

## The Christian Research Association

The Christian Research Association was formed in 1985 to provide information about religious beliefs and practices in Australia. It employs three part-time researchers.

Its activities include:

1. The annual production of *A Yearbook for Australian Churches*.
2. The quarterly production of *Pointers*, a newsletter outlining the CRA's own research and reviewing current research related to church life and religious faith.
3. Major research projects, such as the *Combined Churches Survey for Faith and Mission* which investigated what the Christian faith meant to 6200 church-goers and the clergy who served them. The CRA is currently examining the beliefs and attitudes of people who do not attend church through questions in the *National Social Science Surveys*. The results and implications of these projects are reported in books which are available directly from the CRA and in many bookshops (distributed by Acorn Press Ltd.). The CRA has published eleven reports so far.
4. Contract work. The CRA is available to undertake contract work for churches and for denominational and non-denominational religious organisations. Contracts range from designing surveys, production of books and journals, and investigations into aspects of church life in Australia.

The CRA is funded in several ways:

1. Full membership from denominational groups and para-church organisations which contribute \$1000 per annum or more. These funding organisations have one member each on a board which directs the work of the Association.
2. Associate membership from individuals, churches, denominational, welfare and research organisations who contribute \$100 per annum or more. Associate members receive copies of all CRA reports, the *Yearbook*, and *Pointers*.
3. Sale of reports of the major research projects and of the *Yearbook*.
4. Subscriptions to *Pointers* - \$15 per annum.
5. Contract work.

We invite you to help the Christian Research Association provide a strong research basis for church life and inform all who are interested in religious beliefs and attitudes in Australia.

# A Yearbook for Australian Churches

## 1992

Peter Bentley, Tricia Blombery  
and Philip J. Hughes

Christian Research Association

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**Part 1  
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Religious Bodies**

**Ecumenical  
Organisations  
Non-Denominational  
Organisations**

**Part 2  
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Church Life**

**Diary of Events 1990-1991**

**Reflections from  
Church Leaders  
Ethnic Ministries  
and Multiculturalism  
Research Reports  
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**1992 Ecumenical Calendar**

## Preface

The Christian Research Association was formed in 1985 to provide information about the religious faith of Australians. The representatives of church and other bodies who established the Association saw the need for detailed and reliable information about Australian people, their attitudes and values, and about church life. This information would be of value to church leaders, to those who work in the church, to those who sought to reach a greater understanding of their own faith, and to those interested in the role religion plays in Australian culture.

Over the last six years, the Christian Research Association has become recognised as a useful and reliable source, not only of information, but of analysis and commentary. It has gathered information through major surveys, and has disseminated it through research reports, meetings, workshops and seminars, academic papers, and interviews on radio, television, and with the religious and secular press.

The Christian Research Association has become aware of the need for a regular summary of church life and faith in Australia. This Yearbook attempts to meet that need. It gathers much valuable information together:

- \* directories of organisations
- \* statistics and reviews of church life
- \* bibliographies
- \* calendars.

The information will be of great value to everyone whose contact with churches and church organisations extends beyond their own. It will be valuable to everyone interested in church life and religious faith in Australia, providing regular, reliable, up-to-date information on developments in church life and the issues which challenge them.

The 1991 Yearbook, our initial venture, although produced under severe constraints of time and money has been widely and enthusiastically received. We hope that this 1992 Yearbook will provide a useful update and introduce some valuable new sources of information about the religious community. We cannot include all information that would be useful in any one year. We have decided, therefore, to include different sections each year. This year covers multicultural ministry and religious periodicals. Next year we will look at education.

We would appreciate corrections to the material contained herein, updates, and suggestions, in order to make this a more valuable resource.

We hope that the Yearbook will not just provide information, but will help all Australians to see more clearly the breadth and significance of the churches in

Australian life. We hope that it will give us all a broader perspective of what is going on in churches around the country. In these ways, it is our desire to promote co-operation between the churches of Australia, for the sake of faith, hope and love amongst Australian people.

### *The Editors*

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October, 1991.		

## Acknowledgements

A large number of individuals and organisations has contributed to the formation of this Yearbook. The Board of the Christian Research Association has helped us to develop the vision and bring it to fruition. We are grateful for the support and personal interest of Board members in the project. We wish to acknowledge, in particular, the work of editorial review that has been done by Dr. Neville Carr and Associate Professor Gary Bouna.

We also wish to thank those who have contributed articles to this volume:

Mr O.C. Abbott, Mr Ian E. Allsop, Commissioner Robert E. Bath, Dr Alan Black, Archdeacon Thomas Brown SSM, Father Jeff Foale, Dr Frank Lewins, Colonel Frank J. Linsell, Very Reverend A.C. Stubbs, Reverend Father Marcos Tawfik, Reverend Charles Wilcox, Seongia Yoo.

Zadok Institute for Christianity and Society has passed on to the Christian Research Association some materials related to multicultural ministry, and we appreciate their contribution to this volume. The libraries and staff of the Australian Council of Churches, and Rev. John Baldock, general secretary of the World Conference for Religion and Peace, have been most helpful in providing information.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the countless individuals and officials who have provided the Christian Research Association with information, publications and pamphlets, and those who critically appraised our first Yearbook and offered constructive suggestions for improvement.

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## Introduction

This Yearbook aims to provide directory information and an overview of the life of churches in Australia. It is divided into three main parts.

### *Part 1. Directories.*

The most substantial section includes an alphabetical listing of all the major denominations in Australia. It also includes a number of non-Christian groups, in order to provide information and a means for contact. Details of spiritual and administrative leaders are provided for national and state levels, and where appropriate, diocesan levels.

Several other directories have also been included. There is a directory of ecumenical organisations, major nation-wide non-denominational organisations, and publishers of religious books in Australia. To include all church-related bodies would have made the volume unwieldy. Hence, we plan to cover different groups each year in special sections.

### *Part 2. Review of Church Life.*

A review of church life in Australia has been presented in a number of different ways:

- \* Diary - lists some of the significant events in Australia and on the world scene that have occurred in the last year.
- \* Reviews - from a number of church leaders, reflecting on what is happening in their own denominations and in the life of the multicultural church.
- \* Statistics - from denominational sources.
- \* Reports - from observers of the churches.
- \* Bibliography - of books related to church life or religious faith in Australia published in 1990/91.

### *Part 3. Calendars.*

An ecumenical calendar contains lectionary and prayer calendar details for the major denominations. It also contains details of events which are planned for 1992. We hope that this section will provide useful keys to events occurring in the forthcoming year. It will provide a useful guide for the clergy planning themes for services, not just in terms of the lectionary readings, but also in relation to special events and emphases in the year.

While a number of organisations were not in a position to let us know of plans for next year, we hope that this section will be expanded in the future. Some brief lists of important festivals in other religions have been appended.

## A Note on the Use of Religious Statistics

This guide is placed in a prominent position at the start of the *Yearbook* to emphasise the fact that church statistics, like those of many other groups, may vary greatly in quality and reliability. Necessary qualifications concerning them must be stated clearly and without reservation.

### Church Statistics

Where possible we have obtained the latest statistics from each group included by asking them to complete a simple survey form. Differences in terminology and theological variations in understandings of the nature of membership and clergy have made this a difficult task for some groups. Other groups were unable to provide answers. Some groups computerise data and have a highly accurate bank of up-to-date information. The largest number is dependent on hand-tabulated figures provided by individual worship centres. Others use baptismal records or census estimates which relate only slightly to actual attendance patterns.

As well as general observations on church statistics, some major qualifications need to be made:

1. Church statistics are always incomplete. They are collected by many people, some skilled some less so, but none specifically trained, and then pass through the many channels in church bureaucratic structures.
2. Church statistics are rarely comparable. Definitions of membership, and of other important categories, vary from denomination to denomination. Adherents may be estimated by the clergy from attendances at worship services or deduced from census figures. Some denominations include only adults as members while others include children of members as well. Some include only ordained ministers as clergy, while other denominations have no ordained ministry or have a mixture of lay and ordained fulfilling pastoral roles.
3. Church data reported in the *Yearbook* were not all gathered in 1991. Not only do reporting years differ from denomination to denomination, but some bodies have no regular reporting of information. Where possible we have included 1991 information and noted differences where we have been aware of them. Attempts to combine current and non-current data for purposes of interpretation and projection could lead to difficulties.
4. Many of the important types of information are simply not available for a large group of religious groups. Not all groups responded to our surveys; not all groups keep records of church attendance; rarely is there socio-cultural data available.

Statistics of participants in church activities and programmes other than services do not exist.

Hopefully, one of the indirect benefits to the Australian Church in producing *A Yearbook for Australian Churches* will be a growing awareness in those who have the power to achieve it of the value of carefully and regularly collected church statistics.

### Census and Population Survey Statistics

We are well aware that the use of Census and Survey data has its obvious - and not so obvious - pitfalls. It is apparent that the majority of the population - 75% in the 1986 Australian Census - are able to attach a religious label to themselves (and their children). Clearly some form of religious affirmation is regarded positively by most Australians. It is equally apparent that, particularly for the larger denominations, nominalism has always been a major factor. The extent of nominalism varies considerably across denominations. Some denominations, such as Brethren, are underestimated on the Census because many disclaim a denominational label and are found in the 'other Christian' category. There is an increasing tendency not to give denominational labels to children or other family members who are not actively involved and these show up in the 'no religion' category.

On a different level, there are changes in 'fashion' which influence the choice of different labels. The label 'Protestant', which was used to designate a non-Catholic, non-denominational respondent, has been replaced by the label 'Christian'.

Comparison of Census and survey data from previous years is further complicated by the nature of the question. The Question on religious affiliation has been both compulsory and voluntary. In some years the response was generated by marking a selected category while in other years the response had to be written in. Each variation has influenced their comparability.

### Difficult but still valuable!

Despite many unavoidable problems in interpreting church, survey and census data, they remain a valuable and challenging resource to those who strive to gain a better picture of religion. The problem is neither new nor insurmountable and the support of statistical estimates has the most impeccable sources: Acts 2: 41.