**CHRISTIANS FOR AN ETHICAL SOCIETY**

**ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

**September 2022**

It is fascinating that the Hebrew scriptures and the Gospels are filled with stories. The poetry that commences the Bible tells the story of creation. Stories have a unique truth different from concepts, ideas or definitions. Importantly, as Isabelle Hamley points out in her wonderful book *Embracing Justice,* stories are about people. They force us to look into the eyes of the characters in the stories, particularly those who suffer. However stories are not tidy, and often leave us with more questions than answers. As Hamley says “This is the genius of stories: with their ambiguities and unanswered questions, they invite us to continue to wrestle with the text, our consciences and the vocation of being a Christian today.”

Christians for an Ethical Society is an organisation drawn from the Christian communities of Canberra concerned about issues of justice, the common good, God’s prophetic voice, what it means to live out our Christianity in politics, society, community and economy. We respect God’s creation and the importance of giving voice to the voiceless and upholding those in need, discriminated against or neglected. We respect the profound teachings of the Bible. We work in close association with the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and the ACT Council of Churches.

COVID-19 impacted significantly the CES Forums program in 2021. Canberra went into lockdown on 12 August 2021. The decision was made by the organising committee to cancel our programs for the second half of 2021 lest we unwittingly become a superspreading event.

The theme decided for 2022 was *What sort of world do we want?* as life reorganises itself in a COVID-19 world. The CES committee wanted to see a world characterised by new opportunities for living in a world characterised by justice, compassion and truth. Our first Forum focused on truth telling by ANU Professor Asmi Wood with response by Felicity Mc Callum. This was a challenging address emphasising the importance of truth telling by first nations peoples in the company of the larger Australian polity. On 22 March Genevieve Jacobs spoke on the media and its role in shaping our identity and how we can use social media to assist the common good. In May Archdeacon Tom Henderson-Brooks spoke on compassion. Acting Justice Richard Refshauge spoke in August on Justice to a well attended Forum.

There have been changes to the position of President and Chair of CES. Professor John Warhurst AO did a wonderful job as President of CES for five years. The Committee is most grateful for John’ s contribution. His replacement is Professor Ingrid Moses AO, formerly Vice Chancellor of University of New England and Chancellor of the University of Canberra. Rt Rev Professor Stephen Pickard retired from his role as Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in March 2022. He worked closely with me as co-Chair of Christians for an Ethical Society, a role from which he has also now retired. I thank Stephen for his support for CES, for his leadership and ideas and encouragement as co-Chair. I am delighted to advise that Professor Anthony Maher has joined the Committee in his new role as Executive Director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture.

I wish to thank the Committee for their work, particularly Ann Scamp as Secretary and Jeremy Dawson as Treasurer. I am most grateful for the support and encouragement of the Committee and of the Canberra community in supporting this significant Christian voice.

**Clive Rodger**

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