

Religion in Australia from 1901 to the Present

- The primary influence of Christianity in Australian society within the period 1901 to the present:
 - The influence of Christianity on at least two of the following areas in Australian society.
 - § Education
 - § Laws and the constitution
 - § Medical care
 - § Public morality
 - § Social welfare
 - The interrelationship between the Australian physical and cultural environment and the development of Christianity in Australia.

Influence of Christianity on Education

- Education until the latter part of the 19th century was reserved for the privileged
- A comprehensive education system was not seen as a necessity, but some were established by the Church of England
- 1833: Denominational System proposed
 - Burke would give funding for all Church Schools
 - Children were received non denominational religious instruction
 - Public opinion opposed the integration of classes and denominations, however Catholics supported the bill
 - Thus sectarianism prevented a universal education system
- The middle class established their own schools based on the British model
- 1836: Church Act-financial assistance for churches based on congregation size
- 1850-1860: tight control over funding to non-secular schools-many closed
- 1852: S.A. removed state aid to denominations, Mary MacKillop developed Catholic system
- 1862: State Aid withdrawn from all denominations in NSW
- 1972: Secular Education Act, Victoria
- Eventually Victoria, QLD, Tasmania and South Australia had no aid for denominational schools (15 minutes bible reading in SA)
- 1850 to 1990s saw withdrawal of financial aid for denominational schools and the introduction of a free, compulsory and secular education system
- Middle class not greatly affected by the abolition of aid because they already had a system of independent schools aiming to
 - Produce Christian gentlemen and leaders, young ladies etc
 - Provide religious instruction
 - Maintaining positions in society
- 1880: Public Instruction Act introduced by Henry Parkes → education to be free, compulsory and secular
- Catholic schools established through the rapid growth of Australian religious orders (Sisters of Charity (1838) Josephites, Good Samaritan Sisters, Sisters of Mercy)
 - To pass on Catholic tradition and heritage
 - To improve the economic status of Catholics

- More than 25% of all children attend Catholic schools
- Reintroduction of State Aid
 - Opposition based on sectarian fear of Catholic dominance
 - The middle class could pay high fees, however poor Catholics could not
 - School fees kept small because the schools were staffed by orders
 - Post war migration → could not maintain a system without aid
 - 1956: some State Aid to Catholic schools due to rise in R.C. pop. after war
 - Goulbourn Strike → limited aid resumed
 - 1967 State governments granted financial aid to non-government schools
 - 1974 Commonwealth Labor Government introduced federal aid
- 1962: Goulburn Strike
 - Catholic schools closed on the basis of inadequate toilet facilities
 - 2000 students turned up at state schools
 - Parents were paying taxes, therefore could enrol in schools
- 1964: funding for science blocks in secondary schools
- 1967: State Aid to independent schools
- 1974: Commonwealth Schools Commission guarantees funding
- 70% of Jewish students receive a Jewish education
- The Christian education system accommodates __% of the Australian market

Influence of Christianity on Social Welfare

- Christianity has functioned as the conscience of Australia
- Christian activism → legislation and social welfare reform
- Until the 1960s welfare was segregated as churches looked after their own, and excessive social support was 'socialist'
- Anglicans generally supported the status quo particularly when it was conservative, while Catholics agitated for their own lower class problems but did not want to appear as disloyal citizens
- Methodists worked for equity for all except the Catholic poor
- Salvation Army concentrated on practical assistance
- Christian churches remained stuck in the Depression mentality whereby they assisted without questioning the structures in question
- Vatican II gave Catholics permission to work with other Christians
- 1973-75 Henderson Poverty Commission set up largely as a result of work done by the Brotherhood of St Laurence
- 1985 Changing Australia- released by Uniting, Anglicans and Catholics
- Catholic, Anglican and Uniting churches largest providers of community services beside the government sector in Australia
- Increasingly governments call on the voluntary sector to provide welfare service, while at the same time resisting 'interference'
- 'The Brotherhood of St Laurence supports the St Vincent de Paul Society's report *Two Australias: Addressing Inequality and Poverty*
- Christian churches collectively are largest non-government provider of community and welfare services in Australia
- Salvation Army provides \$300 million social welfare service
- Anglicare- \$280 million
- Catholic: St. Vincent de Paul and Centacare

- Uniting has most extensive welfare network-Wesley Mission, Unifam and Burnside, Uniting Senior Ministries, Frontiers Services
- Churches lobby and collaborate with government on welfare and aid
- Indigenous rights-advocated by all denominations publically
- Poverty-respond to effects and causes
- Unemployment-many churches have agencies in the Job Network

Other Traditions:

- Buddhism is not centrally organised → little opportunity for large agency work
- Gradually Buddhist-run agencies are being established within communities
- Islamic Council-advocate on social issues
- *Zakat*-compulsory religious tax used to fund Islamic welfare
- Dispute in Judaism as to how much to fund Israel and how much to welfare
- Jewish Welfare Society supports Jewish community

Australian Cultural/Physical Influence on Christian Development

- More Anglicans than Catholics in Tasmania → early British settlement and low migrant intake from Europe and South East Asia
- High proportion of Presbyterians → early Scottish settlers
- Prior to WWII Italians were most numerous non-British settlers → shaped the religious identity of certain areas i.e. North QLD, along the Murray
- South Australia has high proportion of Uniting Church members → large numbers of Methodists (No Convicts)
- Highest proportion of Lutherans due to German immigrants after unification
- Orthodox highest in Victoria → Greek settlement
- Multicultural society → new Christian churches and support systems
- Culturally religion (organised) is not an obvious or heavily emphasised aspect of the national consciousness
- Constitution ‘...humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God’
- Sittings of Parliament open with the Lords Prayer
- Physical conditions in Australia require a reinterpretation of some Christian teaching with people who are unfamiliar with the landscape of the Church of England- i.e. pastures green etc
- Large distances and small communities mean that services and facilities are shared
- No new religions are produced in Australia in general terms
- Different areas are marked by their historical inclination towards one denomination or tradition in particular
- Melbourne is Catholic and Jewish, Sydney low Church, South Australia dissenting Protestant
- Fading Irish subculture → fundraising for Catholic schools etc link the community together (Donald Horne ‘The Lucky Country’)
- Globalisation and technological change → people see the world differently
- Gender equity has become widely accepted concept
- Decline in social capital-trust, generosity
- Developing cult of personality/individual
- Women are more likely to be in the workforce than propping up churches
- Smaller networks of people develop to explore spirituality
- Festivals of a spiritual nature become popular i.e. Carols by Candlelight

- Church attendance across Australia continues to fall
- Charismatic movements grow within many churches
- Openness to picking and choosing religious affiliation
- Responses by some religious traditions to social change and initiatives in community development from 1901 to the present
 - Ministry in rural and outback Australia
 - The role of religious traditions in the labour movement, conscription, wars and the Great Depression
 - The role and responses of religious traditions in/to at least three of the following issues/political debates:
 - § Abortion
 - § Divorce
 - § Euthanasia
 - § Gambling
 - § Indigenous rights
 - § Poverty
 - § Sexuality
 - § The role of women in family, church, workplace and society
 - § Unemployment

Rural Ministry

- Catholic Church
 - Moved where the Irish went
 - Nuns and brothers prepared to go where Anglicans wouldn't
 - Most religious orders came to Australia specifically to go to rural areas i.e. the Brigidine Sisters, Dominican sisters, Patrician brothers
 - Sisters of St Joseph founded by Mary MacKillop
 - Sisters of Mercy on 'motor missions' brought religion to Catholic children in remote areas
- Anglicans
 - Bush Church Aid society founded 1919 to establish correspondence schools and hostels
 - Women played large role, taking services, preaching and providing health care and education
 - Replaced the Bush Brotherhoods (High), initiated by Sydney Low Anglicans
 - Reaction to Mannix's stand against conscription – alleged fear of Catholic aggression in the bush
- Presbyterians
 - Australian Inland Mission begun in 1912 by Rv. John Flynn
 - Sought 'benefit for the whole nation' not just Christians
 - Rev J Payn Lewis and Rev Brady pioneered mission to areas never visited by any churches
 - 'Such is our task. In places we just go on until the remotest islanders know that we are a part of their life and their lives parts of ours.' Rev Plowman 1912
 - AIM approached by government to set up a hospital in 1917
 - Flynn dreamed of a network of safety-schools, nursing homes etc

- Flying Doctor Service established 1928, with Flynn wanting it to become independent of the AIM (Became Royal Flying Doctors 1939)
- 1949 first Old Timers Home opened in Alice Springs
- Flynn died 1951
- Became Frontier Services after the formation of the Uniting Church 1977
- Only organisation to provide aged care, HACC, health, family, respite and welfare support across the whole of remote Australia (85%)
- Lutherans
 - Concentrated on missionary work with indigenous people
 - Formed communities and missions across the interior
- 93% of Muslims, Buddhists and Jews live in capital cities

Churches and Conscription

- two referenda held October 1916, December 1917 to endorse conscription of single men without dependents for war service
- Catholic loyalty to the war decreased after the Easter rebellion 1916
- Working class identity of the Catholic population → negative vote
- In first campaign, leading opponents were Protestants
- Highest proportion of anti-voters in NSW and the highest Catholic population
- South Australia had second largest, and the most Methodists
- Secondary/further educated Catholics tended to support the war
- Archbishop Mannix (Melbourne May 1917) vocally opposed to conscription → becomes the hero of the working class
- Majority against conscription increased the second time it was proposed
- 'Diminished Catholic enlistment', in fact only slightly reduced
- Closer Catholic identity with the labour movement resulted

Catholicism and Labour

- Australia was under a threat of communist take over (perceived)
- Menzies style agitation → McCarthyism
- B.A Santamaria established the Catholic Social Studies Movement
- Opposed communist influence in politics, trade unions and general community
- Movement controlled by a committee of Catholic bishops and attracted laity
- Mid 1950s the Movement began to seek influence in the ALP
- Movement interference was unwelcome in the ALP-hostile attack
- 1955 Catholics split to form the Democratic Labor Party to side with the conservatives against the ALP
- Without Catholic support the ALP did not gain federal government until 1972
- DLP remained an important minor party in Australia for 20 years

Religions and Indigenous Rights

- Pope John Paul II commented on Reconciliation and the rights of the indigenous people when he visited in 1986
- 'Let it not be said that the fair and equitable recognition of Aboriginal rights is discrimination... what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow.'
- World Council of Churches recognises the relationship of indigenous people to land

- Uniting Church has spoken out on reconciliation since it was formed in 1977, gaining volume as the issue becomes more widely discussed
- Bush Church Aid society 'Indigenous Australians live in a world where others have come and taken over.'

Abortion

- The Pope has never proclaimed an infallible teaching on abortion, however he states that he believes it to be wrong
- Catholic groups i.e. 'Society for the Protection of God's Precious Innocents' are active in Australia, maintaining daily protest outside abortion clinics
- The Protestant churches have varying official stances on the issue, however they are less active than Catholics in terms of protest
- Jews do not oppose necessary abortion therefore there is little protest

Gambling

- Churches are increasingly vocal opponents of gambling, particularly the Baptist and Uniting churches who have been involved in government enquiries etc into problem gambling
- Rev. Tim Costello leads the anti-gambling movement in Australia, and has done for a decade
- Costello is involved in the politics as well as the theology of gambling
- Involved in church and state measures to deal with gambling
- 'We don't have problem gamblers, we have problem machines in a problem industry.'
- The development of religious plurality and distribution/profile of religious adherence today
 - Immigration after World War II
 - The ending of the White Australia Policy
 - The formation of the Uniting Church in Australia in 1977
 - New Age Religions
 - Religious Conversion and denominational switching
 - Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement

Immigration after WWII

- Following WWII there was an influx of refugees from Europe (predominantly Jewish)
- First en masse influx of Jews → establishment of communities
- First attempt to build up population brought Britons to Australia, however not enough responses
- Population shortage in Australia → acceptance of 'white looking' Europeans 'New Australians'
- Assisted immigration from Italy, Greece, Romania, Malta etc
- Catholics (non Irish) and Orthodox Christians arrived
- Assimilation policy required that Italian and Maltese Catholics integrate into the Irish model, and that the Orthodox become Catholic
- Orthodox would not assimilate → spread of the Greek Orthodox church
- Ethnic diversity represented the opportunity for Christian churches to boost their numbers

Ending of the White Australia Policy

- The White Australia policy was adopted at Federation
- Officially ended 1966, but practically only stopped under Whitlam
- Allowed for the entry of Indochinese refugees (Catholics fleeing communism and Buddhists)
- Steady entry of a diverse range of people from a variety of traditions into Australia
- Particularly after disasters or conflict
- Gradual abolition of the policy of assimilation and move towards multiculturalism
- Different kinds of Christians
- Buddhism fastest growing religion in Australia as a result

Formation of the Uniting Church

- Uniting Church formed from the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches on 22 June 1977
- Became the new, Australian Church
- The majority of adherents of the three previous traditions transferred to the Uniting Church, although there are still some original churches operating (mainly Presbyterian/Church of Scotland)
- Culmination of ecumenical discussions dating back to Federation

New Age Religions

- Cover a wide range of non-conventional spiritual experiences
- Generally focus on individual fulfilment, perfection etc
- Not necessarily religious, generally do not have divine texts etc
- Frequently are inspired by a guru of some description
- Different to cults-not necessarily a sacrifice of personal freedom
- Individualistic and searching
- Influenced by Eastern notions of time, rebirth and soul
- Renewed emphasis on meditation in Christianity in response to New Age
- Mind, Body and Spirit Festival
- Deepak Chopra etc are very popular in Australia (generally not religious)
- Increased interest in the occult and astrology etc \$100 000 per month on calls
- Willingness to identify with ancient religions i.e. witchcraft, Satanism, pagan
- Take followers away from established religions

Denominational Switching

- Swapping between denominations occurs predominantly in the Protestant Churches
- The diversity of Christian churches and the raising of the profile of smaller churches contributes
- Rising fundamentalism?
- Increasing preference for non-institutionalised churches
- Moves towards House Church etc-small, intimate communities
- Charismatic movements gain momentum with young people
- Old churches can't cater for everyone-young and old etc

- 200 000 people attend Pentecostal services each Sunday-second only to Catholics
- Grew by 41% in ten years from 1986
- Appeal to less educated, the poor, the disadvantaged etc at whom the churches actively push themselves
- Recognition of common elements in religious expression and world views in Australia today:
 - Religious harmony and inter faith dialogue
 - Ecumenical development within Christianity eg WCC, NCC etc
 - Joint interfaith and ecumenical initiatives

Ecumenism/Inter Faith dialogue

- Councils of Christians and Jews started Victoria 1985, NSW 1989
 - Educate about respective beliefs
 - Promote research into the history
 - Promote education in relevant ethical teachings
- 1995 Jewish, Islamic and Christian bodies issued joint press release on Bosnia
- Vesak celebrations at Buddhist temple chanted by an imam
- Religious Founders Day involves multiple traditions
- Heads of Faith Meeting every two years in NSW Parliament
- Interfaith chapel at Olympics
- Australian Catholic Bishops Committee and Council of Aust. Jewry meet
- Columban centre for Christian-Muslim relations in Sydney includes women's network etc
- Palm Sunday peace marches show cooperation between churches
- Meetings of Ministers' Fraternal in local areas
- United Christians promoted Billy Graham crusades
- WCC founded 1948
- Interchurch Commission for Religious Education in State Schools NSW
- Accredited NCC with Catholic Church and others
- Australian College of Theology-originally C of E but is now an accreditation centre for 25 theological colleges in Australia and New Zealand