups or individuals interested in the ministry could function with a local mentor or support-person over a period of time to gain an insight into the nature of a given ministry.

Some emphasised the need for Aboriginal role models to be respected and encouraged also in the ministry. All too often, it was said, Aboriginal people cut down their people when they succeed. For some it is viewed as a 'shame thing' if people really succeed. Some even said people would feel 'shame' if they aspired to being a pastor.

There was also strong support for the idea that units in Lutheran teaching and hermeneutics be added to the Nungalingya program for Lutheran students, taught perhaps by a part-time Lutheran lecturer. Given our current good relations with Nungalingya, this proposal would seem to be viable and could be introduced along with a group of Aboriginal students, including mature-age students.

The ultimate goal expressed by several groups is that in the not-too-distant future Aboriginal pastors, teachers, and parish workers could function in any parish or school of the LCA in the same way as non-Aboriginal members. The presence of Aboriginal ministers as a normal part of church and school life in the LCA would enrich us all. For this to happen, Aboriginal students would need to attend Luther Seminary or LTC as part of their training.

These ideas were brought together at the final consultation of our committee and resulted in strong support for a three-stage program for preparing Aboriginal members for ministry. These stages may not be appropriate or necessary for each region, especially where existing programs are working well. There was a strong feeling, however, that they ought to be considered as an option for all areas. The three stages are:

Stage One: Preparatory course units designed to build confidence, improve written language skills, introduce various ministries under local mentors, and begin Lutheran theology. This program would be designed for groups to learn to study together, with the possibility of studying together in Stage Two. Stage One would be under the auspices of the CAMSA, FRM, or FNQLMC as appropriate. This program could include a series of short courses consisting of 2-week modules specially prepared jointly with experienced Aboriginal leaders and submitted for accreditation with Nungalingya College.

Stage Two: Courses at Nungalingya Aboriginal College, Alice Springs, TAFE, or elsewhere designed to develop a more intensive understanding of Scripture, theology, and ministry, and provide the student with a basic qualification. Existing programs would be supplemented, where necessary, by Lutheran theology and orientation. Extra units could be accredited with Adelaide College of Divinity. Courses developed by FRM could be separately accredited. Students in this program would be monitored and supported by the responsible authorities involved in Stage One.

Stage Three: Courses at Luther Seminary designed to build on Stage Two and adapted to the needs of the groups of Aboriginal students studying for various ministries, including the ordained ministry. These students would be supported by the seminary and the church at large. In some cases congregations might wish to sponsor students in this program. It was emphasised that such courses should be developed and, where possible presented, together with Aboriginal people.

Stage One Preparatory units	Stage Two Award courses	Stage Three Ministry courses
2 weeks duration, locally adapted, Nungalinga accredited on location at	theology, Scripture, etc, Lutheran focus added, for diploma, degree with bodies such as	for teachers, pastors, parish workers, adapted for Aboriginal students at
North Queensland (under FNQLMC)	Wontulp Bi Buya TAFE	Luther Seminary or extension
West Coast (SA) (under CAMSA)	Nungalinga College	Luther Seminary or extension
Adelaide (under CAMSA)	TAFE, Nungalinga	Luther Seminary
The Centre (under FRM)	Accredited FRM course Nungalinga	Luther Seminary or FRM course

Special ministry programs

In addition to the need for a program of courses to prepare Aboriginal people for ministries in the LCA, many expressed a strong concern for special units and programs within the existing courses at Luther Seminary to prepare all who work in ministries among Aboriginal communities.

Experiences by Aboriginal congregations in recent years have made some of them very aware that some of the attitudes and styles of missionaries in the past are no longer appropriate. The current critical situation demands that any who intend to serve as teachers, parish workers, or ordained pastors in Aboriginal communities need to have a good understanding of the history and culture of a given area and be sensitive to the social issues that affect Aboriginal people today. In the past, Aboriginal people said, 'white pastors often preached down to us'.

Aboriginal people stressed to us the importance of the right non-Aboriginal people being chosen to minister among Aboriginal people and the importance of their receiving proper training, orientation, and support. In one area Aboriginal people stressed that both pastors and teachers should have an intensive orientation course about the history, culture, and current values of the Aboriginal community where they are to serve. In one place people said that every pastor that comes 'has to be trained from scratch'. People should be trained to minister to people from different cultures as a basic part of their seminary course.

Our impression, also from talking with non-Aboriginal people working with Aboriginal people, is that pastors, church workers, teachers, and others are not always selected or screened carefully enough, given sufficient training or orientation, provided with the

necessary in-servicing, or given the special support needed during their ministry. Procedures for screening people to discern their attitude to working with Aboriginal people and their aptitude for cross-cultural ministry ought to be a basic consideration for the future.

Where people are being considered for working in areas where Aboriginal languages are still used, we believe that greater use should be made of courses provided by Wycliffe Bible Translators to test people's aptitude for language learning, and that people who are then called or appointed to this work be given linguistic training (through an organisation such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics).

Working in a cross-cultural ministry can be stressful, and some felt that the LCA, through the relevant bodies, should make sure that people ministering to Aboriginal people are given special support and encouragement. Some thought that this support had not always been present, especially in remote areas. Our impression was that there is a danger that non-Aboriginal people become disheartened, disillusioned, and even cynical, in spite of their love and concern for Aboriginal people, when they are not adequately supported in their work.

An important aspect of ministering in Aboriginal contexts is the question of the relationship of a given Aboriginal culture to the message of the Christian gospel. Some Aboriginal people feel that in the past some missionaries negated Aboriginal culture and associated the Christian message with Western forms of culture. Aboriginal culture, said some, is far more than 'quaint beliefs' to be tolerated or art and drama to be exploited for commercial reasons. Aboriginal culture is a deep and powerful factor which needs to be explored in terms of worship, proclaiming the gospel, social organisation, ministry and doing theology. Questions of how far to use aspects of Aboriginal culture in the service of the gospel need to be answered by Aboriginal Christians themselves.

There was strong support for a move to include a study of Aboriginal culture and history as an integral part of the courses at Luther Seminary, not merely as a one-off optional unit, but as fundamental to the question of relating the gospel to the diverse cultures of Australia and understanding Christ's presence in Aboriginal communities who have suffered at the hands of European immigrants for more than 200 years.

Recommendations

- 6.1 That the above three-stage plan for preparing Aboriginal members for participating in the various ministries of the LCA be implemented where appropriate.
- 6.2 That at Luther Seminary special courses be developed in which Aboriginal history and culture are studied and the task of relating the gospel to this culture seriously explored, and that these courses be integral to the training of people for the various ministries of the LCA.
- 6.3 That screening procedures, orientation programs, in-service courses, and support mechanisms be developed for those ministering in Aboriginal communities.

7. WOMEN

Ministry among Aboriginal people is not only conducted by pastors. All members of the church have a responsibility for ministry in the broad sense. Aboriginal women have particular gifts in ministry within our church, and also play important roles in their local communities.

Church and congregation

Members of our committee met many Aboriginal women involved in ministry all over Australia: teaching religious instruction, Sunday school, confirmation, and involved in singing. They also minister in many informal ways, as well as in their daily work, eg as state school teachers. Some women asked for greater preparation and training for these ministries. Such preparation may include Bible studies and training workshops to help them share their faith, and resources, such as Sunday school materials. Resource people within the Districts could visit the communities to share these resources and provide support. Some women have received training, and need support in their ongoing work. Some Aboriginal women felt that the church should find an appropriate title for the women involved in more formal ministry roles within the church, and that some women should be trained as Aboriginal parish workers. This is to be tried in Yalata during 1997.

Women are strong in many communities. Their traditional roles include the education of the young. Their roles have also changed over time as the communities change. Some women expressed the desire to have more say and involvement in their local congregations. This needs to be done in a culturally appropriate way. Traditional roles are changing but there are still clear distinctions about roles within the culture in many areas. While Aboriginal men and women worship together, greater involvement by women in decision-making within the church could be culturally disruptive in places. The situation in each local community needs to be taken into account, while recognising that women may need support and training to have their voices heard, especially within the wider church.

Family and community

Women are also concerned about their families and communities. Disputes between families, and the problems of alcohol, drugs, petrol sniffing, poverty, and poor health are of great concern. Some women are also victims of domestic violence. Some women are said to neglect their children because of alcohol. Some women suffer serious health problems themselves, or support family members with such problems. Older women particularly express frustration at the fact that their families don't listen to them any more. Some say they no longer know what to do about these problems; others have ideas and are keen to implement them. Women need support and skills in community building, given the fragmentation of their communities. Many women saw that their communities would benefit from strengthening their faith and coming back into the church fold. Women are keen to take part in this ministry.

Aboriginal marriage difficulties present a particularly challenging problem. Older women are concerned that young people do not get married in the church any more, and neither do they follow traditional marriage practices. The question was raised as to whether a new form of marriage ceremony is needed, which would emphasise the importance and responsibilities of marriage. Marriage problems have traditionally been considered a family issue, and it is not generally seen as appropriate for the church to get involved; it would be difficult for a pastor to avoid being seen as 'taking sides'.

Women should not be built up at the expense of men. Many women seem to be stronger than the men, who have been more acutely affected by dispossession of their land, breakdown of traditional roles, and alcohol abuse. Men may feel threatened by women taking on stronger roles within the community and the church, and may also need support. One man mentioned that the government has formed 'women's councils' but he feels they also need 'men's councils'.

Further study

We met some Aboriginal women who have returned to formal study and trained as teachers or nurse assistants. There are some women doing excellent work within

Lutheran schools. We also saw good examples of non-Aboriginal women supporting and developing women in local communities through literacy training and health education. There are many examples in developing countries where communities have been developed and rebuilt through working with women's groups.

Stories of Aboriginal women

(The names have been changed)

- Doreen has worked in her congregation in a remote Aboriginal community in various ministry roles for many years. She was encouraged by the non-Aboriginal pastor who felt sorry for the women who were left behind when the Aboriginal evangelists went off for their week-long training sessions. He conducted intensive Bible studies with them at home. Doreen has taught Sunday school and has taken a leading role within the congregation. When there were no pastors or evangelists she led Sunday worship services.
- Helen lives in an Aboriginal community. She works in the government clinic as a nurse assistant and also cares for her children, including her daughter who is in a wheelchair. Formal Sunday school has not been conducted in the community for some time, so Helen gathers the children together in her home and teaches them Bible stories.
- Mabel and Rosalie teach religious instruction regularly in the local community school. Each week they spend time preparing their stories and activities. When we were there they were looking through old Sunday school material, and we discovered that they had not even seen the *Come and see Jesus* material. The children are keen participants in the religious instruction classes and most know the Bible stories well.
- We spoke with some Aboriginal women who worship in a mainly non-Aboriginal congregation. One spoke of how she worries about going to church and not having appropriate clothing to wear. This is not a problem for her in other contexts (eg in the child-care centre where she works), where it doesn't seem to matter so much. But at church she feels that people look at her if she does not have the right clothes. As she spoke the tears welled in her eyes.

Recommendations

- 7.1 That training programs for female Aboriginal parish workers to work together with pastors in Aboriginal communities be developed and implemented in a culturally sensitive way.
- 7.2 That training and resources be provided to support Aboriginal women in their local ministry roles, such as teaching the young.
- 7.3 That the church work together with women in Aboriginal communities to encourage and support them in developing appropriate ways to address issues of community concern, such as petrol sniffing; and that successful programs in Australia and overseas be reviewed and adapted for use in communities.

8. EDUCATION AND YOUTH

Lutheran Aboriginal education in the past

From the early days of Australian Lutheran missions to Aboriginal peoples, schools were established for the children. These were based on European models, and in most cases Aboriginal children were trained in European patterns of behaviour. The aim was instruction in Christian teachings and elementary skills in the three Rs. Attitudes towards the Aboriginal languages varied, but the missionaries usually hoped that the children would abandon their traditional way of life and assimilate into the European-based society. Few Aboriginal children had schooling beyond the primary level.

This pattern largely continued until about the second half of the twentieth century. A few Aboriginal students then began going to Lutheran colleges, often facing great difficulties because of their isolation and the cultural differences. Some of the Lutheran missions began looking at different ways of providing schooling, such as the sending of teachers to outlying Aboriginal communities to teach specific skills rather than the sending of children to central schools. Many of the older Lutheran schools for Aboriginal children were closed or handed over to the government.

The current situation for schools

Most Aboriginal people our committee spoke to valued the church's involvement in education. Many regretted the state takeover of the schools on Aboriginal communities. Some felt that the government may be ready to hand some of the schools back to the church. This has already happened with Yirara College. There would then need to be an adequate supply of Lutheran teachers with the skills to work in such schools.

Aboriginal children experience racism in the state school system, and retention through to secondary school is poor. The church's role in providing religious instruction in state schools is important. Some Aboriginal people are doing this teaching.

Young Aboriginal people get homesick if they need to go away from their communities to school. They can also experience racism in Lutheran schools. Teachers and students may not have sufficient cultural sensitivity or the skills to handle racial tension. There is a need to enhance the curriculum in cross-cultural studies for all students (and teachers) in Lutheran schools, and to incorporate appropriate components on Aboriginal history and culture. This is already happening in some schools, but further development is needed. The type of accommodation available in the city can be a problem for young Aboriginal students from the country. There was support for the idea of having a family home available to groups of students, perhaps with Aboriginal house-parents, rather than a formal boarding situation.

Many of the students who have completed secondary education at Lutheran colleges have appreciated the benefits, such as getting good jobs in government services. Scholarships are needed to support capable students to continue their education.

Catering for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in the one Lutheran school is working well at Crossways in Ceduna and Peace College in Cairns. This model was supported by many, particularly where Aboriginal students are not just a small minority. Aboriginal people living in the Adelaide area suggested that there may be room for a multicultural Lutheran college in the western suburbs. It is understood that planning for a school in that area is already under way.

Some Aboriginal people felt that there would be benefits in conducting exchanges between non-Aboriginal classes and Aboriginal or mixed schools within the Lutheran system.

There is a debate in Central Australia about the value of teaching children in both English and their language. In more traditional areas a different value is placed on formal education. Some Aboriginal parents want schools to provide the skills of European society and to leave the teaching of Aboriginal culture to the family and community; others want schools to help them in the passing on of their Aboriginal heritage to their children.

Aboriginal youth

Youth are falling away from the church, often after confirmation. Those who drop out of school and don't get work can succumb to alcohol abuse and petrol sniffing. Youth suicide is also an issue. Most Aboriginal congregations do not seem to have any organised youth activities. Young people need to build up their confidence. Drama, music, and storytelling activities may help in this. Young people from different Aboriginal communities across Australia may benefit from coming together and sharing their experiences.

Many young Aboriginal people do not relate to traditional worship styles. Our committee met many Aboriginal people with a great love of music and many musical talents. Young people could be encouraged to use these talents within the church, especially in worship. Some Aboriginal people felt that older people would not support contemporary worship styles of music. Others felt that they would get used to new music if they heard it, and if not, that separate services could be held. Acceptance of modern music will not be universal, and this could cause the same problems as occur in non-Aboriginal congregations.

It was suggested that the church ask congregations to pray for Aboriginal young people.

Recommendations

- 8.1 That the LCA investigate opportunities to be involved in primary education in Aboriginal communities.
- 8.2 That appropriate models of accommodation and support be sought for Aboriginal secondary students who live away from home to attend college.
- 8.3 That cultural awareness training be made available to teachers and students of Lutheran schools and those training at LTC; and that where schools are currently running successful programs in cultural awareness, these programs should be promoted in other Lutheran schools.
- 8.4 That the LCA investigate the feasibility of establishing a Lutheran secondary college in the western suburbs of Adelaide, with a special focus on multiculturalism, to cater particularly for Aboriginal students.
- 8.5 That the church encourage worship styles and forms suitable for young people in Aboriginal communities and young people's involvement in music for worship.
- 8.6 That LCA and District youth directors examine how they can support the development of youth programs in Aboriginal communities, foster contact across communities and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and encourage the participation of Aboriginal youth in wider church youth activities.

9. COMMUNITY ISSUES

The problems

Before white settlement, indigenous communities were highly structured and effective. They included extended families, in which the people worked together to survive. There were traditional systems to carry out important functions such as teaching the young, and maintaining law and order. The structures were strong and kept the communities functioning well for many thousands of years.

Some of this community strength remains, but much has been broken down by European influences. The indigenous people we spoke with were concerned about the many social problems facing their communities. At one meeting the following issues were listed:

- schooling
- relationships with police
- drugs
- alcohol
- health
- breakdown of Aboriginal culture
- domestic violence
- control of young people
- family breakups
- divisions within Aboriginal communities
- lack of power in decision making
- land rights.

On the other hand, a number of positive things were happening for indigenous people and their communities. These included

- the Community Development Employment Project (CDEP)
- the homelands movement
- revival of kinship systems
- police aides
- alcohol programs
- sport
- increasing cultural awareness
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC).

Changes that have brought disadvantage

Since our meeting referred to above, cuts have been made to the funding for ATSIC and the CDEP, which provides employment for many indigenous people.

On all social indicators, Australian indigenous people and communities are more disadvantaged than other Australians. In 1991, unemployment for indigenous Australians was almost three times higher than for non-indigenous Australians. Poverty is much higher, and an ATSIC survey in 1992 found that there were \$3 billion worth of infrastructure needs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including basic services, housing, and road works. About 11% of the indigenous population aged 15 years and over have never attended school. Average life expectancy is 15 to 20 years less for indigenous people than for non-indigenous Australians. (*Walking Together*, p141)

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody found that the major underlying contributing factors to indigenous Australians' disadvantage were the legacy

of history, and the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples, particularly from access to economic, political and social power. Aboriginal and Torres Strait labour made a widely undervalued contribution to the marine, agricultural and pastoral sectors of the Australian economy before the advent of farm mechanisation and the achievement of equal wages. When the rural economy largely squeezed out its indigenous workers after the 1960s, with no compensation or land and resource settlements, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples became much more economically marginalised. (*Walking Together*, p141)

When the church was involved in running Aboriginal communities, it played a direct role in controlling social problems, sometimes through strict disciplinary measures. Since the handing over of communities to indigenous or government control, the church has to some extent withdrawn from involvement in these areas, and has seen its main role as being in the ministry of word and sacrament. Some older indigenous people told us that they long for the past times when church discipline had a stronger role in their communities, even though they might not have appreciated it at the time. Many younger indigenous people would not see this as an appropriate role for the church. The church has a limited diaconic ministry with indigenous people (eg Lutheran Community Care in Adelaide), and has taken part in advocacy regarding community issues (eg alcohol problems at Yalata), but could perhaps do more in helping communities address social problems. Aboriginal people raised a number of difficulties with this during the consultations; for example, the church should not cut across the role of the family in sorting out relationship problems.

Challenge to the church

The difficult question in this area is: What can the church do?. Many of the responses overlap with other sections of this report. There are many issues of structural disadvantage that can only be overcome by changing the structures and priorities of our society. For this to occur, we need to overcome racism and promote reconciliation in our church and in the wider community. For Christians these are gospel-centred actions, and the church has an important role to play in helping them to come about. The LCA needs to become a strong advocate for positive change.

Helping indigenous people to obtain educational opportunities is important in addressing disadvantage. Our Lutheran school system has grown dramatically in recent years and has a good reputation in our community. We already have some excellent examples of creating such opportunities for indigenous people; however, we need to keep working hard in this area.

We have much expertise to draw on from within the Lutheran World Federation and the Lutheran World Service for how to assist disadvantaged communities. We need to draw on their advice and help in supporting our indigenous communities.

It is critical that indigenous people are supported to gain the skill and knowledge needed to address their own community problems. However, self-determination does not mean that non-indigenous people should not get involved in helping to address the social problems and disadvantage of indigenous communities. We need to develop constructive and sensitive partnerships in these areas. Church members need to be assisted to overcome stereotyped views about indigenous people and understand the real causes of their disadvantage.

Recommendations

9.1 That the LCA draw on the expertise of the Lutheran World Service and the Lutheran Community Care departments to determine, in consultation with those

concerned, how the social needs of disadvantaged Aboriginal communities and people can best be met, and act on the findings where possible.

- 9.2 That the LCA encourage its members to be sensitive to Aboriginal community issues and encourage congregations to work in partnership with these communities to develop a holistic ministry.

APPENDIX: THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLE CONSULTED

Listed below are the Aboriginal people who attended formal gatherings to discuss this report. This does not include those who attended consultations in various local communities. The final report was drawn up by the Adelaide members of the committee (see Introduction). Despite our attempts to gain consensus on the issues and views expressed in the report, they do not necessarily reflect the views of all listed here.

West Coast of South Australia

Edmund Bilney .
 Russell Bryant.
 Rose Hillman .
 Jodie Miller .
 Penong Miller .
 Wanda Miller
 Keely Mundy
 Pastor Keith Peters .
 Roslyn Peters
 Archie Reid
 Joy Reid
 Colleen Tschuna

Central Australia

Pastor Davey Inkamala
 Mavis Malbunka
 Daphne Puntjina

Queensland

Peter Costello
 Dunbia Lakefield
 Pastor George Rosendale
 Len Rosendale
 Noel Pearson

Adelaide

Rita Boxer
 Mary-Anne Chester
 Margaret Lawrie
 Maxine Wilson

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Reconciliation

- 1.1 That the LCA publicly commit itself to a process of working for reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the church.
- 1.2 That the church prepare a range of resources to help church members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
 - think about and understand the need for reconciliation
 - learn about, understand, and acknowledge what has happened in the past between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
 - find ways of interacting and working together, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, with mutual acceptance and respect
- 1.3 That the LCA establish a group, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal membership, to explain and promote the reconciliation process in the church, and to consider the possibility of some form of reconciliation event in 2001, the centenary of federation.
- 1.4 That the church publicise and promote in all its parishes the annual Week of Prayer for Reconciliation (27 May - 3 June).
- 1.5 That the LCA publicise accounts of programs or events involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of the church working together, learning about each other, and acknowledging and overcoming past misunderstanding and distrust.

2 Racism

- 2.1 That the church speak out strongly against racism, affirming the equal value of all people in God's eyes, and stressing the importance for people, in the power of the gospel, to show acceptance and respect towards one another.
- 2.2 That the church prepare materials to help its members understand the problem of racism, recognise racist tendencies in all of us, and overcome racist attitudes and behaviour.
- 2.3 That the church develop materials and programs to help its non-Aboriginal members understand, appreciate, and value Aboriginal people, their culture, and the contributions that Aboriginal people have made and continue to make in Australian life and in the life of the church.
- 2.4 That the church facilitate programs of exchange and interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the church, so that they can come to know, understand, appreciate, and accept one another better.

3 Land rights

- 3.1 That the church publicly state its support for the principle of land rights for Aboriginal people.
- 3.2 That the church establish a consultative group of Aboriginal people to advise church leaders in relation to land rights issues.
- 3.3 That the church prepare materials to help its members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) understand the issue of land rights (the traditional importance of land for Aboriginal people; the history of land rights; the present legal situation; theological perspectives), to clear up misunderstandings, and to help members view the issue from a gospel perspective.

4 Involvement of Aboriginal people in the church

- 4.1 *Aboriginal involvement in congregational life*
That the LCA provide resources (in the form of personnel, materials, or programs) to help congregations that have Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members find out — better ways of providing an appropriate ministry to all members (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
— ways of facilitating greater contact and interaction between Aboriginal and non-

Aboriginal members and creating better relationships between them
 — ways of making the church more welcoming and inviting for everyone, especially Aboriginal people
 — ways of listening to Aboriginal members, consulting with them, including them in decision making, and involving them more fully in the life and work of the congregation.

4.2 *Aboriginal mission boards and committees*

That the LCA no longer use the word 'mission' in relation to the ministry provided to Aboriginal people;
 and that the LCA review the present administrative structures in relation to its work with Aboriginal people with a view to providing structures that are locally based, that have majority Aboriginal membership, and that operate in ways that are congenial to Aboriginal people.

4.3 *Aboriginal involvement in decision making*

That the LCA adopt and promote a policy of including Aboriginal people more fully in decision making in the church at the congregational, district, and general church levels, especially (but not only) in bodies responsible for the church's ministry among Aboriginal people.

4.4 *Facilitating contact between Aboriginal people*

That the LCA facilitate meetings and other forms of contact between Aboriginal members of the church from various parts of Australia;
 and that the LCA arrange for Aboriginal people, as opportunities arise, to meet with Lutheran visitors from overseas (especially visitors that are themselves members of indigenous groups or have close acquaintance with indigenous peoples) and to make visits to Lutheran churches in other countries.

5 Confidence building and leadership

5.1 That the relevant District authorities of the LCA appoint one or more appropriate and qualified person(s) to develop and conduct leadership courses in each of the Aboriginal communities of the LCA, and that these courses be community-specific and include such things as:

- confidence building through storytelling, music, and other culturally relevant forms
- leading worship, teaching Scripture and Lutheran teaching
- the gospel and Aboriginal culture
- motivation, management, community building, and pastoral care
- Aboriginal spirituality.

5.2 That these authorities also encourage and support Aboriginal members to take TAFE, university, and other courses available in areas such as management, education, counselling, and social work.

6 Training for ministries

6.1 That the above three-stage plan for preparing Aboriginal members for participating in the various ministries of the LCA be implemented where appropriate.

6.2 That at Luther Seminary special courses be developed in which Aboriginal history and culture are studied and the task of relating the gospel to this culture seriously explored, and that these courses be integral to the training of people for the various ministries of the LCA.

6.3 That screening procedures, orientation programs, in-service courses, and support mechanisms be developed for those ministering in Aboriginal communities.

7 Women

7.1 That training programs for female Aboriginal parish workers to work together with pastors in Aboriginal communities be developed and implemented in a culturally sensitive way.

- 7.2 That training and resources be provided to support Aboriginal women in their local ministry roles, such as teaching the young.
- 7.3 That the church work together with women in Aboriginal communities to encourage and support them in developing appropriate ways to address issues of community concern, such as petrol sniffing; and that successful programs in Australia and overseas be reviewed and adapted for use in communities.

8 Education and youth

- 8.1 That the LCA investigate opportunities to be involved in primary education in Aboriginal communities.
- 8.2 That appropriate models of accommodation and support be sought for Aboriginal secondary students who live away from home to attend college.
- 8.3 That cultural awareness training be made available to teachers and students of Lutheran schools and those training at LTC; and that where schools are currently running successful programs in cultural awareness, these programs should be promoted in other Lutheran schools.
- 8.4 That the LCA investigate the feasibility of establishing a Lutheran secondary college in the western suburbs of Adelaide, with a special focus on multiculturalism, to cater particularly for Aboriginal students.
- 8.5 That the church encourage worship styles and forms suitable for young people in Aboriginal communities and young people's involvement in music for worship.
- 8.6 That LCA and District youth directors examine how they can support the development of youth programs in Aboriginal communities, foster contact across communities and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and encourage the participation of Aboriginal youth in wider church youth activities.

9 Community issues

- 9.1 That the LCA draw on the expertise of the Lutheran World Service and the Lutheran Community Care departments to determine, in consultation with those concerned, how the social needs of disadvantaged Aboriginal communities and people can best be met, and act on the findings where possible.
- 9.2 That the LCA encourage its members to be sensitive to Aboriginal community issues and encourage congregations to work in partnership with these communities to develop a holistic ministry.

