

Mission Trips Organised by Australian Churches 2015-2016

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 2016 National Church Life Survey *Operations Survey*¹.

Has this local church² organised any mission trips in the past 2 years, including trips jointly organised with another church or organisation?

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

The results in this Fact Sheet come from the responses of 2,289 churches from 12 different denominations. Table 1 shows the percentage of churches in each denomination that indicated any of the boxes other than

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

² "...this parish" in the Catholic versions of the Operations Survey.

Approximately 23% of churches have been involved in organising a mission trip over the 2015-2016 period.

'None' for the two questions. Using weighting that balances the participation of different denominations and

regions against what we know to be the actual number of churches in Australia, NCLS researchers have estimated that approximately 23% of churches have been involved in organising a mission trip over the 2015-2016 period. This could translate to 2,350 churches Australia-wide that belong to the 12 denominations included in this analysis (and even more when considering all denominations in Australia).

Table 1: Churches by percentage of denomination that have helped organise a mission trip in the 2015-2016 period

	Aust only	O'seas only	Both	Combined
All Churches	3%	14%	6%	23%
Anglican	2%	7%	3%	12%
Baptist	6%	21%	12%	39%
Catholic	3%	8%	3%	13%
Lutheran	4%	7%	2%	13%
Pentecostal ³	6%	43%	17%	66%
Presbyterian	3%	10%	4%	17%
Salvation Army	9%	3%	3%	14%
Uniting	1%	6%	2%	9%

Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches, weighted).

While this result may not reflect 2,350 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

³ 'Pentecostal' includes Australian Christian Churches, Apostolic, C3 Church, CRC International, and International Network of Churches.

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 two thirds (66%) of churches indicating they had done so in the past 2 years. Baptist churches also showed strong involvement, with some 39% of their churches having organised a mission trip. The Salvation Army were notable in being the only participating denomination to have organised more trips elsewhere in Australia (12%) than overseas (6%). Overall 9% of churches had helped organise at least one trip to elsewhere in Australia, 20% to overseas, with an overlap of 6% 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 some 44% of all trips organised by the denominations in this analysis,

with an estimated 1,030 churches indicating involvement. Other movements accounting for large numbers of trips are Baptist (375, 16% of all trips) and Anglican churches (345, 15% of all trips).

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.

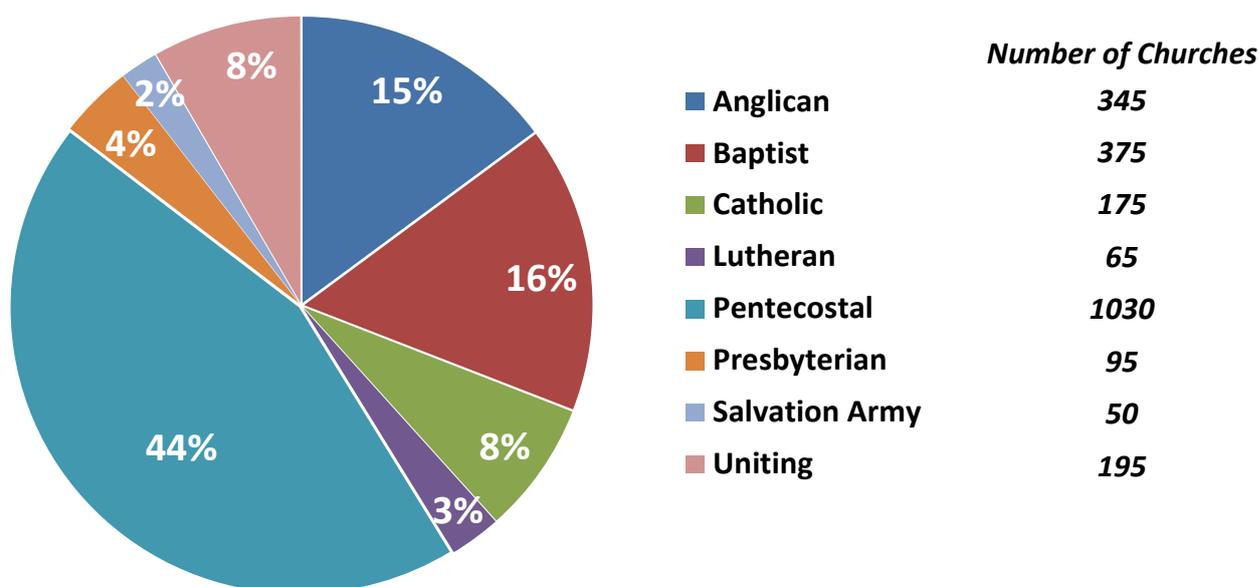
Data sources

Powell, R., (2016) [computer file], 2016 NCLS Operations Survey. Sydney, Australia: NCLS Research.

Citation

Sterland, S. & Hancock, N. (2017) Mission Trips Organised by Australian Churches 2015-2016, NCLS Research Fact Sheet 17008. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Figure 1: Mission trips broken down by denomination



Source: 2016 NCLS Operations Surveys (n=2,289 churches, weighted).

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