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## EDITORIAL

THE PRESENT ISSUE witnesses to an interesting shift of attention in the 'mission' outreach of the Australian church. The classical missionary dioceses are subjected to some probing investigation. Maybe the conclusions of the 'safari group' (pp.13-16), in view of its rapid transit, wide range and mixed complexion, would not merit the same seriousness of consideration as is due to the thoughtful observations of the scholarly and experienced Eugene Stockton (pp.20-28). On the other hand, the other papers bear witness to a resurgence of missionary outreach to Aboriginal people in other parts of the country, a fact I am noticing in the course of my PICT survey (cf. *Nelen Yubu* No. 24, p.26).

We have finally finished our production of an English translation of the Australia-wide survey of traditional Aboriginal religions done by the Pallottine priest-anthropologist, Fr E A Worms. This year the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies held a special conference in Canberra to mark the 25th anniversary of the Institute which resulted from the 1961 Canberra conference where the program for religious research was mapped out by Fr E A Worms. His book was his record of the research he himself had done — though in the review paper on the topic of 'Religion' presented by Howard Morphy (*in absentia*) at the recent silver jubilee conference neither it, nor Fr Worms nor any other work or person involved in the factual 'christianised' situation of Aboriginal people got the slightest mention!

**Martin Wilson**  
Editor

Ernest Ailred Worms, Australian Aboriginal Religions survey of traditional religion throughout the continent — religious material culture; high spirit beings; initiation; birth, death, funerary rites, human destiny.

German edition, *Australische Eingeborenen Religionen*, Kolhammer, Stuttgart, 1968. Translated by M Wilson, D O'Donovan, M Charlesworth; printed by Spectrum Publications, Richmond, Vic., for Nelen Yubu Missiological Unit, 1986. Pages 231+xvi, soft cover, sewn, available from NYMU, 4/17 Jersey Ave., Leura, NSW 2781. Price \$13.95, plus \$2 for postage and handling.

# THE CHERBOURG TRIBE

## Some of their Ceremonies and Customs

### Sr Delores O'Sullivan SSps

What people have to say about the past may not always be particularly useful in reconstructing a detailed picture of it, but it is certainly significant in understanding the present.

Berndt RM (1963:399)

CHERBOURG IS IN WAKKA-WAKKA COUNTRY, near the border with its eastern neighbours, the Kabi (or Gubbi-Gubbi, as the local people call them). It was a Queensland Government settlement and like all such places, is in the process of becoming a self-governing community. Under the Amendments to the Lands Act, 30 March 1982, the Crown land of existing Community Reserves may be vested in the Aboriginal Community Reserve Council in trust for the benefit of the community, such title being revocable only by Act of Parliament (Amendments to Land Act 16 December 1983) while the Community Services Legislation, 13 April 1984, provides the elected Community Council with structures for some Local Government functions.

Whatever may be the official designation of the status of the land under Deeds of Grant in Trust, and whatever difficulties bureaucracy may be having defining the boundaries of this land and with the intricacies involved in deciding the size of reservations which may be made for public purposes, and with the confusion as to excisions which may be made from the Deeds, in the minds of those who belong to Cherbourg - or Barambah, as it was originally called - it is and remains Wakka-Wakka territory and the Wakka hold a special position among the amalgamation of tribes that constitute today, the people who 'come from' or 'belong to' Cherbourg.

In the 80 years of its existence Cherbourg has forged its own identity. In changed and changing situations, new customs, new traditions, new legends have evolved that are moulded by the traditions of the past and adapted to the conditions of the present. Influenced by the society that surrounded and dominated them, and instructed by the white administrative staff that took responsibility for training them for survival in this society, the people have shaped a lifestyle that is being modified further today as modern ways penetrate even more into their lives and homes through TV, radio, education, and longer and closer association with western society.

However, links with the tribal past remain and beneath a thin veneer, habits, values and beliefs persist, even though people are often unconscious of their origins. It is with the modern expression of some of these traditions and customs which seem to have their roots in the past that this paper will deal.

The Wakka-Wakka belong to the country of the Bunya festivals and the Bora rings. The life of the Aborigines has always been rich in ritual and the rhythm of their existence was punctuated by ceremonies. While there were secret-sacred rites belonging exclusively to a particular group, there were also many songs and dances which though 'belonging' to a certain tribe were taught and passed on, especially at times of 'big gatherings' when a number of tribes came together. It could happen then that even major rituals were sung in dialects or languages of people in far distant areas and though the performers may have been unable to identify with certainty many words of the songs they sang, there was great care taken that all would be performed in the form it was taught. The borrowed dance must be done the 'proper' way.

The same Aboriginal attitude of strict observance of rites can be seen today in the performance of the new ceremonies that have become part of the life of Cherbourg. They have learnt and practise the rites of the white society that surrounds them. In their borrowing, the form of the rite as first presented to them has been taken on and adhered to. The new celebrations have become the accepted rituals and rites have become customs.

The people are very traditional. Although over the years variations have crept in, it has not been conscious changing for the sake of change. The norm is rather: 'It is always done this way.' Ceremonies must be performed the 'proper' way.

In contrast with the often embarrassment and awkwardness of white youths when having to take part in a public function, most Aboriginal young men enter into the event with a dignity<sup>1</sup> and grace and unselfconscious wholeheartedness which speaks of their appreciation of the importance of the occasion, whether it be guard of

honour at a funeral, or simply accepting a birthday gift. There seems to be a keen awareness of the deeper inarticulated meaning of the event and its significance is held in respect.

Another Aboriginal element very evident in the customs of Cherbourg is the greater value the people put on symbolic objects. These are treasured because of the message they evoke and enclose – and symbolic actions are understood. The significance of the anointing with oil and the pouring of water at baptism is readily perceived, and the candle lighted during the ceremony is taken home and given an honoured place. Wearing team colours denotes not only support but also belonging. Photos, especially of the dead, are also highly respected. Presents received take on something of their donor and carelessness in handling them is seen as showing disrespect to the giver. Children are reminded that Auntie or Uncle So-and-so gave them the present so they should look after it. This is even when the object itself is no longer new. Objects have personal and symbolic associations.

Cherbourg is an Aboriginal community so its celebrations are community ones. Of course there is more personal involvement in some events than in others, but everyone feels free to join in the preparations, either actively or as a spectator, and also to participate – if one wishes to do so. Friends always come along and no one is regarded as an intruder or an uninvited guest, though there are unwritten and unspoken codes to be observed.

Aborigines remain lovers of tradition and ritual and symbolic action. In the mixture of tribes and the changed lifestyle that is present day Cherbourg, tribal customs can no longer be observed, but the new ones that have evolved have become part of its tradition and folklore.

One such interesting custom has arisen in Cherbourg where a forgotten dietary practice now resonates with Christian significance. The Thursday before Good Friday is a night where someone from every family goes fishing so there will be fish for the following day. The first time a woman told me 'We're going fishing tonight to get fish for the men tomorrow,' I thought this simply a family matter, but having heard the same remark over the years from others as well, I now know that fishing on Holy Thursday night is a universal custom. And it is not only the men who need the fish.

It is said that nobody would eat meat on Good Friday, many not from Thursday, 'till it's all over' on Easter Sunday. One young woman said that the rule was that red meat, meat with blood in it, could not be eaten so either chicken or fish could be served, but others present disagreed and said 'No – it means fish.'

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No one seems to know or remember where or when the custom originated, but see it has connections with the practice of Friday abstinence and its appropriateness is considered obvious for the Gabbi had a practice called *Narin* incumbent upon bereaved persons. This is mourning by fasting (Curr 1887:159) and among the Wakka-Wakka in times of mourning men ate fish only (Curr, 1887:138).

Although no one whom I questioned had ever heard of the traditional dietary laws which I had read about, there was a general feeling that the new custom of Holy Thursday fishing for the Good Friday fish with its Christian overtones of mourning the death of Jesus was an appropriate continuation of the *Narin* of the Gubbi-Gubbi and that its origins must have had a connection with it. Whether this is so or not, the fishing is now an accepted traditional custom of Cherbourg.

Cherbourg is in Bunya Pine country and the great pines grow tall. Bunya feasts were held when the nuts of the Bunya Pine, *Araucaria Bidwilli* were ripe. Every third year the trees bore a heavy crop and neighbours were invited and hundreds gathered from a distance of 100 miles for the feast which lasted about a month. At the Bunya feast, strangers did not climb the bunya trees to collect the cones. The trees belonged to the people of the place and were handed down from father to son. All, however, were invited to share equally in the eating of the nuts. (Curr, 1887:788; Petrie, 1904:16). 'Before being roasted each seed was partially bruised with a stone and when it is in the fire a minute or two, it gives a crack, a signal that it is cooked.' (Curr, 161).

Bunya nuts are still eagerly collected and eaten, but now are usually boiled in salty water rather than roasted. Those who claim to cook them properly make small cuts in the shape of a star at the top of the nut. This allows the salt to penetrate to the kernel and facilitates its removal when eating. Those who do not do this are considered 'too lazy' or 'too ignorant' to cook the nuts the *right* way.

Though Bunya festivals have not been held for many years, each year Cherbourg still celebrates its own big gatherings. The Murgon Show is one such meeting. Murgon, 5 km from Cherbourg, is its nearest neighbour and is about equal in population (approx. 1,200). Murgon advertises itself as the 'Hub of the South Burnett' and prides itself on being one of the *Tidy Towns* of Queensland. It is the centre of a beef and dairy district but its economic stability, regardless of fluctuations in the rural industry, is assured by the regularity of the Social Service payments of its Aboriginal neighbours whose existence it would prefer to ignore.

Much money is spent on the entertainments at the Show. This expense is foreseen and there is some forward planning and saving and expectations from visitors calculated to ensure that all, children especially, have a good time. Again those who are neglectful are criticised. 'They should have thought about it last payday.' Still, money is loaned generously to those in need and expectations from visiting relatives are usually fairly accurately estimated so all can enjoy the Murgon Show.

The ritualised fighting that concluded the Bunya festivals and the Bora ceremonies has its modern counterpart in the clashes of the local football team – the Hornets – with the teams from the neighbouring towns in the district football competition. Since, as their banner proclaims the 'Hornets have the sting', there are usually two or three of their teams in the finals, or at least in the semi-finals, so football final matches take on the aspect of a tournament of a 'big gathering': the more spectacular, the more teams that are to play. Years when teams are to compete in all divisions are high points indeed. Excitement builds up as the end comes closer and visitors who come for the Semis often remain at Cherbourg till the Finals, while on the day of the match itself travellers come from all points of the compass to be present for at least the Big Match. As with the Show, it is an occasion of return to home country, of reunion and further strengthening of ties.

The Show itself is a typical small town local show, very poorly attended by the local white population<sup>2</sup> but eagerly awaited by the Aborigines and regarded as one of the social events of the year.

Just as at the Bunya feast, friends and relatives who have moved away are invited to come home for the Show and are reminded of the date (changed a few years ago from early May to late March). There is speculation as to who will come and arrangements are made for exchange of goods and messages. It is seen as an opportunity to send news and presents with the returning visitors to those unable to come.

The importance of correct bodily adornment for celebrations is still recognised. New clothes are seen as a necessity. Completely new outfits are bought, some making special trips to Kingaroy, Toowoomba, or even down to Brisbane in order to be able to purchase what is desired – neither time, effort nor money is spared. It is not regarded as a fashion parade, rather as the right thing to do – to celebrate by dressing up and thus showing proper respect for the occasion. Those who do not do so are criticised for their shabby or slovenly appearance. The young especially have very good dress sense and wear the latest trends with great style and flair.

In the pageantry that surrounds a football match and the earnestness and enthusiasm of those preparing for it (not only the training sessions of the teams), a glimpse of the atmosphere before an important ceremony of the past can be caught.

Just as in the old ceremonies, men and women each had their role, so too today. The men are the players while the young girls form an imported American-style 'cheer squad' complete with war-cry and outfits in the Hornet's colours, black and orange. That these costumes are important is apparent by the seriousness with which the matter is treated. A committee is formed to procure what is considered the 'right' style for the current year and neither expense nor effort is spared to execute the selected design. (Murgon shop-keepers benefit).

In traditional life, to all ceremonies belonged correct and distinctive designs relevant to the Dreaming incident to be dramatised. The painting of the bodies of the dancers was as important as the actions they performed. Together they conveyed a message, no less real for being intangible. The same capacity for understanding and appreciating these unspoken messages remains with the people today and today's loyal supporters of the Cherbourg tribe, all even the youngest — arrayed in the team's orange and black are proclaiming more than their allegiance to the Hornets. In it their need and appreciation of ritual has found expression in the setting in which they find themselves.

Another event with its origins in western society that has become part of the ceremonial life of Cherbourg is the Annual Debutante Ball. The formal and public presentation of the young girls to some important personage has engendered its own rituals and its rites are adhered to as faithfully as any of those at the Bora ring. The young girls are dressed in the traditional white. In the days when the 'Department' organised, supervised and financed all activities on the settlement, identical ball dresses and tiaras were supplied to all the young women participating as well as the evening suits for their partners.

Until about ten years ago, although the training of the Debs and their partners had been the responsibility of a few of the older Aboriginal women, the organising of the other details of the Ball, including arranging for identical bouquets was done by the white Liaison Officer. Now however, the Ball is run by a committee of the local people. The girls select and purchase their own white dresses: the suits for the partners (all the same colour and style) are hired through a firm in Murgon. But some details remain unchangeable. Little flower girl attendants, one for each Debutante, are still considered indispensable though each year their dresses are different in style and colour; tiaras must be worn, but may vary in shape.



Gloves, even for the partners as well, are still essential. But the rite of entry is unalterable. When I suggested that another style of entry might add variety and that perhaps the decorated arch could be dispensed with, I was clearly told 'It is always used. It has to be.' Tradition dictates.

The Debs and their partners enter the hall in procession. Singly, they pass through the decorated arch at the end of the dance floor, pause there while their names are announced, then solemnly led by the little flower girl, proceed with a slow rhythmic walk to the stage where the girl is presented to the important guest.

After all have been presented and congratulated, the Maxina (not a waltz) is danced by the Debutantes and their partners with great dignity and grace. Then all present join them in the dance.

The whole ceremony is punctuated by the flashing of camera bulbs as relatives and friends take photos to record the event. The picture taken under the arch is usually the best!

Although in the wider society Debutante Balls have less significance now than in former years, in Cherbourg the Ball with its accumulated traditions and formalised procedures remains an occasion of social importance performed according to the rites of the original Debutante Ball of years ago.

A common feature of the homes at Cherbourg is the number of photos displayed - large studio photos; collections of snapshots arranged and framed together; school photos; small prints stuck on the wall with scotch tape. Most possess also a library of photo albums. The people are inveterate camera users. There is no occasion which does not demand to be recorded - celebrations and meetings of all descriptions - birthday parties, visits, outings, christenings, football matches and of course the Debutante Ball.

The respect shown to the photos of the dead is in harmony with the attitude of respect that is accorded to all that pertains to the dead, their name, their belongings, and to the cemetery, their burial place.

All photos are treasured. Not only is the photo a representation of a person and a record of an event, it seems somehow to make the person present and the event relived. It seems to have something to do with the Aboriginal concept of time and tradition and may be a concrete expression of it.

Some years ago a house was burnt down. All was destroyed, the furniture, almost paid for, the clothes of the family, but the next door neighbour had rescued the photo albums. She brought them over to the mother of the household while I was with her beside the charred ruins of the house. So we sat down and looked through the albums.

That these were saved was considered very consoling for some of the albums were specially valuable since they contained photos of the young son of the house who had been accidentally killed a few months previously. The loss of all else was accepted simply as something that had happened, but even the thought of the loss of the photographs was considered a tragedy.

So we sat on the ground on cushions I had brought 'for a new house' as a gesture, in some ways futile, but appreciated as belonging to the same category as that of the value of the albums. It was an experience for me to be shown through the albums beside the ashes and half-burnt food from the fridge and to realise the supreme importance personal relationships *do* hold in the lives of these people and how continuity with the past is an essential part of their view of life.

Dreamtime stories were enshrined in designs which symbolised the travels of the Ancestral Beings. The past was captured for the present and acquired a permanency in a society where tradition holds precedence over innovation. Perhaps it is from this perspective that the photo albums of the Cherbourg people can be viewed. It is the modern method of recalling the past and holding it for the future.

The propensity towards ritual and celebration nurtured by generations of participation is not readily snuffed out. It finds its expression most readily in life's significant moments and Cherbourg has evolved its own rites for these occasions.

It was at the funeral of a woman with whose family I had become quite involved that I learnt the protocol observed in the placing of wreaths on the grave mound at funerals. At Cherbourg it is customary for all floral tributes brought, to be handed after the grave has been filled in, to relatives and friends who, in an order of implicitly understood relationships, place them on the grave. This I had observed, but at this funeral I was handed a wreath by the deceased woman's cousin who was the 'organiser' of such details on this occasion<sup>3</sup> and asked if I would place it soon — near the head — as the family would want it.

Not only was there an established precedence for placing the wreaths of which I was aware, but the position is also governed by unwritten rules. In this, as in many other situations, new traditions adapted to the changed milieu are being established. These replace lost tribal customs but are in harmony with the symbolic significance and emotive effect of the old ones.

There is a resurgence of interest in the past and regret is often expressed that so much is being forgotten and that those who knew the old ways are dying. 'It's too late. It should have been asked about before while the old people were still alive' is a lament often

voiced. Still, in the everyday life of Cherbourg, echos of the past can be heard. Love of celebration and ceremonies abides deeply in an Aboriginal heart and the people have evolved their own ritual life to fit their present situation. Much may be lost, but much remains. There is respect for tradition. Symbols are not abstract concepts, but vibrant with message and meaning.

Continuity can co-exist with adaptation and life can be lived with a fullness and freshness which links past with present.

### NOTES:

1. This dignity is even more marked in the old people, especially the older men.
2. Many go away for the long weekend with its public holiday for the Show.
3. A remainder perhaps of the function of the opposite moiety to perform ceremonies and services for relatives, (c.f. Kelly C. Tennant 1934:467).

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# ABORIGINAL APOSTOLATE PROGRAMME CONCLUSIONS FROM THE PROGRAMME IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

**Pamela Barker fmm**

## **PREAMBLE:**

In August 1985 eight of us gathered in Alice Springs. We, women and men, Anglican and Catholic from Queensland and New South Wales, have all experienced ministry among Aboriginal people over a number of years.

After five weeks of travelling, visiting several Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, and listening to many people and through reflection and prayer, we shared our experiences.

The following observations and reflections are one attempt to put together the main points which are important to us at this time.

The purpose of this exercise is to help us to share these insights on return to our communities.

The groupings are under two headings - *The Church* and *Church Workers*.

The Church is seen under the broad aspect of all Christian Churches.

## **Participants**

Revd. Fred Wandmaker

Anglican Board of Missions, with  
a responsibility for liaison between the  
Anglican Church and Aboriginal people.  
Townsville/Palm Island  
Armidale  
Woorabinda, Qld.

Rev. Brian McCoy SJ  
Sr Rita Steptoe OSU  
Sr Mary Scanlon RSM

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Rev. Eugene Stockton	Sydney Archdiocese. Mandated to work with Aboriginal people.
Rev. Philip Freier	Kowanyama, Qld.
Mr Tom Mayne	Sydney. Researcher of writings on Aboriginal people.
Sr Patricia O'Brien RSM	Bellbrook, NSW, now at Woorabinda, Qld.
Sr Pamela Barker fmm	Co-ordinator of Aboriginal Apostolate Programme (AAP)

## Places Visited

Alice Springs; Santa Teresa Community; Utopia Station; Tennant Creek; Phillip Creek; Mataranka; Ngukurr; Numbulwar; Katherine; Darwin – Nungalinga College; Bathurst Island; Melville Island; Daly River Community; Port Keats Community.

## The Church

1. The Aboriginal people are deeply spiritual with a distinctive spirituality.
2. Aboriginal people can run their own parishes:
  - We note the attempts by the Uniting and Anglican Churches to enable this to happen.
  - The preferred Aboriginal style of ministry seems to be team ministry rather than a one person ministry; the community puts forward potential leaders; all leaders share decisions.
3. We are aware that within the Catholic Church here, and in our own communities, there is a growing concern that we have not enabled an Aboriginal ministry to develop fully.
  - Some impediments seem to be – celibacy, academic requirements, current models of the Church, ministry of liturgy, decision-making structures.
4. Self determination is at the heart of the development of Aboriginal communities.
  - We note the efforts to offer assistance and resources towards this end, e.g. Aboriginal Development Service, Institute of Aboriginal Development, Nungalinga College, The Congress (Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress); the Anglican Primate's Consultation on Aboriginal Ministry (Darwin, July 1985).
  - Some instances of not responding to Aboriginal determined ends are: maintaining control of traditional works; control of finances; control of education policy; control of bible translation priorities; liturgical adaptations; Church's political silence; etc.

5. The Church can't avoid a political stance. Its silence enhances the status quo.
6. The detrimental effects of alcohol are a major community problem and Aboriginal communities are taking strong initiatives in this area. Many people asked for widespread support for their initiatives.
7. We are aware that liturgy, especially the Eucharist is a reflection of the Church's missiology. It is of great concern to us that too often the liturgical presentation is little different from that of any parish church.
8. We are convinced that in the Church's missionary endeavours we need to work with clearly stated aims and objectives. Where these are lacking, frustration, interpersonal conflict and maintenance of the status quo result.
9. Denominationalism has been highlighted as causing further divisions among Aboriginal communities. We recognise ourselves to be part of that problem. We are confident that greater unity can be achieved especially after the combined Church involvement in this program. We resolve to make greater efforts to work with other Churches in the future.
10. The Aboriginal apostolate is the responsibility of the whole Church, not particular groups, societies or denominations. It should have the high quality of scholarship and expertise that is offered to other apostolates.

### **The Church Workers**

1. Church workers are seen to be authority figures, often exercising considerable power.
2. We create pressure on communities by:
  - 2.1 Withholding decision-making power from acknowledged leaders.
  - 2.2 Failing to accept local leadership criteria.
  - 2.3 Lack of listening and dialogue, leading to conflict of cultural expectations.
  - 2.4 Failing to develop strategies which would enable self determination.
  - 2.5 Sometimes by frequent change of personnel or by persons staying too long.

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3. We see the need for ourselves to be formed in:
  - 3.1 The art of story telling and listening to the stories of others.
  - 3.2 Biblical knowledge.
  - 3.3 An understanding of racism.
  - 3.4 A knowledge and appreciation of ourselves and our own culture.
  - 3.5 An appreciation and growing knowledge of the guest culture.
4. An understanding of and coping mechanism for:
  - 4.1 Anger — its legitimacy
  - 4.2 Guilt — personal and corporate
  - 4.3 Isolation — spiritual, social and geographical
  - 4.4 Alienation — feeling 'apartness'
  - 4.5 Culture Shock — cyclic dysfunction
  - 4.6 Burnout
5. We need:
  - 5.1 Flexibility in our prayer, personal and communal, and a realisation that our spirituality and way of prayer will change.
  - 5.2 Skills in discernment for questions such as:
    - length of stay
    - motivation
    - effectiveness
    - decision making, etc.
  - 5.3 An ease in ministering with Aboriginal people in their universal belief in 'spirits'.
  - 5.4 Skills in social analysis, including the ability to assess and implement programs.
  - 5.5 The ability to form relationships which support, encourage, inform, challenge and affirm us.

Dated: 18 September 1985.

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## ABORIGINAL APOSTOLATE RETREAT:

### REFLECTIONS

Doug Smith msc

IN DECEMBER 1984 I TOOK PART in a special Retreat experience entitled 'Listen to the Voices'. Part of the experience involved listening to the experiences of Aborigines, especially the injustices they have suffered. This was followed by a week near Rockhampton as an observer at the Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Council Conference. Both experiences were real eye-openers for me, making the concerns of Aborigines real and personal. My current commitments make involvement difficult at this stage, but I did have the time to take up the opportunity last December to take part in a Retreat focussed on the Aboriginal apostolate in the Sydney Archdiocese. What follows is an account of this Retreat and where it is leading me, especially as a Missionary of the Sacred Heart (MSC), an order long involved with Aborigines, mainly in the Northern Territory. I share all this as it pushes me towards greater commitment, and hopefully it will challenge those who read on.

A word about who was there. Peter Dorfield, PP of Cunnamulla in southwest Queensland, ran the retreat, assisted by Ted Kennedy, chaplain to the Aboriginal community in Sydney; Mum Shirl; plus some priests and Sisters involved with or working among Aborigines; a couple of Aborigines came in during the week. Bishop Heaps and about eight priests from Sydney were there, plus myself and Dan Hook from St Paul's. The setting was a couple of holiday houses in the Wentworth Falls area. One thing that struck me was the presence of so many busy people involved with Aborigines. Obviously they considered the venture very important.

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Adapted by the author from an MSC private publication, *Province Newsletter* (No. 115, January-February 1986, p.7. Doug Smith msc is rector of St Paul's National Seminary, Kensington.

It should be said straightway that it was a proper retreat, not a discussion seminar on Aboriginal issues. The pattern consisted of input from one or more of the team, with plenty of time for prayer and reflection. At the informal beginning on Sunday evening, two of the Sisters shared their experience of being part of the recent Aboriginal celebration on a Wilcannia property that the Land Councils had acquired with NSW Government land grants finance they had saved and pooled over a period. Getting back some of their land obviously meant a lot to them, a real ray of hope for the future and a reminder to me how important land is to their whole way of life. (Maybe we could give, say, some riverfront land at Douglas Park to an Aboriginal community - a symbolic gesture, but very meaningful?)

The input during the retreat included a history of Australia (last 200 years) from an Aboriginal viewpoint; the experience of various ones involved with Aborigines; Mum Shirl's journey of faith, her heartfelt concerns, her anger at various injustices; Shane Houston's challenge to the Church to be involved and how; reflections on poverty and commitment to the poor; how we benefit from the oppression of the poor, especially the Aborigines. Much of the input was a real challenge to question many of our attitudes and ways of living and behaving. We all wanted to build on the retreat experience, so there was a follow-up meeting in February.

In many ways the retreat was a more powerful version (for me) of our 'Listen to the Voices' retreat. I have moved further along the road towards wanting active involvement with Aborigines not a simple matter in view of my present job and the investment made in me in a specialised area. I made some resolutions during the retreat; I may not live up to them or they may prove impractical, but they do show the dynamic of the retreat and the direction I am moving in. I decided to make myself better informed about issues concerning Aborigines, so that I will be able to talk about them more effectively. I want to befriend Aborigines here in Sydney and establish some bonds between the Seminary and the Aboriginal community and finally I want to work for a greater conscientising of MSC to the injustices that Aborigines are suffering and for greater MSC involvement with and commitment to the Aboriginal apostolate.

Two areas that have really struck home to me concern Australia Day and the Bicentenary. When I reflect on what 200 years of European occupation have done to the Aboriginal community, how it has affected them adversely in so many ways, I think it difficult to find anything to celebrate that could counterbalance the harm done to them, harm still being done, with little concerted national effort to do anything worthwhile to redress matters. What Aborigines will be 'celebrating' is 200 years of survival against overwhelming odds, surely

one of the more significant achievements in Australia over these years.

There is no room to develop the issue here at this stage, but it looks as if a concerted effort has been made to misrepresent and so discredit the aspirations of Aborigines regarding land rights.

The Aborigines are probably the most victimised, oppressed people in Australia. If we are to take seriously what our Constitutions say about our spirit and mission (especially nos. 6, 7, 13, 20-24, 49), our involvement with Aborigines should extend beyond the NT. As I understand what Aborigines are saying and the kind of help they are looking for, it is not a question of many people working fulltime with and for them, but of assisting in the massive task of re-educating the non-Aboriginal community, beginning with ourselves (if necessary). For me a lot has not yet sunk in.

I am not an admirer of the way many Australians typically live, think and behave. The retreat has made me feel rather ashamed to be an Australian, and during reflective walks while on retreat, I couldn't help thinking what it has cost the Aborigines to enable me to walk this land today. Obviously we can't put the clock back; we can do some re-thinking of any unquestioned attitudes and behaviour of ours, and see what we can do to restore to Aborigines as much control over their lives and destiny as we can (as we have), without inflicting still greater injustices on others.

I must end this piece of writing, but hopefully this chapter of my life is only beginning. My current work is rather specialised but in itself may provide an avenue of concern and commitment in the midterm future. Currently I can better inform myself, and an avenue of friendship with Aborigines at the University of New South Wales is opening up here at the seminary, and of course there is scope for conscientising our students here.

But I suggest we begin with ourselves. That's where I'm still at. A sample challenge: what is your attitude to the Bicentenary celebrations? Have you even given this any thought at all?

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### SUBSCRIPTION NOTICE

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## THE PLIGHT OF CATHOLIC MISSIONS IN AUSTRALIA

Eugene D Stockton

FROM MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1985 I was able to visit Catholic missions, as well as a few Protestant ones, in the Kimberleys and Northern Territory in association with the Aboriginal Apostolate Programme. From my own observations and those proffered by mission personnel, I was able to gain an overall view of the Church's apostolate with tribal Aborigines. It must be emphasised that these observations apply only to the mission dioceses of Broome and Darwin, although the further reflections (reassessment and recommendations) involve, as I believe they must, the Aboriginal apostolate throughout Australia.

### The Mission Situation Today

The Aboriginal missions which the Catholic Church has been running for some decades, like those run by other Churches and government authorities, used to be total institutions where white management extended to every area of a people's life (religion, education, hospital, dormitory, stores, power, finances, entertainment etc.) With the change of government policy to self-determination and self-management (and the influx of government money to finance it), the religious aspect of mission was separated from the secular with the latter being managed, increasingly and to various degrees by the local community through its council (even where religious personnel remained to staff hospital and school). The resident priest and other religious no longer served the total needs of the community, but saw themselves as parish priest and assistants serving the purely spiritual needs of an Aboriginal parish.

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Fr Eugene Stockton (a frequent contributor to *Nelen Yubu*) is presently stationed at Mt Druitt to liaise with the Aboriginal people of the Sydney Archdiocese and dioceses.

The Anglican and Uniting Churches pursued the trend to self-management even into the parish structure of their erstwhile missions. Spiritual leaders put forward by their respective communities were trained and ordained as pastors in a local ministry team of men and women, under the governance of a local parish council. Nungalinga College and other centres trained Aboriginal pastors, theologians and community workers even to the upper echelons of the clergy (now an Anglican bishop and a Uniting Church moderator). The Uniting Church has gone further with the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress, in effect an Aboriginal church or rite (in the Catholic sense) within a church, carefully prepared over ten years, broadly based and embracing a thoroughgoing spiritual renewal and an effective community development arm (through the Aboriginal Development Service), all in Aboriginal hands.

These developments have left the Catholic Church far behind and very vulnerable. Aboriginal ministry has not gone beyond one deacon and one acolyte. On the more positive side, Catholic (largely white) initiatives have included:

- a) spasmodic innovations in liturgy and in the use of language
- b) expanding growth of Alcoholics Anonymous
- c) developments in education, including curricula, teacher training, bilingual education, adult education, craft promotion
- d) responses to invitations to staff schools on out-stations
- e) religious Sisters in some places seeing their role as one of christian presence, which is also appreciated by the people
- f) the renewal of Halls Creek parish (never a mission) serving several communities in a unique charismatic style
- g) the missiological review *Nelen Yubu*, edited by Father Martin Wilson
- h) the Daly River training scheme

These innovations have not been accompanied by any overall shift in rationale, nor by reference to a global policy. The status quo has simply been maintained, which can be described as a sacramental and doctrinal ministry by whites to Aboriginal individuals (rather than to the community as such), as pertains in most Australian parishes. Although assimilation is now a disavowed policy, it is still implicit in a parish ministry (as for any other ethnic group) geared to tide the individual over and lift him out of his limited, culture-bound sphere, so he can take his place alongside his fellow Australian Catholics in any church in Australia. It is difficult here to recognise 'mission' in the sense generally understood by the Catholic Church today, whereby the Universal Church relates to the local indigenous church and the missionary works to enable a people/community to realise the Gospel

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for themselves as a people true to their own culture (inculturation), with their own spiritual leadership and ministry. (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*).

Since my work was directed primarily to the welfare of mission personnel, my attention was drawn to the question of their morale. It must be stressed that they are on the whole men and women of extraordinary dedication and heroism, living in generally harsh environments under conditions of real poverty. They are especially vulnerable to the hazards of their vocation – loneliness, alienation, recurring frustration from culture shock, burn-out, conflict of intercultural expectations, anger, guilt. Morale is also affected by the conditions of their work and as they spoke of these I was afforded an insight into the current state of Catholic missionary endeavour in Australia.

The deficiencies noted by my informants can be summarised under the following headings:

### 1. Identity

With the government induced change of status in missions, i.e. to self-managing communities, it has not been clear to missionaries how to identify that part of the operation which has remained their responsibility. In some cases it was a matter of maintaining the status quo, with as few modifications as possible; in others of following the model of the parish (as experienced by all from their earliest years) without adverting to its assimilationist implications. At the time of the changeover, with the freedoms it allowed, a chance was lost of thoroughly introducing current principles of Catholic missiology.

### 2. Mission Policy

Frequently expressed was the question: 'What are we trying to do?' With no sense of direction it was rare to find anyone working to a plan. In default of a comprehensive policy in a community, no part of the operation (representing the work of an individual) could be related to the whole. There was no standard by which to evaluate past and present performance or to set priorities. Activities tended to be *ad hoc*, and in the face of importunate requests there were no criteria for refusing.

Religious Brothers and Sisters generally recognise the need for special training both initial and ongoing, but for the better trained and more thoughtful person, the gap between missiological ideal and fact was all the more distressing. Priests generally had received no special training and they acutely felt this lack relative to other religious in the community and to the spiritual (and sometimes civic) leadership expected of them.

### 3. Teamwork

Without clear goals and objectives, it is difficult for mission staff to work together as a team, because teamwork presupposes the possibility of relating the work of an individual to an overall strategy. Hence there was little evidence of mission staff regularly meeting to discuss and plan their work, as well as to affirm mutual support in each other's apportioned task. This usually results in individuals concentrating on self-contained tasks which did not come into conflict with each other. Generally it is peripheral matters which can be so self-contained, leaving unaddressed important central issues where co-operation is called for. Demarcation of respective responsibilities, covering the whole gamut of perceived need, is rarely found. Programs resulting from personal initiative, without the general support of a team, are unlikely to outlast the initiator's stay.

### 4. Communication

Lack of mission policy and teamwork is compounded by what many informants regret as a lack of communication. Often there is simply no common ground for discussing things which concern everyone deeply, such as work, spiritual life, mission policy, future. In a small community the strongly held positions of each worker are generally known and there appears to be no ideological basis of relating or interpreting one to the other, hence conversation will be guarded to avoid surfacing old conflicts or known polarisations. There can be sensitivity that to voice misgivings about mission activities might be taken as personal criticism.

### 5. Community

Repeatedly was heard the longing for a community sharing of faith and prayer together, over and above the more formal office and liturgy in common. This can be seen as all the more imperative for religious living isolated in small numbers, commitment to a common apostolic task.

### 6. More Teaching and Practice

Universally there was perceived an unbridgeable gap between Catholic moral teaching and Aboriginal practice especially in the area of marriage. Priests profess (or keep silent on) the Church's known position, but in practice tolerate what they feel is inevitable (e.g. in those approaching the sacraments, in Church workers and in teachers, both black and white). This leaves a demoralising sense of weakness ('what can you say?') and a numbing awareness that the Gospel is not really a word of power.

The language of imperative and exhortation comes over as hollow and futile. There is an urgent need for moral theologians and missiologists to canvas the possibility of different moral standards for 'christians in transition' (as Yahweh allowed to OT patriarchs), while pointing to the ideal which mature christians will find the power to uphold.

#### 7. Aboriginal Response

On all mission communities church attendance was low and liturgical participation at a minimum. Some of the older folk may attend Mass 'so Father won't be too disappointed'. There was the realisation that, with the changes in mission status and the shrinking of missionaries' responsibility to the spiritual sphere, that sphere itself was largely irrelevant to the local community: 'If we left, would anyone notice the difference?' Some older missionaries, soured and disappointed after a lifetime's work, put the failure down to innate corruption or paganism of the Aborigines — I call this the Jigalong syndrome, after anthropologist Tonkinson's analysis of the reaction of failed missionaries in his *The Jigalong Mob*.

So far I have been looking at the Aboriginal apostolate through the eyes of the missionaries, but on the basis of several opportunities to discuss it with articulate Aborigines, I suspect their point of view, while holding individual missionaries in high regard, would be more condemnatory of the whole system. Yet even the missionaries' point of view prompts us to ask radical questions about this apostolate. Are we prepared to undertake mission in the sense which is generally understood in the Catholic Church today? If we are unable or unready to minister to people in the full sense of current Catholic missiology, are we prepared to hand over that ministry to a Church which has demonstrated that it can? The middle option, the maintenance of the status quo on the assimilationist model, is unjust in that it has resulted in crippled christians and crippled ministers, and decades more of the same policy can only produce more of the same results. The matter is particularly urgent now because, with the recent developments in the Uniting and Anglican Churches, time itself may take the question out of our hands. The Aboriginal people may then be better off, but the Australian Catholic Church would be the poorer in having squibbed the greatest mission challenge in the history of the Catholic Church and lost a potent force for its conversion.

#### Reassessment

Viewing the mission scene through the eyes of mission personnel (and even more forcibly through the eyes of Aborigines), it is clear that the Catholic apostolate to Aborigines is in need of radical



assessment. To pull out or to reform – the choice is as stark as that. In this there is no room for sentiment, for fear of hurting others, for flabby thinking or shallow slogans. With so much at stake, we must be prepared to apply the highest quality professionalism and to draw together our best resources to reshape this apostolate, as the Catholic Church has demonstrated magnificently in the areas of schools and hospitals. As in these areas, competing with state institutions, it was not good enough to allow mediocrity: it had to be top quality or not at all. Some of the parameters of this reassessment include:

### 1. Goal

What are we trying to do (as I heard so often)? First it must be decided whether we are involved in mission at all, in which case any lingering idea of assimilationism is to be rejected. In mission, the christians of one culture are offering a culture-free Gospel to the people of another culture, so that they might reincarnate it in their own culture. In this case, as prehistory and archaeology demonstrate, the culture gap to be bridged is the greatest between two peoples anywhere any time, making this the greatest missionary challenge in the history of the Church. From another point of view, according to current Catholic missiology, it is Christ himself who is being reincarnated in Aboriginal flesh, the Body of Christ truly Aboriginal, with its various Aboriginal members mutually interacting grow to full maturity (Eph.4: 15-16) – in this we as members of the Universal Church mediate to enable it to happen in whole and in part. From a further point of view, that of Liberation Theology, we are empowering the poor/oppressed to go free – liberation in a holistic sense including salvation, self-determination, freedom from the fear, pressures, internal constraints, freedom to lead, to minister, to express, to make their own integration of Old and New Laws, to become fully Aboriginal in a sense not possible even under traditional ways. These three formulae, expressing much the same thing, or any other form of expression, might embody our universal goal in mission.

Within, and conducive to, the overall goal are particular aims which express specialised parts of that work, be it that of a priest, teacher, nurse, community worker. Particular aims may vary from traditional society to fringe camps to urban areas, while the ultimate goal remains the same for the people as a whole. Goal and aims continue to operate, not only in the apostolate as a whole, but also at the level of the community where I work, and at the immediate level of one-to-one ministry. The linking of goal and aims form the skeleton of strategy to be further fleshed out in the field by circumstances, opportunities,

temperament, skills, background, etc. But it is imperative that there be such an explicit strategy, to evaluate performance and progress and to plan ahead. The alternative is the desolate aimlessness now prevailing.

2. Communication

However the goal and aims be formulated, it must be clearly understood by all in the field, both mission workers and Aborigines. Self-determination demands that Aboriginal communities and individuals be given the choice of rejecting or accepting what is being proposed and, if accepting, to co-operate according to their own lights. Under communication would come also periodic review, evaluating performance and modifying strategy – this both at the national level and at the community level.

3. Teamwork

Working as a team can be envisaged (a) at a national or state level, with Aboriginal workers and co-workers operating in a unified way, (b) at the level of the local community where they organise themselves, of set purpose, to operate as a team. Where goals and secondary aims are clear and agreed, it would be comparatively easy to link respective programs (representing particular aims) organically together and to the whole (one goal), to affirm the responsibility and competence of individual workers in particular programs or areas of concern, and to assure each person of the interest and support of other teamworkers in his/her work. Teamwork requires regular meetings to review/assess performance in the light of goals and aims, and publicly to affirm team spirit and mutual support. Professional help should not be overlooked in welding a team together and in starting its operation.

4. Mandate

Though in current Catholic thinking the building starts from the ground level (i.e. begin by forming Aboriginal ecclesial communities before ordaining Aboriginal bishops), yet those working at ground level need a certain enabling, leading, freeing from the top. In the true sense of mission, a person or team needs the conviction of being sent, mandated to the work, and in the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church, apostolic mandate comes from the bishop. However it should be clearly understood and stated that the apostolate to Aborigines is the responsibility of the whole Australian Church, not just of a particular diocese or congregation; hence, it is that Church, through its hierarchy and special committees, which needs to give the mandate.

This might also raise the question of an Aboriginal Vicariate for those working outside the two mission dioceses, assuring them of a clearer and more direct mandate and of special pastoral care.

5. Co-ordination

A prime example of hierarchical enabling is the co-ordination of personnel, resources and activities, because at the ground level one would naturally see their own place as deserving more, whereas a bird's-eye view could survey and weigh the needs of the apostolate in Australia as a whole. The supply is limited and needs to be distributed responsibly. Some mission communities may be seen to have more than their fair share of resources. No distinction should be made between full-blood and part-blood because the latter identify simply as Aboriginal (at least in the east and south) and the Gospel is brought to them not on the ground of their colour, but of their common need and dignity (Lk.4:18). As there begin to be more and more Aboriginal church-workers, it may be necessary to prune the number of white co-workers in a community, perhaps moving some of the front-line troops to back-up positions.

6. Popular Support

If this apostolate is seen as an Australian Church responsibility, it is worth considering that many ordinary Catholics might like to be involved, even though unable to take an active part. The Australian hierarchy might invite the participation of a wide range of people to give financial and moral support to those in the field, and to provide specialist services to back up the work. This should include Aboriginal Catholics (e.g. those in cities) who most have this apostolate at heart and who might thereby have a greater say in its operation (on the model of AICC).

**Specific Proposals**

1. **National Forum** to re-assess this apostolate, to state clearly its goal, policy and principles, to initiate a fresh start - drawing together representatives of Aboriginal workers and co-workers, missiologists, experts in kindred fields, representatives of AISS, CCJP, etc., facilitators, (observers?).
2. **National Organisation** to invite participation of all interested Catholics, black, and white, to support this renewed apostolate financially, morally and physically - to be a force for educating and influencing the general Catholic body - to be a means of displaying solidarity on Aboriginal issues - to stem creeping racism in respectable Church quarters.

3. **Centre for Research and Training** – drawing together an interdisciplinary body of experts (already available), for questions such as Aboriginal theology and spirituality, catechetics, liturgy, moral teaching, missionary principles and styles, community development – research and training at the same centre would be mutually advantageous – training for Aboriginal workers (majority) and co-workers – source of information on new Aboriginal developments.
4. **Newsletter** to circulate among Aboriginal workers and co-workers, and all those interested in this apostolage – continuing forum for ideas, news items, discussion of ministry strategy, reviews and digests of important publications, advertising/soliciting help, mailing list. Link with Nelen Yubu?
5. **Formation** (initial and ongoing) and **Pastoral Care** readily available to those in the field, e.g. Centre above (no. 3), AAP courses, regional conferences, summer schools, retreats, visitation, informal gatherings – recognition that all in the field need and deserve adequate training and support (i.e. for black and white) – arrangement for special leave.
6. **Inter-Church Relations** to avoid divisions among Aboriginal christians and duplication of effort. Some possibilities:
  - a) Link Centre with Nungalinya – Wontulp
  - b) Affiliation or some formal link with UAICC and similar bodies which might arise in the future
  - c) Seek professional help of Aboriginal Development Service in community development of parish bodies in former mission communities
  - d) Make Catholic facilities open to other Churches
  - e) Joint functions, e.g. worship, bible camps, rallies, preacher exchange, research
7. **Symbolic Action**
  - a) Preparations for Bicentenary Celebrations should take account of Aboriginal feeling, e.g. awareness of tragedies we have shared in 200 years of tough national formation, and common vision for future
  - b) Appropriate gestures during Pope's visit, e.g. prior conference of Aborigines to discuss issues, decide who sees Pope, agenda
8. **Aboriginal Vicariate** – feasibility?

9. **New Modes of Ministry** to be explored, e.g.
- a) Local Aboriginal leadership, encompassing a team of varied ministers for each community
  - b) Mobile priestly ministry serving cyclicly a number of communities, which also have local leadership
  - c) Priests stationed at nodal centres (e.g. Alice Springs, Katherine, cf. Halls Creek) to serve fringe camps on outskirts and through them the respective communities in the hinterland using these camps.

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## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

We have a new Bishop in the Northern Territory! Congratulations to Father Ted Collins msc who has succeeded the late Bishop JP O'Loughlin. Fr Collins is an old friend of Nelen Yubu, having been responsible for its acceptance as a Missiological Unit in 1975. Catholics in the Darwin Diocese will welcome the new Bishop as a long-standing friend, and look forward to greeting him in his episcopal role.

At the same time we should not forget Fr Brian Healy msc, the Vicar General and Administrator who performed the arduous and faithful task of carrying on before and after the demise of the late Bishop, as well as being responsible for several other commitments while always being available and helpful to anyone who needed him. The thanks of a great many people go to Father Healy.

We began this column joyously, but alas we have been sad too. On Sunday 27 April a wellknown and much loved Sister of the Order of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Sister Miriam Wright, died. The Requiem Mass was held on 29 April in the OLSH chapel at Kensington, with a packed congregation. Fr Wilson was amongst the celebrants, as were others who had been in the NT. The hymn-singing was extraordinarily beautiful, which would have pleased Sister Miriam, who had such a beautiful voice herself. I, too, was able to attend that Mass for my old friend of Daly River days.

A recent letter from Mrs Susanne Hargrave brought a pleasant compliment for NYMU from SIL, and I quote: 'I and other members in SIL appreciate your journal, *Nelen Yubu*. It fills a role that no other journal does - that of provoking more than surface thought about issues in Aboriginal Christianity. I find it stimulating - probably particularly so because I would not be able to agree with some of its conclusions! Thank you for your work in putting it together and for sticking with it in spite of limited budget and help.'

Owing to pressure of space that's all from me for this time.

Secretary Keren

## COUNTRY TOWN MINISTRY SEMINAR

Co-Operative Venture of Uniting Church,  
Anglican Church, Catholic Church

Pamela Barker fmm

To All Interested Persons:

We conducted a Consultation with pastors working in country towns in Dubbo on 20 March 1986. The participants have given us encouragement and some clear directives to plan a three day seminar to assist in ministry in communities where there is tension between Aboriginal and other Australians.

There were twenty-three persons present at the Consultation. The major topics given for further information, discussion and reflection were:

1. To learn more about Aborigines from Aboriginal speakers.

Topics: Growing up Black in Australia.

Aboriginal spirituality/philosophy of life today.

The culture, history and aspirations of local, rural Aborigines.

Relationship to Aboriginal people.

2. Clear theological and sociological perspectives for ministry in rural towns in Australia today – (a model for mission).

Racism – its theory and practical implications.

3. Ministry to and care of the pastor in his/her situation.  
The effects of this ministry on his/her spirituality, relationships, etc.

How to deal with alienation from one's own people.

1988 – What involvement in the bicentenary affairs?

4. Facts and figures on grants and assistance available for Aborigines today.  
The conflicts this can cause from misunderstanding and mis-information.

The seminar will take the format of using:

Formal input sessions from persons with experience and knowledge.

Discussion groups.

Informal sessions with local Coonabarabran people, hopefully out at the Warrumbungles National Park.

Sharing of experience and interaction with each other.

The use of videos and films.

Biblical reflections.

Reflection on ministry in the future.

The seminar will be held at Coonabarabran, NSW, from 9 am on 22 July till 9.30 pm on 24 July 1986. It is a live-in seminar at the Country Comfort Motel, cnr. John and Edwards Streets. Coonabarabran was chosen because it is fairly central to those interested from central and northwest NSW. Seminars will be held at other centres, for instance in the Riverina district at a later date. It is open to anyone working in pastoral ministry in areas where there are Aboriginal people/communities.

Discussions have been held with some of the Aboriginal people at Coonabarabran, and they are interested in the proposal and would be willing to be part of the seminar by giving some sessions and joining in group discussions. More discussions will be held before July.

The days of the seminar would be grounded in Biblical reflections. The themes we have chosen are:

Identity

Relationship to Land

Relationship to others

You are earnestly invited and encouraged to think about these themes and send us references to various passages which you would think suitable. All this will help us to prepare and give guidelines for the reflections.

We are in the process of contacting suitable resource persons and will notify you when we send a more detailed program if you indicate you are interested in the seminar. We realise that great resources will come from the participants and the local Coonabarabran community.

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You are welcome to invite an Aboriginal person from your town to accompany you. You would be responsible for the cost involved for that person.

The cost of the seminar will be:

Double room accommodation including meals: \$136.50 for 3 nights  
Single room accommodation including meals: \$172.00 for 3 nights  
Surcharge for seminar expenses: \$ 30.00

Correspondence and general organisation will come from a central office at the Secretariat, 2nd Floor, 154 Elizabeth St., Sydney, 2000. Please send replies to attend to Pamela Barker at that address. You are of course free to contact any one of the team.

We need to know soon if you will be attending the seminar in order to finalise accommodation.

I look forward to hearing from you, and any comments, suggestions or advice will be carefully considered.

With best wishes and prayer,

Yours sincerely,

**Pamela Barker,**  
On behalf of the Organising Committee.  
17 April 1986

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Organising Committee: The Revd. Charles Harris (02)2909611; The Revd. Bernie Clarke; The Revd. Fred Wandmaker (02)5606841; Sr Pamela Barker (02)2647302.

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