



Initiatives of Change
Australia

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

Building trust across
the world's divides

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Initiatives of Change (lofC) is an international NGO and a worldwide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

lofC International is incorporated in Switzerland, and the global lofC network spans 60 countries.

Initiatives of Change Australia (lofCA) is registered as a charity by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. Our mission is to empower leadership for peace and trust building in communities in Australia, and overseas, where invited.

This annual report covers activities and financial statements of lofCA from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

www.au.iofc.org

Cover image: Launch of Our Uluru Response trustbuilding project. Led by Indigenous musician Amos Roach and dancers, participants learn some new moves. / Credit: Alex Childs

Office: 226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, Victoria, AUSTRALIA 3142

Phone: +61 (3) 9822 1218

Email: info.au@iofc.org

ABN 22 004 350 789

Our Australia-Pacific Centre stands on the traditional lands of the Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri people. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present, and emerging.

JOINT MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Individuals and communities all over the world have been experiencing a year of change—rapid, accelerated, unexpected and unprecedented change. It is as if, as a society, we are experiencing a new rite of passage.

Coming through COVID-19, an overwhelming communal sentiment is growing: a realisation that we don't want to return to 'normal', that now is the time for a 'new normal'—indeed, a better and more optimistic 'normal.'

In 2020, the world learned new words: 'lockdown' and 'sani.' We learned new behaviours: 'social distancing' and 'masks on.' We also learned and responded rapidly to another new word and behaviour—'pivot.' And pivot we did.

Like the rest of the world, we joined Zoom. Creators of Peace Circles continued online, and we discovered that deep and meaningful engagement could be achieved, even when looking at each other on a screen. Taking our events online brought wider national as well as international reach. Our work of developing ethical leadership pivoted to serve a widespread, diverse set of participants, enhancing their skills in life to become authentic and deeply honest leaders.

Emerging from the COVID-19 lockdown, we celebrated with the heartfelt launch of a three-year trustbuilding project, Our Uluru Response. Since then, we have been walking with First Nations leaders through national forums for truth telling and truth hearing, understanding that hearing and accepting the truth is critical for change.

We are focusing now on how to use IofCA's assets to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our work, while being bold in how we fulfil our mission and purpose. Local projects are unfolding, and an exciting new vision for Armagh is on the cusp of fruition.

As an organisation committed to a socially just and equitable world, we continue to work for a world in which the marginalised are no longer pushed to the edge, the vulnerable no longer left exposed, and those denied their basic human dignity can regain it. We look forward to working with others to live joyously, harmoniously and inclusively. Each and every one of us, everywhere, can become practitioners of peace and reconciliation within ourselves, in our communities and within society at large. We can open ourselves up to a grander moral vision for society and for our communities, so that we may unfold a higher purpose for all of us as individuals and as a collective.

We thank our staff, our volunteers, our Board and, most especially, our IofCA Community who carry the work through their hearts and their hands.

We invite you to join us on this journey of change and in this vision of a better world that works for everyone and that inspires our imaginations, enlivens our sense of possibility, and lifts our spirit as human beings.

A new vitality is growing, and we welcome everyone on the journey.



Paul Ntoumos
Chair of the Board



Margaret Hepworth
Executive Officer

WHO WE ARE



Initiatives of Change (IofC) is a 100-year-old spiritual and social movement, founded by Frank Buchman, a pastor and peacebuilder. In Australia, we are registered as a faith-based charity that engages with people of all faiths and none.

Through our work, we inspire and connect people to take their first steps in creating a peaceful, just and sustainable society. Trustbuilding, ethical leadership and sustainable living are the cornerstones of our work. We believe that practising honesty, unselfishness, love and purity of intent will help us 'be the change we want to see in the world.'

Our work inspires people to:

- **Practise global citizenship.** We educate and equip program participants with the tools and skills to exercise their own rights and responsibilities in peaceful and democratic ways.
- **Build community resilience.** We work towards social cohesion and environmental sustainability through service and partnership with marginalised and vulnerable communities, and through joint local action to protect and restore ecosystems.
- **Promote peaceful and inclusive societies.** We spark awareness of the broad and historic dynamics of colonisation and environmental degradation that have led to current inequities and injustices, and encourage everyone to take focused action as individuals and in groups to address these wrongs.

See more about our history:

au.iofc.org/initiatives-change-australia-short-history



We support First Nations people to seek recognition and justice.



We value and make space for diverse life stories.



We train and mentor ethical leaders.



We make space for friendships to build an inclusive society.



We grow communities for local action on the environment.

MEET OUR COMMUNITY

Initiatives of Change (lofC) is more than an organisation. Our committed staff team is supported by a large network of volunteers who organise and facilitate events, mentor others, and take their own 'initiatives of change' for a better world. Meet some of these movers and shakers.



Jane Mills was born in Kenya and has been a life-long worker with Initiatives of Change in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Solomon Islands. Today, she continues to support bridge-building work from the country town of Gerringong, NSW.

"Relationship building is absolutely key to our work. You can build a

new world on paper, but it has to come from people. The sort of peace work we do is not highly advertised diplomacy. It's very much behind the scenes.

"We build bridges within the family, within community, between communities, and between nations. It's all about people...people can change, and that's the hope for humanity."



Alex Birnberg volunteered with lofC for 10 years, working with international teams in India, Malaysia and other parts of the world.

"We humans are made of two parts, the logical and the 'illogical.' In fear, we have pushed away that second side of ourselves. lofC gave me the chance to build a bridge to that

irrational side of myself, and yet, that side is as much 'me' as my conscious rationality.

"We divide ourselves at our own peril. lofC has allowed me to take that chance on being fully human. Any group that can do that is important for this hurt, fractured world."



Elisse Higginbotham took part in a Life Matters workshop. The experience was one that she wanted others to have. Besides her day job as an optometrist, she now volunteers with lofC Australia, organising follow-up workshops for its 'Leadership in Practice' community.

"I found the community at Initiatives of Change Australia has been a place where I have always felt very welcome. I have felt surrounded by people with passion and integrity, and it's been lovely to be gradually more and more a part of that. It used to be something that I did, now I kind of feel like it is something I am."



Vipulie Iralu, GIS and technology specialist, grew up at Asia Plateau, the lofC conference centre in the hills of Maharashtra State, India. After completing tertiary studies in Australia, as a young working professional, he lived at Armagh, the lofC Australia-Pacific centre in Melbourne.

"My parents moved from Mumbai to manage the lofC conference centre, Asia Plateau. From a very young age, I always had playmates; it was cool. It gave me an appreciation of diversity and the ability to interact with different kinds of people.

Being at Armagh, you have an awareness of social issues. Armagh provides that space. 'Quiet time' is something that's built into the lifestyle. For me, the routine is to start writing down bullet points in my mind... it may be things like how I talked to my wife, something that affected her, or something at work. If something comes to my mind, then I write it down, then spend time going through it—so you haven't lost that thought."

OUR PROGRAMS

Our Uluru Response

In March 2021, we launched a trustbuilding project, in partnership with First Nations leaders. The project supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and its call to Voice, Treaty and Truth. The project, Our Uluru Response (OUR), has begun holding national education forums, workshops, community visits, and community-based 'truth telling and truth hearing' dialogues.

With funding from the Fetzer Institute and lofC International, the OUR project is working with First Nations and partners to co-design local projects that will benefit Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander communities, while inviting all Australians to build relationships with First Nations people and learn the true history of our nation.



We all come from a sacred place, the beginning, and we can all journey back as one people and be the authors of a new story for this country.

Archie Roach, Bundjalung-Gunditjmara singer/song-writer

3000+



Facebook views of the launch event livestream

7000+



people reached on social media

A 44-year old vision of harmony

In 1977, national and overseas guests gathered at the opening of the new wing at Armagh. People from every state in Australia joined in planting a tree in the courtyard to signify wholehearted nationwide participation. Aboriginal rights campaigner and Yorta Yorta woman Margaret (Lilardie) Tucker, and a white friend, Honor Thwaites, played key roles on the day.

At the launch of Our Uluru Response 44 years later, their descendants met as Lilardie's grand-daughter Barbara Burns laid a plaque at the foot of the tree. Its message, written by Barbara and her brother Selwyn, conveys a message of hope and racial harmony.



There is more to life than racism, bitterness and unkindness. Let us look up at this beautiful tree and know that it grows great and strong...Stand tall and proud, go out on a limb, and pray that all mankind can walk together as one.

**Barbara and Selwyn,
Lilardie's grandchildren**





Working for restoration

Cherbourg, 270 km northwest of Brisbane on the lands of the Wakka Wakka people, became a site of forced resettlement in the early 20th century, under the 1897 Queensland law on Aboriginal 'protection.' Traditional landowners became disconnected from their respective cultures and languages. By the 1930s there were 28 different First Nations represented among Cherbourg's population of 900 people. The intergenerational impacts continue to play out to this day.

In January 2021, IofC volunteers organised a group of 22 non-Indigenous visitors to Cherbourg. Hosted by magistrate and Wakka Wakka man 'Uncle' Eric Law AM, the visitors began a conversation to better understand the legacy of past policies, and consider what steps ordinary people can take to right the wrongs of the past. The visit is the first of more that will take place around the country as part of 'Our Uluru Response.'

This is not about making people feel guilty. It's about going forward together and working it out.

'Uncle' Eric Law AM, born in Cherbourg



Facing page: First Nations campaigner and signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, Thomas Mayor, gave the keynote address at the launch event. Credit: Eike Zeller / Memorial plaque at Armagh, marking a tree planted by Margaret Tucker (Lilardia) and Honor Thwaites. Credit: Aasha Gray

Top and centre: Aboriginal dancers at smoking ceremony, Armagh. Credits: Alex Childs

Bottom, left to right: Memories of the Cummeragunja Walkoff and a tune on the gumleaf by 'Uncle' Herb Patton. Credit: Eike Zeller / Remarks by Dr Katie Allen, Federal Liberal MP for Higgins. Zoom screenshot / Tired but happy—IofC Australia volunteers and organisers at the close of the launch event.

Top right: IofC group from Brisbane on a visit to Cherbourg. Credit: Amiel Nubaha



Ethical Leadership

While COVID restrictions on in-person gatherings remained throughout much of 2020, the lofCA team around the country continued to build and grow ethical leadership through workshops, a community of practice, and webinars.

Life Matters workshops

This program teaches life skills through a four-day encounter workshop. Life Matters workshops invite and strongly engage with emerging leaders from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. Participants grow in confidence, experience inner transformation, and are better able to participate effectively in the world of work and public life.

As soon as COVID restrictions lifted in Melbourne, the team in Victoria prepared a return of Life Matters. The residential workshop took place in March with 10 participants from many different national backgrounds, including Australian, Mexican, Indian, Sri Lankan, Ethiopian, Ugandan, South Sudanese, and Afghan.

A 21-strong team of volunteer facilitators and support persons enabled the workshop to take place. Many were alumni of previous Life Matters workshops, who want others to also benefit from a transformative experience.

Learn more about Life Matters workshops here: au.iofc.org/life-matters-workshops

Leadership Community of Practice

The community of practice encourages Life Matters alumni and others to keep building their skills for ethical leadership. During the COVID year, the lofCA Queensland team, in partnership with Workforce Diversity, organised national webinars. Our seven-webinar series on 'Effective Leadership in Times of Crisis', kicked off on World Refugee Day, 20 June, with a list of diverse speakers who provoked serious reflection, and stimulated discussions exploring various facets of leadership. The series drew a steadily rising group of participants as word spread, with a total of 727 registrations for the webinars.

Listen to the speakers on Effective Leadership in Times of Crisis [here](#) and [here](#).



Credits: Andrew Flynn



1 residential workshop



17

Life Matters alumni taking on planning and leadership roles in lofC ethical leadership events



7

webinars, with...



12

speakers, and



127

registrations

Life Matters workshop
participants at Armagh,
March 2021



Credit: Andrew Flynn

Life Matters alumni:

Aya Ono



"Attending the workshop was one of the best things I've done in my life! Since the LM workshop, I have for the first time felt truly

complete each day, in a way I had never felt before, and I know that this is my authentic self.

"The LM workshop provides a 'safe space' where we can share our personal stories. It is an amazing feeling to know that you are in a space where you are being heard but not judged. We all carry our own stories from our past and in many instances bury them because we easily conclude that they are not worthy of sharing with others. At the same time, in today's fast-paced digital era we are constantly judged, critiqued and forced to seek validation and you are left wondering, 'When can you ever feel truly adequate just the way you are?'."

"The Life Matters workshop is probably one of the few platforms available that allows you to be who you are, and helps you choose your own path of who you want to become.

"I witnessed a genuine unity among all the participants at the workshop... Since the workshop all of us in my 'family group' have been catching up on a fortnightly basis ... This moment of sharing that I was gifted continues to bring me joy every single day."

Life Matters alumni:

Ali Yaghobi



"In a world that is often full of uncertainty, where money is seen as a means to an end, and where a sense of community has been lost to individualism and self-interest, workshops such as Life Matters help to bring back attention to what is important in life.

"The practice of 'quiet time' that was inculcated in me during the workshop has certainly helped me to navigate these trying times. This time of upheaval has also highlighted the importance of having the right tools to cope with the devastating impact a pandemic can have on a person."



*It is an
amazing feeling
to know that you
are in a space
where you are
being heard but
not judged.*

Aya Ono

Creators Of Peace

Creators of Peace Circles invite everyone into warm, intimate spaces in which friendships can grow and thrive among people of different cultural and faith backgrounds.

Participants practise listening and communication skills as they explore their innate abilities to create peace within their own circles of influence. The Circles meet the needs of newcomers and people experiencing life transitions. Participants build friendship networks that increase personal and community resilience, countering social isolation.

Moving our Circles to Zoom during the COVID-19 lockdown presented some challenges—and some unexpected benefits! The groups began to include some who would previously have been unable to travel to weekend or evening sessions.

We are successfully concluding IofCA's 2-year partnership with the Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre, which brought Creators of Peace Circles to women and youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Dandenong, Victoria, funded by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Victoria. Our experience from this project, Creators of Peace Southeast (CoPSE), shows that a focus on relational health within families and across ethnic divides alleviates fear and stress, and in many instances has led to healing and reconciliation—a foundation for happiness and mental health.

Learn more about Peace Circles here: au.iofc.org/creators-of-peace



7 Peace Circles and related events through CoPSE



5 'in conversation' Zoom speakers on strategies for peacebuilding



28 Australians participating in the Creators of Peace facilitators' global group



120k

program to deliver Peace Circles in Dandenong



Meena Sharma

Meena Sharma is a human rights activist turned peacebuilder, who has facilitated Creators of Peace Circles with women in conflict zones in Nepal. She is an alumni of Creators of Peace facilitator training offered and supported by IofC Australia.

"Initially, when they entered the room, the Maoist victims sat on one side, and the Army victims sat on the other. There was a clear distinction between the two sides...When a woman shared her story of rape by one of the warring parties, they all cried and hugged her, no matter which side they were from. These women were sexually harassed, tortured and abducted to aid either side. But they all shared the same pain. By the end of the three days, it was very hard to identify who was from which group."

Read more about Meena's experience as a peacebuilder with Creators of Peace: au.iofc.org/meena-sharma-story-peace-builder



Jean Brown, designer of the Peace Circle methodology used by Creators of Peace:

"Through my lofC work, I recognised that women's voices needed to be heard—that the more feminine relational, intuitive, subjective values are needed to bring balance when it comes to peace. More women are needed at the table when it comes to peace talks. Creators of Peace Circles evolved in order to bring women together to explore the nature of peace and discover their part in creating it...I was mindful of the changing nature of communities, and how to prepare women to open their hearts to create an inclusive, hospitable space for newcomers of different religious and ethnic backgrounds."



**So thought-provoking ...
I realise I have been stuck
for years in an old story.
Now I want to create a
new story for my life.**

Above: Jane Mills (centre) with neighbour Mariam Hijazi (left) and Mariam's daughter (right). Jane and Mariam worked on many Creators of Peace events together in Sydney.

3 Australian New Story field trials (and 8 international)

30 people participating in the Australian trials

120 volunteer hours to develop the New Story guide

New Story Advocates

During the pandemic, Creators of Peace developed a conversation guide for small groups.



Advocating for a New Story of Our Shared Humanity, a 40-page booklet, maps out five conversations that begin with envisioning a shared future, then easing into story sharing and considering where negative narratives from each person's life could be replaced

with new stories. Like Creators of Peace Circles, New Story conversations work well in culturally diverse groups, and address shared concerns such as justice for First Nations, countering racism, and caring for the Earth. After the initial drafting, the guide was developed through a series of 'field tests' on Zoom, with people taking part from Australia and other countries—including one who attended some sessions while in a 14-day hotel quarantine! The international Creators of Peace network launched the guide in March, and New Story conversations are being rolled out in Australia and beyond.

ARMAGH

Our centre in Melbourne, Armagh, plays multiple roles as office space, a venue for meetings and conferences, and short-term accommodation for domestic and overseas visitors from the lofC network.

Gifted to lofC Australia in 1956, this Toorak residence has been in constant use, and was showing its age. The COVID-19 lockdown in Melbourne offered the perfect opportunity to deal with maintenance issues.

We stripped back furnishings and painted some rooms, including the 1970s-era 'new' dining room. Bathroom refurbishments, new carpet, repairs and landscaping all took place.

Friends of Armagh are a group of faithful supporters who raise money for Armagh. This year their efforts made possible new lighting, blackout curtains and artwork for the refurbished dining room.



Armagh is a peacebuilding centre for the Australia-Pacific region and this refurbishment sets the scene for renewed vitality.

Paul Ntoumos, Chair of the lofC Australia Board

Clockwise from above: Back garden at Armagh. / Ballroom used as meeting space. / Ballroom used for live performances. / Dining room. / Picnic area.
Credits: Aasha Gray, Wendy Vanderleest.

TREASURER'S REPORT

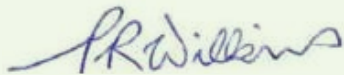
The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on our operations and investments, and on financial results for the 2020-21 period.

Dividends and associated franking credits income for the year were \$50,000 below budget expectations and \$130,000 less than the previous 12 months. Lockdown had a major impact on program activities, including hire of facilities and residential income. The overall decline in program and property income meant that we were entitled to receive financial support from both Victorian and Commonwealth Governments in the form of one-off business support assistance and JobKeeper payments to many of our employees.

The sale of a property in Camberwell, Victoria, provided us with cash to purchase rental properties that provide residential security in retirement for former full-time workers, while at the same time ensuring a market return on capital funds.

Government assistance, coupled with the gain on the Camberwell property, contributed more than \$1 million to the accounts. Without these adjustments, our net operating result from ordinary activities would have been a deficit of \$461,731, higher than the annual deficit of \$377,830 that was reported a year ago, and in line with our budgeted deficit of \$469,120.

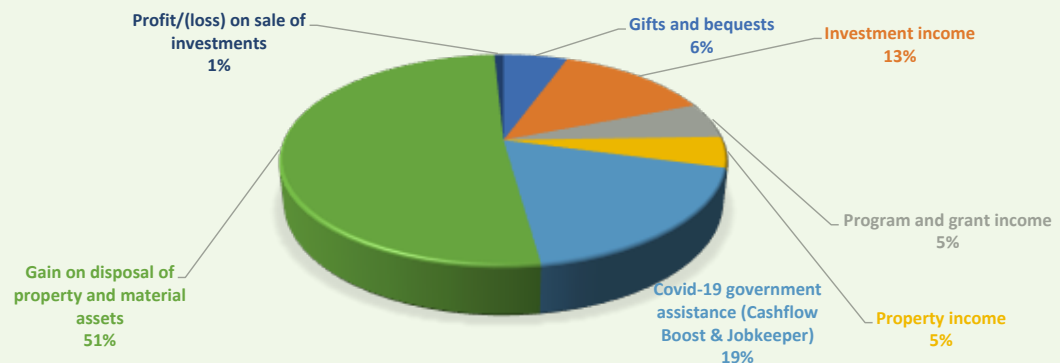
We are scoping, testing and implementing a number of initiatives and strategies that will improve our budget position and financial sustainability. Among these are fee-for-service programs, fundraising activities and increased proceeds from the hire of facilities. Through this process we aim to develop, by the end of the year, a plan to bring our budget into balance in the medium term.



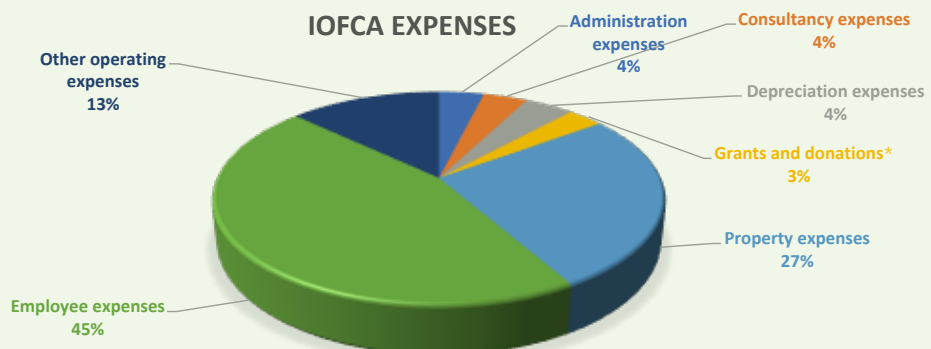
Paul Wilkins, Treasurer

Email: treasurer.au@iofc.org

IOFCA REVENUE



IOFCA EXPENSES



FINANCIAL REPORT

Statement of Profit and Loss and Other Comprehensive Income

for the year ended 31 March 2021

	2021 \$	2020 \$
Income		
Gifts, bequests and grants	85,087	25,635
Investment income	206,018	325,178
Proceeds from sale of books and videos	25	779
Program and grant income	83,452	9,349
Property income	72,187	98,330
COVID-19 Government Assistance (Cashflow Boost & Jobkeeper)	284,246	-
Gain on disposal of property, plant & equipment	786,882	-
Profit/(loss) on sale of investments	12,100	25,571
	1,529,997	484,842
Expenditure		
Administration expenses	35,516	39,904
Consultancy expenses	34,924	49,338
Depreciation expenses	38,633	29,044
Grants and donations	28,442	26,007
Property expenses	246,256	185,539
Employee expenses	416,860	401,122
Other operating expenses	119,969	131,718
	920,600	862,672
Surplus / (Deficit) from operating activities	609,397	(377,830)
Unrealised gain(loss) in market value of financial investments	624,551	(920,829)
Total Comprehensive income/(Loss)	1,233,948	(1,298,659)

Statement of Financial Position as at 31 March 2021

Assets		
Cash and cash equivalent	956,165	868,051
Financial assets & receivables	4,120,686	3,596,099
Property plant and equipment	1,936,385	732,743
Assets classified as held for sale	-	693,383
Total Assets	7,013,236	5,890,276
Liabilities		
Trade payables and other provisions	74,702	121,624
Financial liabilities (non-current)	2,022,840	2,086,906
Total Liabilities	2,097,542	2,208,530
Net Assets	4,915,694	3,681,746
Equity & reserves		
Retained earnings	4,853,429	4,248,900
Reserves	62,265	(567,154)
Total Equity & Reserves	4,915,694	3,681,746

These statements have been produced and extracted from the 2021 audited financial report with permission from the Company's external auditors John L Bush & Campbell.

VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTIONS



90
volunteers



7,700+
volunteer hours

Many volunteers contribute their time and services, augmenting the work of our dedicated lofC Australia staff team. Volunteers work in all areas, from substantive program management to support services for set-up and clean-up when we host events. We value every volunteer and honour every job as contributing to our mission and vision for a better world.



Initiatives of Change
Australia

Registered address:

Initiatives of Change Australia
226 Kooyong Road, Toorak, VIC 3142

ABN 22 004 350 789

Board (as at 31 March 2021):

Paul Ntoumos (Chair), Paul Wilkins (Treasurer),
Mike Brown, Jonathan Lancaster, Daya
Bhagwandas, Francis Halim, Quynh-Tram
Trinh, Ron Lawler, Laurence Gray, Amiel
Nubaha, Maurice Clisby, Elisse Higginbotham
and Sudarshan Suresh
Company Secretary: Elizabeth Lee

Auditors:

John L. Bush & Campbell
30 Blake St (PO Box 98)
Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650

Bankers:

National Australia Bank Limited
445 Toorak Road, Toorak, VIC 3142

Back cover main photo: David Tournier (centre), representing First Peoples of Port Philip and Westernport Bays and Southeast Victoria, stands with Dr Katie Allen, Federal MP for the electorate of Higgins (left) and Sarah Naarden, lofC Australia (right), as they hold up postal submissions in support of a permanent First Nations Voice to Parliament.

Other photos, clockwise from top:

David Tournier delivers the Welcome to Country at the launch of Our Uluru Response trustbuilding project.
Credit: Eike Zeller

lofC Elder Barbara Lawler (centre) with Shwe Mu (left) and Amiel Nubaha (right), alumni of lofC USA's Caux Scholars program for emerging peacebuilders.

Candles lit in remembrance of troubles in our Caux Scholars' countries of origin. Credit: Laura Fontaine

Indigenous dancer at Armagh at the launch of Our Uluru Response. Credit: Alex Childs

Thomas Mayor, First Nations campaigner and signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Credit: Eike Zeller

Editor: Delia Paul / Design: Mark Thomas

