



CONFERENCE REPORT

on the 2nd conference of the Australian Association for Mission Studies (AAMS),
hosted and organised by The Broken Bay Institute
and held from 22 to 25 September 2011
at the Mary MacKillop Centre, 80 Mount St, North Sydney

The second AAMS conference took the theme of “Mission in a Globalised World: A New Vision of Discipleship”. It addressed themes such as ecological mission, secularisation, mission in Australia and the Pacific, and educating for mission.

The participants, about seventy-five in number, came from every mainland state and territory, New Zealand and Ghana—practitioners, teachers, students and agency leaders.

The conference was structured to allow for five keynote addresses (thirty minutes each with thirty minutes for discussion) and thirty workshop presentations (twenty minutes each with twenty-five minutes for discussion). All workshop papers were available online for download for two months prior to the conference, so they could be taken as read.

The overseas keynote speaker was Professor Ernst Conradie, from the University of the Western Cape in South Africa, who spoke twice, once directly on the conference theme and once on the state of the debate on Christian mission and ecology.

Rev Dr Michael Frost, Vice-Principal of Morling College, argued for mission as the church’s organising function, asking what difference it would make if—among the church functions of worship, community, mission and discipleship—mission were to be the organising dimension, helping the church to live out its call to co-operate with the mission of God.



Ernst Conradie

Dr Ruth Powell, Director of NCLS Research, gave a succinct and sometimes confronting overview of what research on churches and Australian spirituality has taught us over the last twenty-years.

Professor Therese D’Orsa, Head of Missiology at The Broken Bay Institute, explored mission education as guiding people in meaning-making in a global world and post-Christian West.

The ecological mission stream of workshops was well-attended, and, in a plenary session towards the end of the conference, those present affirmed and helped to shape a 'Rainbow Covenant for Earth Mission' being developed by Professor Norman Habel and the National Council of Churches in Australia.

With plenty of response time in both keynote sessions and workshop presentations, and with spaces between sessions, participants were very positive about the opportunities to meet others and have good discussions.

The conference began and finished with liturgy, and began each day with worship as well, setting it in a context of worship. The Liturgy Director for the Broken Bay Diocese, Julie Kelly, had prepared excellent services, among them an inclusive mass in the historic Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel.

On one evening participants viewed the moving film *Of Gods and Men*, about recent monastic martyrs in Algeria.

On another evening the conference dinner was held, including a stirring after-dinner talk by Sr Susan Connolly rsj, who has worked in East Timor for eighteen years. Sr Connolly told some dramatic stories and reminded those present that Australia, despite owing much to the East Timorese, has used its power to grab oil reserves in Timorese waters.

The venue was significant, not only because it is the resting place of Australia's first Roman Catholic saint but also because Mary MacKillop stood in a feisty mission tradition of serving the poor.

The AAMS Annual General Meeting was held during the conference and a new committee was elected. The new President of AAMS is Rev Dr Jacob Kavunkal SVD, a lecturer in mission at Yarra Theological Union and formerly the founder of the Fellowship of Indian Missiologists. Offers to kickstart chapters of AAMS in Sydney and Canberra were made, to add to the networks in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane.

AAMS and BBI are grateful to those who sponsored the conference: Catholic Mission Australia, Uniting Mission & Education, the Sisters of St Joseph (Mary MacKillop Place), Sisters of Mercy (Bathurst and Gunnedah), John Garratt Publishing and Mosaic Resources. And AAMS is deeply grateful to The Broken Bay Institute for organising such a successful conference.

*Ross Langmead
Secretary, AAMS
29 September 2011*