



THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

FROM THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATOR



Greetings and welcome to the first edition of Message Stick for 2009. This, the national magazine of Congress, will soon be redesigned for forthcoming editions to offer a much larger breadth of in-depth quality coverage from across our broad spectrum of programs and ministry activities. It will also be distributed on-line markedly more widely in accordance with Congress' new internet based communications program. These measures form but a small part of the impending rollout of a radically revitalised and innovate National Communications Program that promises to engage our many stakeholders with the avenues to affect positive change.

On the national and international front what a year so far ... devastating floods, tragic bush fires, economic recession and threats of a category 5 cyclone to Queensland! Our hearts and prayers go out to all those affected by these truly emotionally crushing and life changing events.

The UAICC is discovering that ministry in this present climate of national and global economic recession is actually creating new and exciting challenges in those service areas in which we are involved. After many decades of learning to operate with minimal support and limited resources, the current situation is, in many ways, quite normal for us ... 'par for the course'. The tough years of past history have equipped many of our leaders with the ability and spirit to continue ministry in the face of uncertainty, hardship, adversity and with little or no financial backing.

In response to the economic challenges of 2009, the UAICC National Executive has determined its course ahead. It will set a platform for engagement with communities by gleaning from the book of Nehemiah, the principles he used to rebuild broken walls, restore the spiritual foundations of broken people and to challenge them to become individually responsible for creating new and exciting futures for themselves. Fundamental to all of this was Nehemiah's recognition that empowerment of people was only possible if the strong spiritual core of life is restored.

To continue Congress' journey, the National Executive has framed the upcoming National Conference (July '09) around the book of Nehemiah. Conference will provide time for all present to listen, share, discuss, reflect on the Nehemiah experience and in plenary, determine its way forward. There will be input from Dr Daniel Smith-Christopher, Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and who, among many other writings, has authored "The Books of Ezra-Nehemiah" found in the Oxford Bible Commentary.

We, in the UAICC, believe that our future in this country can only be strengthened and assured by rediscovering the spiritual heritage bequeathed to us by the Creator and by recognizing that He had a plan and purpose for Indigenous Australians from the beginning. We, therefore, have a key role in restoring spiritual equilibrium into the lives of people by renewal of our own understanding of our God-given cultural spirituality and through the study of His Word. As you continue to support the UAICC be assured of our thoughts and prayers for you and our nation. From all the UAICC you have a blessed Easter.

  
**Rev. Shayne Blackman**  
 National Administrator

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# NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009



## From the desk of the National Elder

This is an urgent message to every member of the UAICC who is fully committed to making a meaningful contribution to the transformation to the way of life of the first born peoples of this nation and of the boat people and their descendants who arrived later.

"Transformation" Determining Tomorrow's Communities Congress's National Elders and National Executive met recently to decide on the theme for next year's National Conference. A major consideration for them was that this new theme should build onto the foundations that had been laid at the last national gathering. They conferred that since the 2006 National Conference had addressed and responded to the critical need for the transformation of leaders and leadership, this next Conference should now focus on the transformation of communities and the families within them.

To do this it is of vital importance that YOU attend the upcoming National Conference in July, Perth, WA. All are welcome and we look forward to seeing you there.

Yours in His service,

Pastor Bill Hollingsworth

## DATES OF CONFERENCE

Tues 30th June to Wed 8th July 2009

## TRAVEL DAYS TO & FROM CONFERENCE

To Perth: Mon 29th June 2009 arriving afternoon/evening  
Return: Thurs 9th July 2009 departing morning

## VENUE

Trinity College 230 Hampden Rd. Crawley Western Australia 6009

For further information, please contact the National Resource Office Alan Randell on (07) 4773 5077 or email [alanuaicc@bigpond.com](mailto:alanuaicc@bigpond.com)



## BOOK NOW

Please book through your State Office or contact the National Resource Office Alan Randell on:

Phone: (07) 4773 5077

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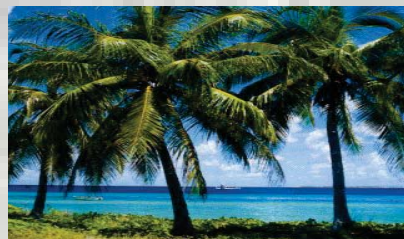
# NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009



## UNITING ABORIGINAL & ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS

National Conference 2009

# TRANSFORMATION "DETERMINING TOMORROW'S COMMUNITIES"



### ALL WELCOME

Please book through your State Office or contact the National Resource Officer Mr. Alan Randell on:

Phone: (07) 4773 5077  
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# TINGHA ROCKS

The Community of Tingha near Inverell, NSW is the focus of a holistic Community Regeneration Program, sponsored by the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress under the leadership of Bob Neville - our Regeneration Facilitator. Aptly titled 'Tingha Rocks' due to the regions distinctive geological makeup and the promise of a brighter future 'that will rock' the project is an exciting addition to Congress' holistic work.

National (UAICC) Administrator Rev. Shayne Blackman recently visited the Project to speak with community members about the projects rapid progress. Only 6 months into the project, amazing advancements have been made. These have been the establishment of a strong, dual cultural Tingha Regeneration Incorporated program that has strategically identified over 40 community projects with some under way. Strong support and funding are opening up for these various project developments.

Just one of these projects is the development of a local tourist industry to provide employment and educate visitors to the townships past and current Indigenous ties. Tingha has a unique, rocky, sandy landscape and intriguing history with potential for a bright future in regional Tourism. It was once a mining community of over 7,000 people now there is a remaining population of about 900 necessitating the need for a broadening of the local economy.

Regarded in recent years as the third most disadvantaged community in Australia, with unemployment three times the regional average, income half the regional average and a host of other unfavorable indicators the objective of the Program is the total regeneration of Tingha over the next 4 years, socially, economically and environmentally. Watch this space!

For more information visit: [www.tingharocks.com.au](http://www.tingharocks.com.au)



The distinctive lanscape and natural attractions of Tingha has the potential to drive tourism and local employment under the Congress sponsored 'Tingha Rocks' Program.



# NARANA CAFE FELLOWSHIP

We have fantastic ministry opportunities in Victoria. In 2008, Rev. William Pickett arrived in Geelong with his family and has taken on the role of Development and Outreach Minister.

Part of this ministry of the Congress, consists of developing state-wide opportunities for ministry. One of these is the new development of the Café Fellowship service at Narana Creations which takes place the first Sunday of each month.

To date Congress has had great support from the wider UCA Church and also from new people from many diverse backgrounds of the Christian faith. On Average we have 7-15 children and 10-20 adults that come along.

The service consists of singing, testimonies and sharing. We also have the opportunity to share the journey of Congress and the concerns of Aboriginal and Islander people both state-wide and nationally. In addition we share a relevant gospel but also give insight of sharing in an informal non-traditional service.

More information can be given by contacting our Regional Office on: (03) 5241 5700

## FACT FILE

NARANA CREATIONS' GALLERY STOCKS GENUINE 100% ABORIGINAL ART & CRAFT.

NARANA HAS A FINE VARIETY OF PRINTED PANELS AND HAND PAINTED CANVASES, DIDGERIDOOS, BOOMERANGS, CLAP STICK, BOOKS, EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES AND NATIVE FOODS.

ALL PROCEEDS FROM SALES OF NARANA PRODUCT ARE GUARANTEED TO SUPPORT THE WIDER WORK OF THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN SKILLS AND STRIVE AFTER THEIR OWN GOALS OF SELF-DETERMINATION.



NARANA CREATIONS IS AN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CULTURAL TOURISM & EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE THAT IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING AN INTRODUCTORY INSIGHT INTO INDIGENOUS CULTURE.

Narana Creations a 3 times winner of the Victorian State Tourism Awards hosts nearly 2000 people at the annual Narana Fest.



With a gallery stocking 100% genuine Aboriginal art and craft, Narana Creations provides a market and thus an income for Indigenous artists.



# ERNABELLA CHURCH RESTORATION

For many years the Church building at Ernabella (Pukatja) in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunyatjara Lands in the North West of South Australia, has been unusable due to the presence of asbestos and damage to the building. The building is over 40 years old and a number of local Anangu people who were involved in building it originally still live in the community at Ernabella.

The Ananguku Area Ministry Council has worked hard over the past few years to attract funding to restore the building so it can be used again.

In 2006 the Church of Scotland donated \$8000 towards the restoration project and the Northern Synod also received a bequest to assist with the work.

In 2007 the Pukatja Aboriginal community set aside \$70,000 of its own money for restoration of the building.

Then, in August 2008, the Federal Ministers for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Ms Jenny Macklin, announced a grant of \$300,000 to assist with the project.

After many years of waiting, work began on the restoration of the building in January 2009. The initial work to remove and replace the asbestos roof and clean up the site has now been completed. NRCC (in partnership with the Northern Synod) will act as the Project Manager for the remainder of the restoration work which we hope will be completed by the end of 2009.

We will work closely with local Anangu people to ensure they are in control of the remaining work and



Federal Ministers for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Ms Jenny Macklin and Indigenous Elder Gordin Ingkatji at Pukatja.



The Ernabella Church will be restored thanks to the Pukatja Aboriginal Community, Federal Government, the Church of Scotland and individual donors.



The Tjitji Choir perform as part of the celebration marking the restoration.



## COOL CHANGE 'DOWN SOUTH' FOR WESTERN CAPE YOUTH

December and January are hot times in Cape York, but for a group of twelve Mapoon/Weipa/Napranum Uniting Church young people it was 'way cool'. They were on a month-long trip called "Down South: Faith, Relationships, Empowerment" where they travelled to Sydney, Canberra, Wagga Wagga, Melbourne and Portland in western Victoria.

The trip was financed by the Western Cape Co-existence Agreement Central Committee.

The Traditional owners were pleased to provide the opportunity for young people to become aware of possibilities for their lives and develop relationships with young people from around Australia as well as to strengthen their Christian faith. The young people, who are regular Uniting Church activity attendees, are leaders amongst their peers in their communities and are future community leaders in Cape York. The growth in their spiritual maturity was obvious as they attended Bible Studies, prayed, learnt new worship songs and talked with other Christian young people from around Australia.



Mapoon - Weipa  
Napranum Uniting  
Church young people.

The trip was supervised by Uniting Church Youth worker James Hughes and his wife Rev Michelle Cook. James said "It's been fantastic to see these young people come out of their shells, take on responsibility and deal with the ups and downs of how the trip has gone – they are a credit to their families, their communities and



One of the youths enjoying one of the many special experiences while away.

to themselves". Rev. Michelle Cook added "We were so warmly received by many people throughout the trip – Uniting Churches letting us stay in their buildings, people showing us around their country and sharing their culture with us, people loaning us blankets and jackets when we felt the chill – everyone was extremely helpful".

The young people were pleasantly surprised to find some Old Mapoon people in Sydney – Pearl Wymarra, who works for the Congress in NSW and also another lady who had been in Sydney for a long time but was related to some of them as well – We turned up at the church she attends in Sydney. God moves in blessed and mysterious ways sometimes.

Some of the mind and spirit-enriching experiences that the young people had were: 'bodybashing' at Bondi Beach; eyeballing Sydney from Centrepont tower; chugging over to Manly on the ferry; speed-drifting around Sydney Harbour in a jet-boat; checking out the Australian War Memorial; inspecting Parliament House; serving Holy Communion to 1300 other young people at the Uniting Church's National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC); yarning with Aboriginal Congress young people from Arnhem land, South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria; dancing with Cook Islanders, Tongans and Africans; eating freshly caught, smoked eel with Gunditjmarra people; catching up with family from Western Cape York and braving the dreaded Giant Swing at the NSW Youth Unit Summer Camp. No wonder they came home tired!!!

## CALLING ALL YOUTH FOR NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009

Our young people play an instrumental role in shaping the direction and priority of youth ministry and activities across the breadth of life of the UAICC. Remember, National Conference 2009 is calling upon youth of all ages to make your voice heard and that of your peers.



Young people play an important role in shaping youth ministry directions at National Conference.



## TJINATJUNANYI FOOTSTEPS TO FREEDOM

"Our children are not going to school!" This was the cry from the women at Port Augusta over a period of a couple of years.

Hearing these cries the Port Augusta Congress Faith Community decided to respond. After extensive discussions with the Aboriginal community and Government representatives, DECS (Department of Education and Children's Services), ICAN (Innovative Community Action Networks and the Uniting Church in South Australia's Uniting Foundation, the Congress Faith Community decided to begin a program for some of these children. And so Tjinatjunanyi was born. "Tjinatjunanyi" is a Pitjantjatjara word which can loosely be translated as "footprints to freedom."

The program mandate is strongly about re-engaging Aboriginal children in education between the ages of 12-19 years who are completely disengaged, school refusers or chronic truants. These young people suffer significant barriers to education in terms of student health and well-being, and most have juvenile justice issues as well.

Tjinatjunanyi has already helped the young people involved in the program to achieve significant success:

- The majority of the students attend regularly.
- Their literacy and numeracy are improving all the time.
- Student-staff relationships have improved to the point that students are now 100% focussed and engaged during lesson time.
- Some students have successfully transitioned back to school.
- The teacher seconded from DECS now works with the students three days a week.



Dr. Di Russell takes a maths class as part of the Program.



## ELDERS REFLECTION

### ELISHA'S DOTHAN EXPERIENCE



"Lord, grant thou Your divine revelation, inspiration and illumination."

Many would have heard me pray this prayer many times – maybe you're tired of hearing it yet again. But I'm reminded of the experiences of Elisha.

While in the city of Dothan, he and his servant woke up to see themselves surrounded by the massive army of the 'enraged' king of Aram. Elisha's servant only saw the chariots and soldiers and was justifiably terrified. Elisha, however, saw something very different... "the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around." This revelation and illumination that Elisha had been given by God, took in the spiritual as well as the natural dimensions of the conflict. It meant that Elisha had no fear of the seemingly disastrous situation confronting himself and the city. Furthermore, God gave Elisha a strategy to deal with the conflict. As a result Elisha prayed and the enemy were blinded and easily captured. This opened up an opportunity to feed them, win them over and eventually have them released and returned to their homes. A really staggering victory! A win-win situation for all involved!

I believe that Congress also has a wonderful opportunity to see as Elisha did – to see the deep things of God and look beyond the physical and natural and see the spiritual realities impacting on communities. Governments of today, in the main, are focused on surface issues. They pour money and effort into physical and natural programs and wonder why there are so few lasting changes for the better.

Like Elisha, we too have been given the possibility of creating win-win situations in communities by praying "Lord, open our eyes so that we may see". As in the Elisha story we need to have our eyes opened to understand what is really happening – to see and understand the spiritual factors as well as the physical and natural. We also need to see the spiritual resources, power and guaranteed victory offered to the followers of Christ.

Pastor Bill Hollingsworth



MESSAGE STICK IS PRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF THE UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS.

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