

Christians for an Ethical Society Annual Report 2010-2011

Introduction

Christians for an Ethical Society (CES) is a working Group of the NSW Ecumenical Council – Churches Together and an Associate Member of the ACT Council of Churches.

CES primarily meets its goals of promoting social justice and furthering public education in ethics, current social issues and the Christian perspective on them through public forums. Given the limited time and resources of CES members, we are only able to give minimum support to other social justice activities.

In 2010-11, the CES held six successful public forums.

Three forums were held under the 2010 theme of Poverty and Affluence and three under the 2011 theme Good Stewardship – Protecting Our Future.

2010 theme: Poverty and Affluence

- In August 2010, our forum was co-sponsored by the Association of Good Government; and the speaker was Dr Terry Dwyer talking on the subject “Is Taxation Immoral?”
- In September 2010, Graeme Mundine, then Executive Secretary of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Executive Council (NATSIEC), addressed concerns about the Northern Territory Intervention under the topic “Poor Fellow My Country; Lamenting Our Poverty of Spirit.”
- In November 2010, Dr Richard Dennis, Executive Director of the Australia Institute spoke on “A Fair Share; Consumerism and a Fair Go in Australia”.

2011 theme: Good Stewardship – Protecting Our Future

- In February 2011, Bishop George Browning introduced the year’s theme with a theological perspective under the title “Known Knowns: A Basket of Summer Fruits”.
- In March 2011, Dr Sue Wareham, Immediate Past President of Medical Association for Prevention of War, spoke on “Nuclear Power: Bequeathing Yet More Problems to Future Generations”.
- In May 2011, our forum was co-sponsored by Sustainable Population Australia. We had two speakers: Geoff Buckmaster, speaking on “Hurling Towards a Precipice,

Hoping for a Miracle” and Mark O’Connor speaking on “Controlling Our Population – A Moral Obligation”.

We generally seek to have a guest forum chair who gives a short Christian perspective on the topic. On most occasions we invite a cleric or theologian. Our guest forum Chairs were: Jack Waterford (Canberra Times); Rev Gregor Henderson; Brendan Kennedy (Uniting Care); Rev Colin Dundon, part of whose introduction to Bishop Browning was used on the CES Website as an outline of the 2011 theme; Rev Erica Mathieson; and Rev Ivan Roberts. We are most grateful for the support of these forum Chairs.

Additional Forums

In addition to the planned six public forums given under agreed themes, CES were delighted to participate in two other successful public events.

- In March, at the invitation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council (NATSIEC) and in conjunction with NATSIEC and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, CES supported a public forum for Dr Anthony G Reddie, Research Fellow in Black Theology at The Queens Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education, Birmingham, UK. Dr Reddie’s topic was “Stakeholding: Towards a Christian Theology of Radical Inclusivity”.
- Early in 2011, CES held a special afternoon entitled “Conversation with Elizabeth Avery Scott”, author of the successful play “Lies Love and Hitler”. This play had teased out ethical issues in a contemporary situation but in the framework of Dietrich Bonhoeffer and had proved very popular. We were most grateful for the support of Wesley Uniting Church which co-sponsored the event with the provision of the venue. The success of the afternoon was aided by the active support of actors James Scott, Dallas Bland and Hanna Cormick.

Other Social Justice activities

Following our September 2010 Forum “Poor Fellow My Country; Lamenting Our Poverty of Spirit”, CES emailed federal members of Parliament, members of the ACT Legislative Assembly and ACT senior schools, highlighting issues raised at the forum by Mr Mundine and in other documents and reports on the issue. Appropriate websites for such papers were provided.

In 2011 CES was pleased to endorse the Australian Christian Response to Climate Change.

CES E-bulletin

The CES provides a regular e-bulletin to supporters. The bulletin advises of CES forums and notifies of other social justice events occurring in the Canberra region.

CES Website: www.ces.org.au

A comprehensive web site provides information about the CES, its forthcoming forums and audio tapes of previous forums. Other information on the web site includes notification of non-CES forums related to social justice, links to many papers and reports on social justice and ethical issues and links to other organisations working in the social justice field. Thanks to web master Sepp Bapler.

Attendance at meetings of the Social Justice Commission of the NSW Ecumenical Council – Churches Together

Thanks to John Nevile for his regular attendance and contribution to meetings of the Social Justice Commission of the NSW Ecumenical Council – Churches Together.

Attendance at ACT Council of Churches meetings

Heather McLaren has regularly attended meetings of the ACT Council of Churches. Sepp Bapler has attended when Heather was unavailable.

President of CES

Rev Gregor Henderson has taken the role of CES President from 2010 and will continue in this role until December 2011. We are most grateful that Gregor has been prepared to take on this role, despite his heavy clerical duties within the Uniting Church. Thanks to Gregor for his participative support in committee planning activities, his attendance at forums wherever possible and his willingness to Chair a number of our forums.

Committee

Thanks to each member of the committee for their contributions. Conducting forums requires planning, negotiating with prospective speakers and chairpersons, preparing and distributing publicity flyers, recording the forums and then preparing the record for the web site, maintaining the web site, putting out media releases and other publicity; and of course providing supper and making our speakers and audience feel welcome. Organisation also requires some-one to take good care of the money and for some-one to keep a record of our deliberations.

Committee members

Executive: Heather McLaren (Chair), John Nevile (Vice-Chair), David Palmer (Treasurer), Robyn Coghlan (Secretary);

Other members: Sepp Bapler (web master), Bill Bush, Colin Dundon, John Goss, Andrew Herscovitch, Werner Padarin

We particularly thank Brian Wraith who retired from the committee and the position of treasurer at the end of 2010. Brian has been a great support to CES from its inception.

Membership and Supporters

Members have until the end of September to renew their membership. Nineteen members have renewed to date and assuming all members renew, membership will stand at forty. There are 341 supporters on the email list. During the year attendance at CES forums ranged from 31 people to 76 people, with an average attendance of 56.

Thanks to Wesley Uniting Church

We are grateful to Wesley Uniting Church in Forrest for the provision of their premises for our committee meetings.

Thanks to Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture

Whenever possible, we hold our forums at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. We thank Rev Professor James Haire AM, Executive Director of the Centre; and staff, in particular Mrs Margaret Roberts, Centre and Programs Manager; and Mr Lyndon Mayfield, Administrative Assistant who continue to be supportive of our work.

Thanks to Christian Radio 1wayfm

Mr Howie Warren of Christian Radio 1wayfm has supported CES through providing the opportunity to speak about forthcoming forums and other public events on the Christian radio station.

Heather McLaren
Chair
August 2011