



# National Council of Churches in Australia

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*From the National Council of Churches in Australia*

## **Churches grapple with prisons and the justice system.**

This week congregations across Australia will grapple with prisons and the justice system as the focus for Social Justice Sunday. The National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) Social Justice Network has produced the resource “I was in prison and you visited me” to assist congregations to discuss, reflect and consider actions to advocate for a more just society.

“It is of great concern to see that the number of people in prison is increasing faster than the population growth whilst the crime rate is decreasing,” said the Reverend Tara Curlewis, NCCA General Secretary.

“Our prisons have an overwhelming number of people suffering from mental illness or a drug or alcohol addiction. Clearly there is a real need for better services in the community. The focus should be on preventing offending and re-offending before criminal actions become a way of life for people. It is time to address these and other social factors such as unemployment that contribute to crime.”

Equally alarming is the fact that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community comprise just 3% of the Australian population yet they make up just over one quarter of the total prison population. Since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody the imprisonment rate has increased and tragically incarceration has become the norm in too many Aboriginal communities.

Now is the time to re-examine many aspects of Australian prisons and the justice system addressing the causes of crime so as to build safer communities, and attend to the needs of those who work, visit or live in prison.

**Media Enquiries: (02) 9299 2215 Rev Tara Curlewis is available for interview**

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Assyrian Church  
of the East

Chinese Methodist  
Church

Churches of Christ

Congregational  
Federation

Coptic  
Orthodox Church

Greek  
Orthodox Church

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Orthodox Church

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Roman Catholic Church

Romanian  
Orthodox Church

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Orthodox Church

Syrian  
Orthodox Church

The Salvation Army

Uniting Church

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