

A Proposal for the Australasian Conference of
the Australian and New Zealand Council of Christians and Jews

September 28–October 2, 2013

Australian Catholic University

Brisbane

Engaging the Other : Jewish-Christian Perspectives in the light of the 2007 Berlin Document, 'A Time for Recommitment'

These are most challenging times, especially for people who espouse explicit religious commitments and faith adherence. It might appear that theology and religion can add little to what seems to be going on in our world.

Perhaps more than other time in our history we are being invited to reflect on the 'other', those who appear different from our traditional socio-cultural mix and who add a potentially rich diversity to our political and religious landscape. But this calls for courageous, hospitable and balanced voices to encourage openness and welcome.

The current situation in Europe, where economic depression is fuelling and re-lighting the fires of xenophobia, racism and anti-Semitism and giving them political expression in fascist and irredentist parties of the right, places a new urgency on developing templates of courageous responses to 'othering' tendencies in societies under stress.

The 2013 conference seeks to reflect on the relationships between Jews and Christians as a template for responding to the 'other'. This can be assisted by:

- Reflecting on the 2007 Berlin Document, "A Time for Recommitment", as a resource for appreciating the other, critiquing religious and racial caricatures, and promoting interreligious friendship;
- Appreciating the history of the gradual 'parting of the ways' between Jews and Christians in which each saw their theological sibling as 'other';
- Presenting sociological, theological and biblical perspectives that could enhance engagement with the 'other', at political, civic and religious levels.
- Constructing ways to engage political and religious leaders in this conversation.

Michael Trainor and Ron Hoenig

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