

# Mission Trips organised by Australian Churches

## Introduction

This Fact Sheet examines Australian churches' support for mission via the organising of mission trips either overseas or elsewhere in Australia. There is a long history of Christian mission organisations working overseas and in other parts of Australia, whether missions of evangelism and ministry training, works of practical service and empowerment, or endeavours comprised of both.

For decades now it has been possible for church attenders to experience a taste of mission work by taking part in a trip, and for those in the field hopefully to benefit from the involvement of more personnel over the period of the trip. Initially such trips were almost exclusively organised by mission organisations, but there may be a growing trend of churches now organising such trips themselves, either alone, with other churches, or in partnership with an organisation. This Fact Sheet shows the overall number of churches involved in this way is large, and denominational differences are also considerable.

## Churches that organise mission trips

The following question was asked in the 2011 National Church Life Survey *Operations Survey*<sup>1</sup>.

*Has this congregation organised any mission trips in the past 2 years, including trips jointly organised with another church or organisation?*

				More
	None	One	2 or 3	than 3
Mission trips to other parts of Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overseas mission trips	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The results in this Fact Sheet come from the responses of 2,429 churches from 20 different denominations (including independent churches). Table 1 shows the percentage of churches in each denomination that indicated any of the boxes other than 'None' for the two questions. Using weighting that balances the participation of different denominations and regions

<sup>1</sup> This is a one-per-church survey used as an audit of objective information such as activities each church runs or supports.

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against what we know to be the actual number of churches in Australia, NCLS researchers have estimated that approximately 34% of churches have

been involved in organising a mission trip over the 2010-2011 period, which could be up to 3,900 churches Australia-wide.

**Table 1: Churches by percentage of denomination that have helped organise a mission trip in the 2010-2011 period**

	Aust only	O'seas only	Both	Combined
<b>All Churches</b>	6%	19%	9%	<b>34%</b>
Anglican	6%	10%	4%	<b>20%</b>
Baptist	6%	31%	17%	<b>55%</b>
Catholic	5%	12%	3%	<b>20%</b>
Churches of Christ	6%	36%	14%	<b>56%</b>
Lutheran	6%	11%	3%	<b>20%</b>
Pentecostal <sup>2</sup>	3%	49%	28%	<b>80%</b>
Presbyterian	6%	16%	8%	<b>31%</b>
Salvation Army <sup>3</sup>	10%	8%	2%	<b>21%</b>
Seventh-day Adventist	6%	32%	14%	<b>53%</b>
Uniting	6%	6%	3%	<b>15%</b>
Other Protestant <sup>4</sup>	7%	32%	26%	<b>64%</b>

Source: 2011 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,429 churches, weighted).

<sup>2</sup> 'Pentecostal' includes Australian Christian Churches, Apostolic, C3 Church, CRC International, and International Network of Churches.

<sup>3</sup> Southern Territory only (approximately half of Australian Salvation Army Corps).

<sup>4</sup> 'Other Protestant' includes Christian Reformed, Congregational, Vineyard, Missionary Alliance, Nazarene, and independent churches.

While this result may not reflect 3,900 different trips (as churches will have sometimes jointly organised a trip), it nevertheless represents an enormous amount of resources in terms of time, money and people being invested. It also suggests that mission trips are enjoying considerable support and indeed direct involvement from churches.

### Denominational differences

The Pentecostal churches showed the strongest culture of organising such trips, with 80% of churches indicating they had done so. They also have the smallest percentage of trips to elsewhere in Australia. Other movements showing strong involvement in trips are 'Other Protestant' (64%; see table footnote for a list of these denominations), Churches of Christ (56%), Baptist (55%) and Seventh-day Adventist (53%). The Salvation Army were notable in having a greater support for trips elsewhere in Australia (12%) rather than overseas (10%). Overall 15% of churches had helped organise at least one trip to elsewhere in Australia, 28% to overseas, with an overlap of 9% of churches that indicated both.

Another perspective on these figures is given by considering the actual numbers of churches represented by the different denominations, and how this makes up the total number, as shown in Figure 1.

The Pentecostal movement not only showed a strong culture of support for organising such trips, but because it is a large movement, it represents almost a third of all trips (32%), with an estimated 1,250 churches indicating involvement. In contrast the group of 'other Protestant' churches, while also showing a strong culture, are a relatively small group, amounting to about 50 churches that indicated involvement. Other movements accounting for large numbers of trips are Anglican (580, 15% of all trips), Baptist (540, 14%), Uniting (330, 8%) and Seventh-day Adventist (305, 8%).

Organising mission trips is clearly a widespread activity among Australian churches. Some trips organised by mission agencies independently of local churches are not likely to be accounted for in these figures, making the overall total of mission trips potentially even higher.

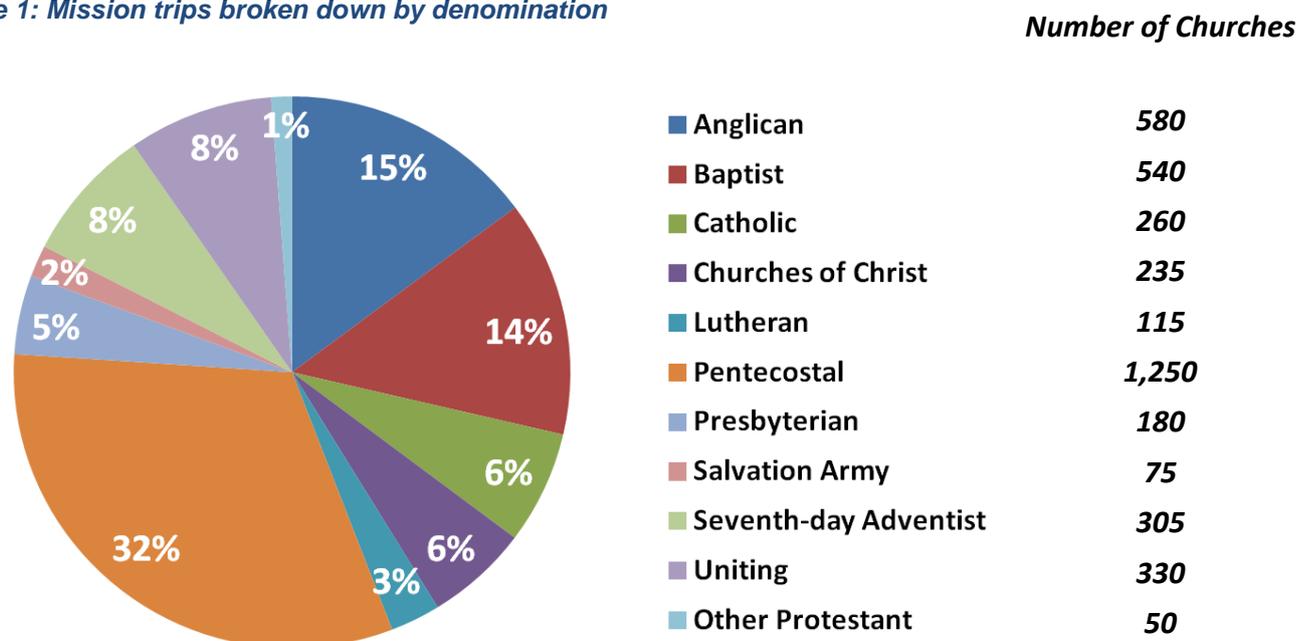
### Data sources

Powell, R., (2011) [computer file], 2011 NCLS Operations Survey. Sydney, Australia: NCLS Research.

### Citation

Sterland, S. (2014) Mission Trips organised by Australian Churches, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 14028. Adelaide: Mirrabooka Press.

Figure 1: Mission trips broken down by denomination



Source: 2011 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,429 churches, weighted).

Notes: Figures are rounded to nearest 5 for numbers of churches. Catholic parishes are counted rather than local churches.