

# NSW ECUMENICAL COUNCIL



## *UNITED IN HOPE*

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027



*For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11

## **Foreword**

On behalf of the NSW Ecumenical Council, we are pleased to present this new strategic plan for the work of the Council. Over the past 9 months, the Council has engaged in consultation with NSWEC members, Commissions, Heads of Churches and friends of the Council in preparing this new strategy.

It was an exercise in discernment as we listened to the concerns, hopes and dreams for the future of ecumenism in NSW, and we hope, in the midst of it all, that the Holy Spirit is present, continuing to guide us. This plan titled: ***United in Hope*** is the result of these consultations.

Fostering unity among our members is at the core of all that we do. As our Churches, many with an ageing demographic and a reducing number of young people, emerge from the post Covid period, the work of fostering good relations and building unity is essential to renewal. In a secular society at risk of division and violence, and in a time of global climate turmoil; reaching out and being in right relationship with all people of good faith and with creation – our *oikoumene* – our common home is vital. It is the Risen Lord who calls us into these relationships.

These challenges afford us opportunities to explore new ways of being united and doing ecumenism in the service of the kingdom of God. It is important that we face these challenges and opportunities together in solidarity, for ‘If one member is suffering, all the members share its

suffering. And if one member is honoured, all the members share its joy' (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Your commitment and support over the next three years is critical as we continue to develop NSWEC as a membership association committed to working together for the benefit of our Churches and for society in these turbulent times.

Very Rev Anastasios Bozikis  
President

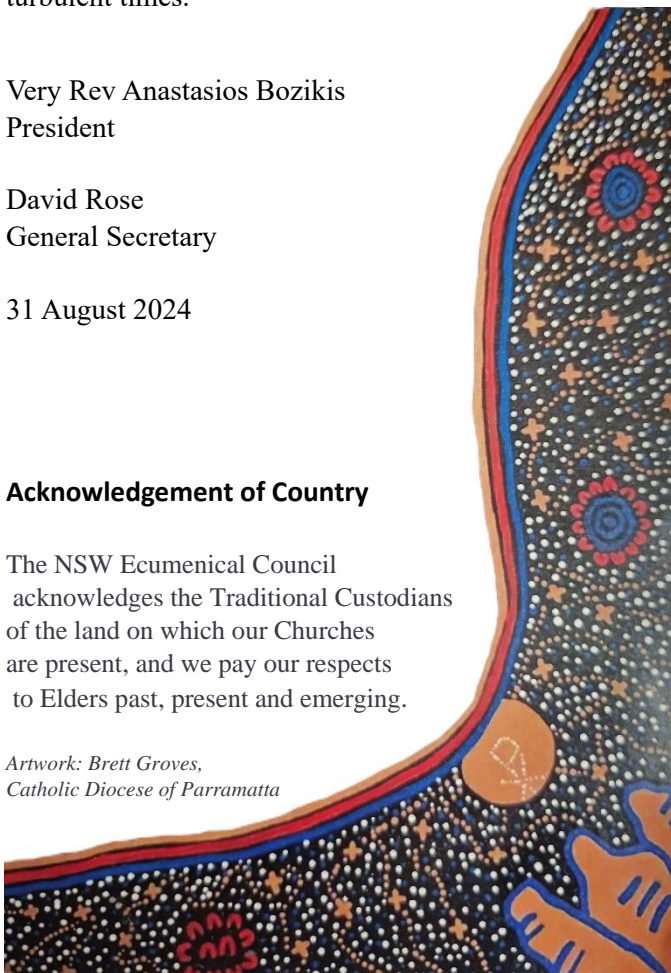
David Rose  
General Secretary

31 August 2024

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The NSW Ecumenical Council  
acknowledges the Traditional Custodians  
of the land on which our Churches  
are present, and we pay our respects  
to Elders past, present and emerging.

*Artwork: Brett Groves,  
Catholic Diocese of Parramatta*



## Vision

The vision of the NSWEC in response to Jesus' command that "we may all be one" is:

*Churches coming together out of a sense of love and respect for each other; to pray in unity and to build community with heart that gives glory to God and is spiritually and socially enriching for each member Church, for people of other faiths and for society in NSW.*



## Mission

The mission of NSWEC is:

*To support Church communities to come together and enhance their capacity for ecumenism.*



## **Strategic Intent**

The strategic intent of this plan is to deepen the awareness of the need for ecumenism in a multicultural society; to grow the capacity of Church leaders and members to engage in and to renew the quest for unity, and to strengthen the NSWEC as a vehicle to deliver on this vision.

In a time of conflict and disunity, moving beyond our individual Churches to deepening the space between and among our Churches for prayer, dialogue and common action for peace and justice gives powerful witness to Christian unity.

The NSWEC intends this plan to give expression to Jesus' message of love, truth, compassion and justice, in contributing to building our common home (*oikoumene*) where all are welcome.

## Aims & Objectives

To support and enable diverse Church communities to:

### 1. Pray together

- Facilitate and develop events for leaders, clergy and members of Churches to pray together, e.g. Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, prayer breakfasts, and events connected to the liturgical calendar, like Christmas, Easter, joint statements and blessings.
- Continue to promote Taizé ecumenical prayer
- Explore reflection away days for Church leaders on common themes
- Promote sharing of Church buildings for prayer and liturgy



*Bethel Mar Thoma Church, Horsley Park, NSW*

### 2. Meet together to collaborate, innovate & learn from each other

- Facilitate events online and in person for leaders, clergy and members of the Churches to meet and share ideas on common concerns
- Highlight good practice in ecumenism already happening in our Churches
- Continue the annual fundraising dinner and other events

- Theological reflection events, e.g. 1700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Council of Nicea
- Re-discover the Council's spirit of innovation (e.g. that gave rise to Faith Housing Alliance, House of Welcome) for our time.



*Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Sydney*

### **3. Act for justice, peace and care for creation through public policy advocacy**

- Identify one to two key social justice issues per year to promote within our Churches, e.g. domestic violence, rights of First Peoples, climate justice.
- Drawing on the policy work of our Churches to contribute to public policy through engagement with NSW government
- Assist in the promotion of the Act for Peace campaigns
- Align with likeminded campaigns and actions





*People of faith call for climate justice*

#### **4. Dialogue with people of other faiths**

- Encourage participation in opportunities to pray with people of other faiths
- Participate in faith events that promote understanding, tolerance and respect
- Partner with like-minded organisations in developing events e.g. Three Faiths Forum



*Interfaith Gathering, Parramatta*

**5. Strengthen NSW Ecumenical Council as an organization that is resourced and fit for purpose**

- Develop a communication strategy
- Develop a young people's strategy
- Review the funding model
- Encourage member Churches to resource the Council by contributing skills and placements of staff and volunteers to the Council, e.g., in communications, social justice, event management/admin.
- Grow the number of Churches involved in the Council.



## Outcomes

- An increased awareness of ecumenism among our member Churches
- A series of events and opportunities both in person and online will have taken place where our Churches pray together, reflect on and work towards Christian unity
- Heads of Churches will know each other better
- More young people from our Churches working together on common causes
- Showcasing of good practice in ecumenism
- Proto-typing of a new innovative project owned by the member Churches
- Advocacy for social and climate justice
- Interfaith dialogue will become more mainstream in our Churches
- Improved relationships with leaders of other faiths.
- NSW Ecumenical Council is strengthened and developed as an organisation.



*St Stephen's Uniting Church, Sydney*



## **Member Churches**

**Anglican Church (Dioceses of Grafton, Newcastle, Riverina,  
Sydney)**

**Antiochian Orthodox Church**

**Armenian Apostolic Church**

**Assyrian Church of the East**

**Bruderhof Australia**

**Church of South India**

**Congregational Federation of NSW**

**Coptic Orthodox Church**

**Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church**

**German Lutheran Church**

**Greek Orthodox Church**

**Indian Orthodox Church**

**Lutheran Church of Australia (NSW District)**

**Macedonian Orthodox Church**

**Mar Thoma Church**

**Religious Society of Friends**

**Roman Catholic Church (Dioceses of Bathurst, Lismore,  
Parramatta, and Wagga Wagga)**

**Syrian Orthodox Church**

**The Salvation Army**

**Ukrainian Catholic Church**

**Uniting Church (NSW/ACT Synod)**



## **NSW Ecumenical Council**

The NSW Ecumenical Council is a membership association of Christian Churches (Anglican, Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic) throughout NSW and ACT.

As Churches together, we are committed to a journey of peace and reconciliation for ourselves and our world, rediscovering our unity in the love of Christ in order that God's love and healing may be known to all.

Being together and learning from each other enables us to know God more deeply, to express a common voice on issues of concern in society, and to work together on specific projects concerning the Churches and the needs of the society. We are in association with the National Council of Churches in Australia.

The Council works through a number of commissions: Peace & Justice, Theological Reflection, Fundraising, Interfaith Commission, and Middle East Commission. New members are welcome to join these groups, email [generalsecretary@nsw.org.au](mailto:generalsecretary@nsw.org.au) to find out more, go to our website: [www.nswec.org.au](http://www.nswec.org.au)





**NSW Ecumenical Council**

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