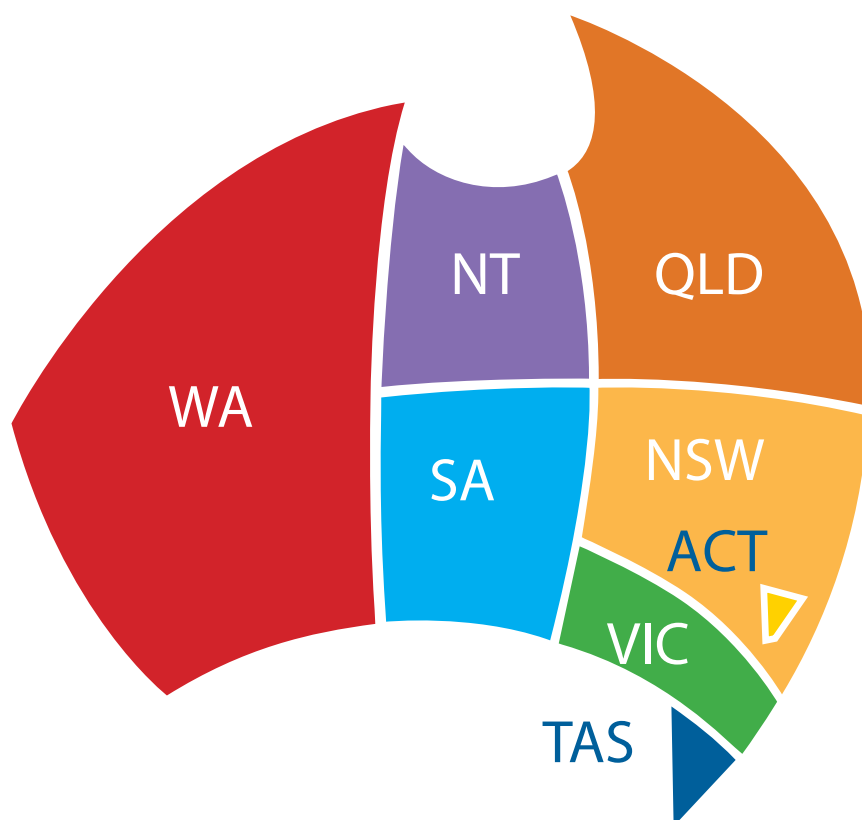


2019 Survey of Non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia



Part One:

2019 Highlights & Overview and a
Review of the Past 35 Years

**OCTOBER
2020**

Southern Pacific Christian Research
in association with Klesis Institute.

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Survey Highlights

The 2019 Survey

- This report is a summary of the 2019 survey of the non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia.
- The 2019 survey marks the thirty-fifth year of surveys, with the first taking place in 1984.
- The survey was conducted in late 2019 and provides us with information on churches, members, attendance and baptisms as at October 2019.
- The survey report for this year contains an expanded analysis of the survey results, including more information of the size of churches, churches in rural and urban areas, churches in major cities, and a more detailed view of the characteristics of churches by State and Territory.

The Survey Results in a Nutshell

- During the last two decades (including the 2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2019 surveys) there has been a slight increase in the number of members (3.5%) and churches (3.8%) and a slight decline in the average Sunday attendance (-1.6%).
- The general pattern since 2001 has been for a moderate increase in members and attendance between 2001 and 2010 and a moderate decrease in both from 2010 to 2019.
- There has been a slight decline in the number of members and average Sunday attendance and a slight increase in the number of churches since the 2013 survey.
- In Queensland and NSW/ACT, the two strongest states/territories, there was significant drop in the number of members and average Sunday attendance between the 2013 and 2019 surveys.
- In contrast, South Australia/NT and Victoria have seen continued growth in members and attendance, although this does not offset the losses experienced in the stronger states.

The Big Picture: Churches, Members and Attendance

The Basic Facts

- Eighty-one churches were included in the survey (Table 1).¹
- The total estimated number of members² of these churches was 1,906.
- The average aggregated Sunday attendance was 2,272.
- The average size of churches: in terms of the number of members, it is 23.5; in terms of Sunday attendance, it is 29 (Table 2).
- There were 83 baptisms reported over the previous twelve months.

Table 1. Churches, Members, Average Attendance and Baptisms -2019

<i>Baptised Members</i>	1,906
<i>Average Attendance</i>	2,272
<i>Churches</i>	81
<i>Baptisms</i>	83

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2019)

National Overview: 2001 to 2019

The Picture Over the Two Decades

- With the completion of the 2019 survey we can now examine statistics for the churches over the last two decades (2001 to 2019).
- In terms of the number of members in Australia there was an increase of 3.5% from 1,842 to 1,906 people (Tables 2 & 3; Figure 1).
- Average Sunday attendances experienced a decline of 1.6% from 2,308 to 2,272.
- The number of churches showed a slight increase from 78 to 81 (3.8%).
- The average number of members per church remained between 23 to 25 and the average Sunday attendance during the period remained between 28 and 30 people.
- The period of greatest growth took place between the surveys of 2006 and 2010, with a 7.2% growth in members, an 8.4% growth in average Sunday attendance and an 8.2% growth in the number of churches.

¹ For details on the survey participants and survey methodology see Appendix A.

² The term 'member', as used in the report, refers to an 'adult baptised believer'.

- The year 2010 recorded the highest number of members (1,956) and highest average Sunday attendance (2,394).
- The number of members since then has dropped 0.8% (2010 to 2013) and 1.8% (2013 to 2019). Average Sunday attendances dropped by 2.3% (2010-2013) and 2.8% (2013 to 2019).

Table 2. Churches, Members and Attendance (2001 to 2019)

	2001	2006	2010	2013	2019
Members	1,842	1,825	1,956	1,941	1,906
Attendance	2,308	2,208	2,394	2,338	2,272
Churches	78	73	78	80	81
Av. Size (M)	23.6	25.0	25.1	24.3	23.5
Av. Size (A)	29.6	30.2	30.7	29.2	28

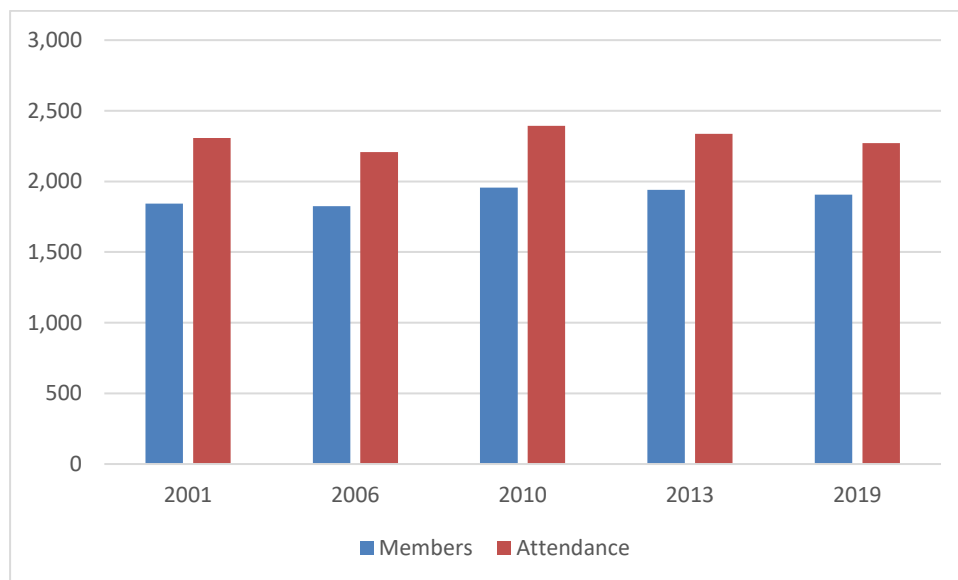
Source: Australian Church Surveys (2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2019)

Table 3. Percentage Change in Churches, Members and Attendance (2001-2019)

	% Change				
	2001-2006	2006-2010	2010-2013	2013-2019	2001-2019
Members	-0.9	7.2	-0.8	-1.8	3.5
Attendance	-4.3	8.4	-2.3	-2.8	-1.6
Churches	-6.4	8.2	2.6	1.3	3.8

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2019)

Figure 1. Change in the Number of Members and Average Attendance (2001-2019)



Source: Australian Church Surveys (2001, 2006, 2010, 2013, 2019)

Snapshot of 35 Years of Surveys

Members and Attendance: 1984 to 2019

- The number of baptised members dropped slightly from 1,926 in 1984 to 1,906 in 2019, a drop of 1.0% over the period (Tables 4 and 5; Figure 2).
- The average number of people in Sunday assemblies dropped from 2,502 in 1984 to 2,272 in 2019 (a drop of 9.2% over the period).
- Growth in the number of members was greatest in the periods 1990-2001 (3.4%) and 2001-2010 (6.2%). Periods of declining growth were seen the periods 1984-2001(-7.5%) and 2010-2019 (-2.6%).
- Average Sunday attendances were at their peak in 1984 with declining numbers in the periods 1984-1990 (-2.5%), 1990-2001 (-2.4%), and 2010-2019 (5.1%). The period 1990-2010 saw an increase of 3.7%.

Size of Churches: 1984 to 2019

- During the 35-year period the average size of churches (in terms of members) decreased from just under 30 to just over 23 (a drop of nearly 21%).
- The average size of Sunday attendance decreased from just over 38 people to 28 people over the period (a decrease of just over -27%).

Table 4. Churches, Members and Attendance (1984 to 2019)

	1984	1990	2001	2010	2019
Members	1,926	1,781	1,842	1,956	1,906
Attendance	2,502	2,439	2,308	2,394	2,272
Churches	65	76	78	78	81
Av. Size (M)	29.6	23.4	23.6	25.1	23.5
Av. Size (A)	38.5	32.1	29.6	30.7	28

Source: Australian Church Surveys (1984, 1990, 2001, 2010, 2019)

Table 5. Churches, Members and Attendance - Percentage Growth (1984 to 2019)

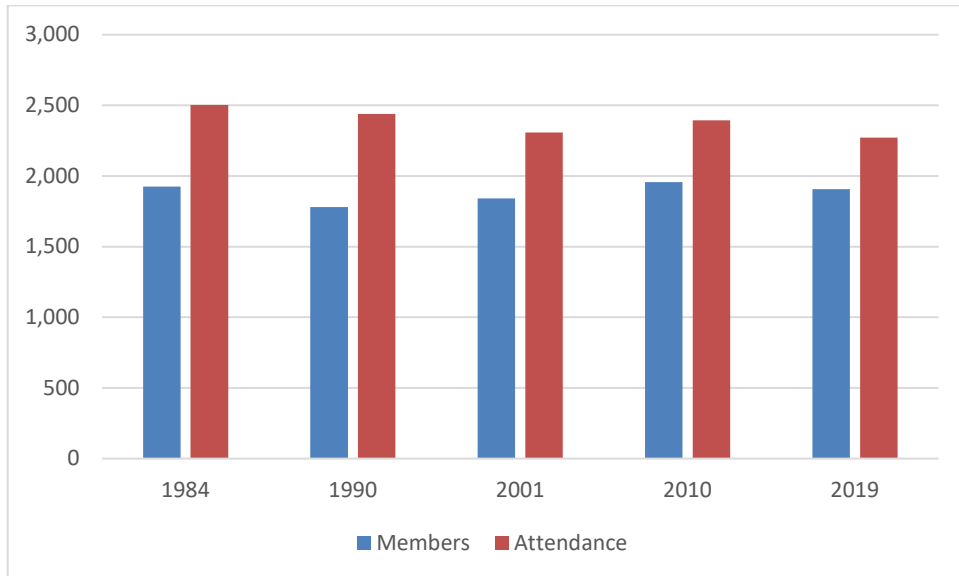
	1984-1990	1990-2001	2001-2010	2010-2019	1984-2019
Members	-7.5	3.4	6.2	-2.6	-1.0
Attendance	-2.5	-5.4	3.7	-5.1	-9.2
Churches	16.9	2.6	0	3.8	24.6
Av. Size (M)	-20.9	0.8	6.2	-6.4	-20.6
Av. Size (A)	-16.6	-7.8	3.7	-8.8	-27.3

Source: Australian Church Surveys (1984, 1990, 2001, 2010, 2019)

The Period 1984 to 2019 in a Nutshell

- At the end of the 35-year period the number of churches had increased significantly (nearly 25%), the total number of members is slightly lower (-1.0%) the average Sunday attendance is significantly lower (-9.2%) and the average size of churches has dropped both in terms members (-20.6%) and average Sunday attendance (-27.3%).

Figure 2. Change in the Number of Members and Average Attendance (1984 to 2019)



Source: Australian Church Surveys (1984, 1990, 2001, 2010, 2019)

States and Territories

States and Territories Compared: 2019

Queensland

- Queensland has the strongest profile of the non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia with 30 churches, 573 members and an average Sunday attendance of 664 people (Tables 6 and 7; Figures 3 & 4).
- Queensland has 37% of the churches in Australia, 30% of the members and 29% of the average Sunday attendance.

New South Wales/Australia Capital Territory³

- NSW/ACT is the next strongest state/territory with 20 churches, 507 members and an average Sunday attendance of 615 people.
- This equates to approximately 25% of the churches, 27% of the members and 27% of the Sunday attendance.
- Together, Queensland and NSW account for approximately 62% of the nation's churches, 57% of the members and 56% of the Sunday attendance.

Western Australia and Victoria

- Victoria and Western Australia together have 21% of the churches and nearly one third of the members.

South Australia/Northern Territory⁴ and Tasmania

- Tasmania and South Australia/Northern Territory make up the remaining 17% of churches in Australia and nearly 12% of the membership.

³ Note: For the purpose of the survey analysis the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) results are reported along with those of New South Wales (NSW).

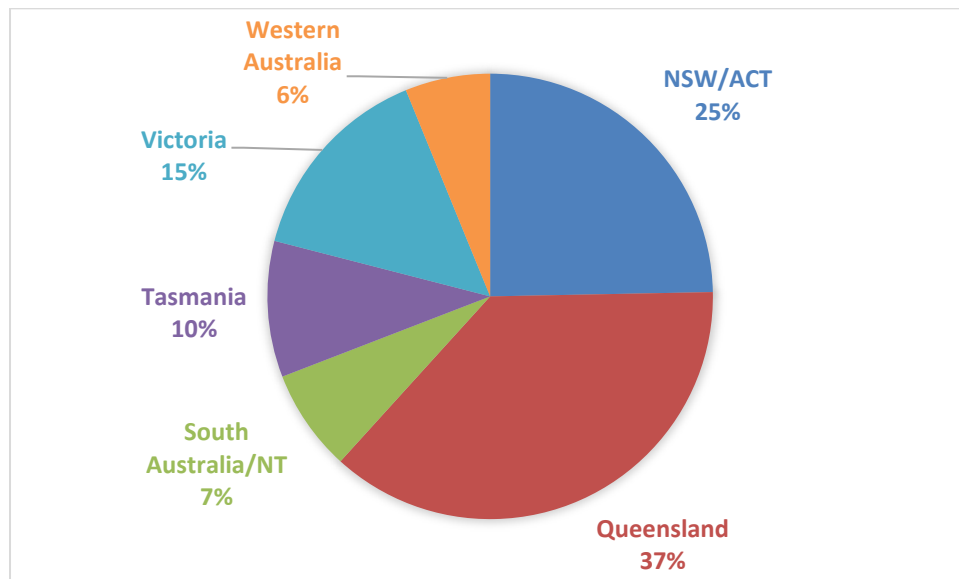
⁴ The results for the Northern Territory (NT) are included with those of South Australia (SA). Churches in the Northern Territory tend to be made up of people locating there for limited periods of time for work purposes. As such the numbers involved are small and are reported here along with those of neighbouring South Australia.

Table 6. Churches, Members and Attendance by State/Territory (2019)

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Churches</i>	<i>Members</i>	<i>Av. Sunday Attendance</i>
NSW/ACT	20	507	615
Queensland	30	573	664
SA/NT	6	131	129
Tasmania	8	96	123
Victoria	12	324	400
WA	5	275	341
Total Australia	81	1,906	2,272

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2019)

Figure 3. Percentage of Churches by State/Territory (2019)



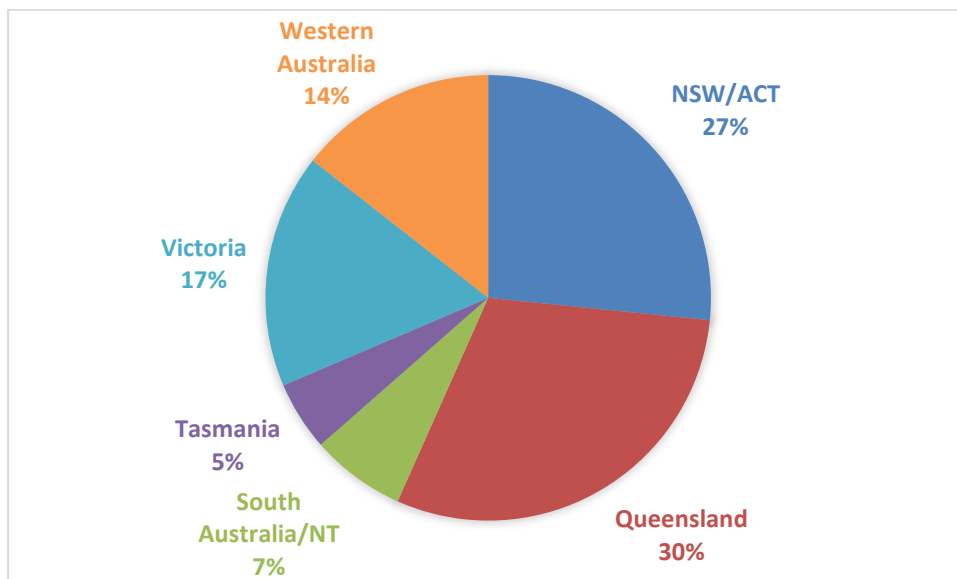
Source: Australian Church Surveys (2019)

Table 7. Percentage of Churches, Members and Attendance by State/Territory (2019)

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Percentage Churches</i>	<i>Percentage Members</i>	<i>Percentage Sunday Attendance</i>
NSW/ACT	24.7	26.6	27.1
Queensland	37.0	30.1	29.2
South Australia/NT	7.4	6.9	5.7
Tasmania	9.9	5.0	5.4
Victoria	14.8	17.0	17.6
Western Australia	6.2	14.4	15.0
Total Australia	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2019)

Figure 4. Percentage of Members by State/Territory (2019)



Source: Australian Church Surveys (2019)

State and Territory Changes: 2010 to 2019

Overview

- Between 2010 and 2019 the number of churches in Queensland and Victoria both increased by 3 and South Australia/NT increased by one (Table 6).
- A slight decrease in the number of churches was seen in NSW, Tasmania and Western Australia.
- An increase in members was seen in South Australia/NT (50.6%) and Victoria (23.7%).

- The number of members in 2019 in Western Australia were almost the same as for 2010 (Table 7).
- Over the period declines in membership were seen in Tasmania (22%), NSW/ACT (16.7%) and Queensland (5.8%).
- The greatest decline in numbers was in NSW/ACT with a drop of 102 members between 2010 and 2019.
- Growth in average Sunday attendance was seen in Western Australia (32.7%), South Australia/NT (25.2%) and Victoria (5.8).
- In contrast declines of Sunday attendances were seen in Tasmania (21.7%), NSW/ACT (16.2%) and Queensland (13.2%).
- The decline in attendance was most marked in NSW and Queensland, both seeing a drop of over 100 in Sunday attendances between 2010 and 2019 (Table 8).

Table 8: Churches by State/Territory (2010 to 2019)

State/Territory	Churches			% Change 2010-2019
	2010	2013	2019	
NSW/ACT	22	22	20	-9.1
Queensland	27	30	30	11.1
South Australia/NT	5	6	6	20.0
Tasmania	9	8	8	-11.1
Victoria	9	10	12	33.3
Western Australia	6	4	5	-16.7
Total Australia	78	80	81	3.8

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2010, 2013, 2019)

Table 9: Members by State/Territory (2010 to 2019)

State/Territory	Membership			% Change 2010-2019
	2010	2013	2019	
NSW/ACT	609	559	507	-16.7
Queensland	608	593	573	-5.8
South Australia/NT	87	90	131	50.6
Tasmania	123	113	96	-22.0
Victoria	262	276	324	23.7
Western Australia	273	310	275	0.7
Total Australia	1,825	1,941	1,906	4.4

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2010, 2013, 2019)

Table 10: Sunday Attendance by State/Territory (2010 to 2019)

State/Territory	Attendance			% Growth 2010-2019
	2010	2013	2019	
NSW/ACT	734	667	615	-16.2
Queensland	765	738	664	-13.2
South Australia/NT	103	118	129	25.2
Tasmania	157	135	123	-21.7
Victoria	378	349	400	5.8
Western Australia	257	331	341	32.7
Total Australia	2,394	2,338	2,272	-5.1

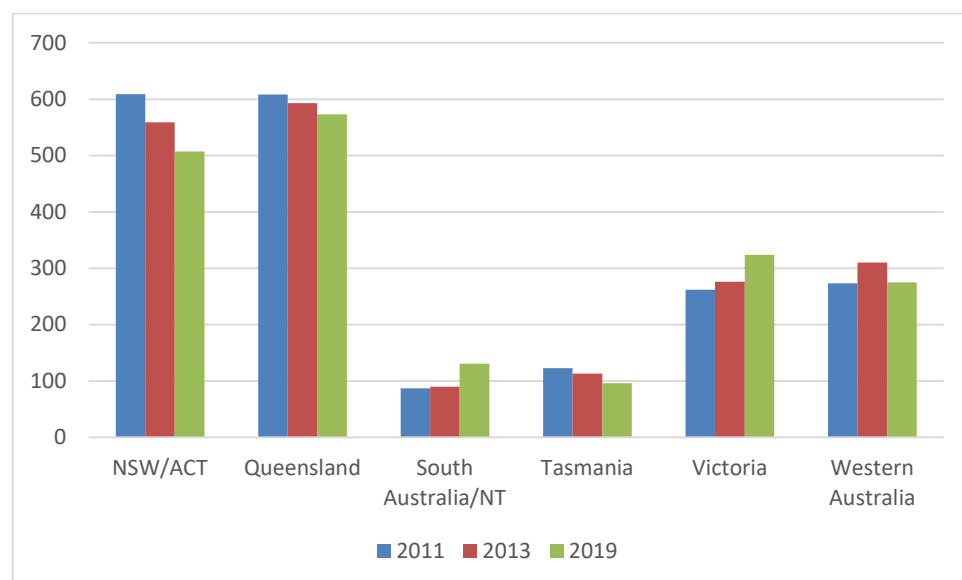
Source: Australian Church Surveys (2010, 2013, 2019)

New South Wales/ACT

- The period between 2010 and 2019 saw declines of the number of churches, members and average Sunday attendances in NSW.
- Both the number of members and average Sunday attendances dropped by over 100 during the period.

Queensland

- In previous periods the strongest growth in Australia was seen in Queensland. However, between 2010 and 2019 there was a modest decline in members and a significant decline in average Sunday attendances.

Figure 5. Change in the Number of Members by State/Territory (2010 to 2019)

Source: Australian Church Surveys (2010, 2013, 2019)

South Australia/Northern Territory

- In previous years there was very little growth in South Australia/NT, this changed in the period 2010 and 2019 with a doubling of members and a 25% increase in average Sunday attendance.

Tasmania

- The period 2010 and 2019 saw a decline in the number of churches, members and average Sunday attendance.

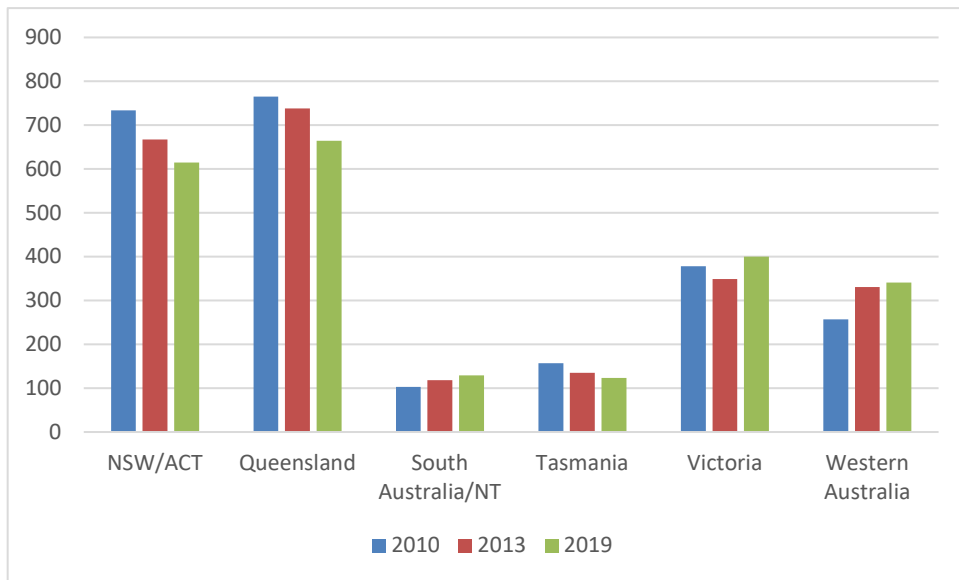
Victoria

- The picture for Victoria was much healthier with relatively strong growth in the number of churches, members and average Sunday attendance.

Western Australia

- The number of churches and members in Western Australia showed little change between 2010 and 2019. However, average Sunday attendance increased by nearly one third.

Figure 6. Change in Sunday Attendance by State/Territory (2010 to 2019)



Source: Australian Church Surveys (2010, 2013, 2019)

Appendix A: About the Surveys

When Did the Surveys Start?

- The first survey took place in 1984 and was conducted by Stephen Randall of the Canberra Church of Christ to support an application for a government land grant.

How Many Surveys Have There Been?

- This is the eleventh survey covering a 35-year period.
- Previous surveys took place in 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2001, 2006, 2010 and 2013.

Who Conducts the Surveys?

- Stephen Randall of the Canberra Church of Christ conducted the 1984, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 2001 surveys.
- Alan Rowley of the Klesis Institute (a Melbourne-based organisation of members of the non-denominational Churches of Christ) conducted the 2006, 2010, 2013 and 2019 surveys.
- Klesis Institute provides biblically grounded Christian resources to assist individuals and churches respond to God's call in the modern context.

How are the Results Analysed and Reported?

- Through the years, Stephen Randall and Peter Gray have reported on the survey results in publications such as *Happenings*, the *Christian Chronicle* and *InterSections*.
- Peter Gray of Southern Pacific Christian Research has undertaken the analysis of the results of each survey.
- Through the years many hundreds of hours have gone into maintaining and updating contact lists, sending out survey forms, conducting follow-up phone calls, collating the responses, analysing data and reporting on survey results.
- Special thanks to Stephen Randall and Alan Rowley who through the years have taken on the major share of these tasks.

What Questions are asked in the survey?

- Three simple questions are asked of churches: the number of members; their average Sunday attendance; and the number of baptisms over the previous 12 months.
- The figures provided are for the month of October in the year of the survey.

What is the Coverage of the Survey?

- The Churches of Christ have a history in Australia that stretches back to 1848.
- Pioneers from Scotland and New Zealand established the first congregations in South Australia. They were part of the growing 'Restoration Movement'.
- Today four groups in Australia are heirs to that movement: Non-denominational Churches of Christ; the independent Christian Churches\Churches of Christ; Australian Churches of Christ Conference; and the International Churches of Christ.
- The survey covers those churches identifying with the non-denominational Churches of Christ.

Who Participates in the Survey?

- Alan Rowley of the Belmore Road Church of Christ has produced an updated *Directory of Non-denominational Churches of Christ in Australia*.
- This Directory was used as the basis for the survey of churches.
- On rare occasions a church may decline to participate in the survey or may not be contactable.
- Altogether 81 congregations took part in the 2019 survey.
- It should be noted that many of the churches listed in country areas are very small, often consisting of a single family. There were ten churches listed who reported three or less members.

A Word of Caution Concerning Statistics ...

- Just a word of caution concerning the interpretation of the statistics: they can show 'what happened' in terms of the growth or decline of the number of members and the average attendance.
- However, they don't tell us 'why' the numbers have increased or decreased. This can only be ascertained through research into the history of the churches in a particular State.

For More information Contact:

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