

Ministry

As a Presbytery, NRCC operates with four Area Ministry Councils. This recognises the language and cultural differences within the region. NRCC is now supporting 5 Support Workers, one in each of our 4 Ministry Areas and one in Darwin.

We struggle with support for local ministry. The model of the Support Worker based in a local congregation in West Kimberley and West Arnhem works well. The West Arnhem Support Worker is currently funded through Frontier Services but there is no certainty around the future of that support. So there is a need across NRCC for local ministry support from Congregations and a program to teach stewardship is being considered.

East Arnhem is in need of ministers at Galiwinku and Yirrkala. The community minister at Galiwin'ku, Pastor Timothy Buthimanj has retired after a long and faithful ministry. Yirrkala is currently hosting a visiting retired Fijian worker, Samuela Vateitei, who worked there in the 1970's. A long term placement of an NRCC minister is needed.

A meeting of ministry workers in Central Australia facilitated by the Synod Secretary was held in Alice Springs in early March. A placement for Remote Area Ministry funded by Frontier Services commenced in January. The meeting enabled Congress workers and non-congress workers to interact and plan for greater co-operation in their ministries across the Centre. The Anangu Educator and Support Worker with NRCC have also visited the community of Apatula (Finke) to discuss support for that isolated congregation and possibilities around training local leaders.

Significant people within NRCC have died over the last year.

Rev Dr Gumana from Gangan died in November. Dr Gumana was one of the artists who produced the Yirrkala Church panels now in the Buku Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre. He had a deep faith and knowledge of culture. He expressed his faith through his culture and struggled for the rights of his people.

Mrs Mununggurr from Garthalala was a teacher and strong advocate for bilingual education and culturally appropriate learning. She was a member of Synod in recent years.

Tjilpi Burton from Amata worked on Bible Translation in the APY lands. As an artist he worked to establish the Tjala Arts Centre in Amata.

Nungalinya College and Leadership Training.

Training leaders within Congress is a priority for NRCC. NRCC members make up a major portion of students at Nungalinya College. Two of the three Uniting Church teaching positions at Nungalinya are funded by NRCC. The third is funded by the Northern Synod.

A new Dean of Uniting Students commenced working in March after Felicity Amery left to take up the position of Presbytery Minister and Chairperson for PPNA. The new Dean is Tony Goodluck, transferring from South Australia where, some time back, he had been SA Congress Resource Worker.

Also commencing this year at Nungalinya College is Justine Gawanygawany. Justine from Ramingining is doing further theological studies and training as an Assistant Teacher. Nungalinya is committed to having Indigenous Teachers on staff and so has commenced a program of training those of its students who demonstrate the gifts and aptitude. There are two in the program this year, one Anglican and one Uniting student. NRCC is funding Justine's training this year but is hoping for National Support from next year.

The first group of Nungalinya students in Certificate 4 in Theology and Ministry graduated last November. A second group will graduate this year. As well as students from Arnhem Land, this year has seen a good number of students from APY Lands attending Nungalinya courses.

NRCC has two field educators. Yurranydjil Dhurrkay works in Arnhem Land. She is involved with a number of Bible Translation projects as a senior translator as well as educator.

Wayne Munster works in the Centre. He is involved with the college for Indigenous Theological Education in Alice Springs now called Ntyethe College. He also works with the Pitjantjatjara Old Testament Bible Translation Project. Wayne is developing an animated introduction to the Old Testament that can be used with various languages. He has recently led studies in the western APY lands and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands of WA. He works with Nungalinya College to enable APY students to attend Nungalinya and also to offer courses in the Centre.

Candidates

Maratja Dhamarrandji has completed a Certificate 4 and attended the UAICC training in Townsville last December. The MEB of national Congress has requested the issue a Certificate of Completion of Studies by the Education for Ministries Working Group of the Assembly so that NRCC can proceed towards his ordination.

Community development and remote services

ARDS (Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation) is the community development and communication organisation in partnership with NRCC. NRCC appoints members to the board. ARDS is going through a review process to ensure its survival and growth into the future. As a small organisation in an increasingly crowded space, it is looking to the Uniting Church to support its work. ARDS runs Yolngu Radio, providing communication in Yolngu Matha across East Arnhem Land, as well as managing a number of projects that work in culturally appropriate ways. It offers unique cultural expertise in the region. It is looking to the wider Uniting Church to give support as a practical expression of the commitment to Covenanting.

ARRCS (Australian Regional and Remote Community Services) took over the community services in the Northern Territory from Frontier Services. It comes under the governance of Uniting Care Queensland. After an initial consultation with NRCC members in East Arnhem, ARRCS has recently secured a contract to establish residential Aged Care facilities in Nhulunbuy. This is a welcome Commonwealth initiative that makes aged care available closer to home communities in East Arnhem rather than people needing to go to Darwin.

ARRCS has a commitment to Indigenous employment and culturally appropriate care. NRCC looks forward to growing our relationship

The Northern Synod is connecting ARRCS and ARDS to share expertise and thus provide quality services to NRCC members and the broader community in Arnhem Land.

In the Kimberley, former Frontier Services Aged Care is now administered by Juniper, a Uniting Church Aged Care provider based in Perth.

Government support for remote communities:

A few years ago, the Commonwealth Government decided to transfer responsibility to the States and the Territory for funding essential services in remote communities and homelands. The states and the Territory have not been able to provide ongoing services at the same level. This has meant that people who were living in homelands have had to move to the larger communities. This causes more housing stress in communities when homeland houses are vacant.

With the change of government in WA, it is hoped there will be a different approach to support for remote aboriginal communities particularly those in the Kimberley within the NRCC region. The impact in the Territory varies depending on

the strength of the local Homeland Resource Centres. The vacant homelands in the APY lands of SA is evidence of the impact there.

Sovereignty, Constitutional Recognition, and Treaty.

These issues are now on the National agenda although they have long been issues for NRCC members. In 2015, NRCC and the National Assembly gave support to a call from the Yolngu Nations Assembly for a treaty. NRCC welcomes the initiative of the National president, Stuart McMillan to have these issues discussed within the National church. NRCC members look forward to conversations with PPNA members around what the issues mean for the church in the Northern Synod. The President's National Ministers Conference after the Synod meeting here in Darwin will provide for an in depth exploration of the issues for Uniting Church ministers from across the nation.

UAICC consultation

A consultation with NRCC by teams from UAICC was held in May. One team travelled to Darwin and through Arnhem Land. The other team travelled to Alice Springs and to the APY lands. Phone conversations were to be held with West Kimberley. It is hoped that this visit from the National congress and the report will give some perspective on the issues and direction for NRCC that is not possible from the inside.

Staff changes

Steve Orme, as Resource Worker, has advised that he will retire at the end of this year (2017). Djawanydjawany's placement as Chairperson ends in June next year (2018). So it is a time for discerning the future direction and leadership for NRCC.

Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra
Chairperson

Rev Steve Orme
Resource Worker