



June 2010

The Sydney Alliance

As part of our preparation to participate in the Sydney Alliance some members of West Epping UC Church recently participated in Alliance training.

The Sydney Alliance is a citizens' coalition whose vision is to provide our community with a voice to express our common values and aspirations for a fair and just Sydney. The Alliance is broadly based across religious organisations, community organisations and unions establishing relationships that respect diversity, while building a cohesive society. The Alliance is a non-party political organisation. Its primary purpose is to empower member organisations with the ability to act for the common good to achieve social change in our communities.

To achieve this vision Sydney Alliance builds bridges and dialogue between organisations and develops the capacity of organisations and their members to participate in public life. It seeks to build grassroots power that respects the contribution and dignity of all people.

The Sydney Alliance is funded by 24 partner organisations representing faith communities (including Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions), community organisations and various trade unions. The Uniting Church is a key member of the Sydney Alliance, and WEUC has been involved since 2008, largely through the activities of Kent Crawford.

The Sydney Alliance provides an exciting opportunity for WEUC to actively engage with its local community, and shape the focus of forthcoming Alliance campaigns. As part of WEUC's preparation to participate in the Alliance, Kent Crawford and Engaging With the Word Co-Missioners Michelle Erofeyeff and Sriani Abeyasuriya participated in Alliance training; here are some extracts from their experiences...

"I think we all realise how fragmented our community has become in Sydney and throughout Australia over recent years. Where once we had confidence in our capacity to come together to surmount obstacles faced by people in our neighbourhoods, now we often don't really know our neighbours or get involved in each others' lives. The Sydney Alliance, at its most basic level, is about rebuilding the fabric of our community life by bringing together members of organisations that have a vision for the common good, and then providing them space to really get to know each other and encouragement to work collaboratively to achieve their common dreams. How can we at West Epping ensure we are working in partnership to serve our community? The Sydney Alliance will help provide the tools and the forum to help us live out our mission collaboratively." Kent Crawford.

"I loved the two-day training and am keen to see how we at West Epping can become more involved. The relational and collaborative approach to building a better city appeals to me, as I believe that is the best way to achieve change. Seeing a young Israeli woman and an older Lebanese woman find that they have a lot in common was just one example of how building relationships based on shared experiences can be the beginning of much bigger change for the common good." Michelle Erofeyeff

"The two-day training program I attended in Western Sydney provided a unique opportunity to understand how the Alliance works, and its capacity to facilitate positive change. I was able to hear, and in turn share, very personal life experiences with people from other faiths, union and community groups, and in doing so, built strong relationships with those I would not normally have had an opportunity to engage with. I left feeling energised and wanting to deepen my engagement with the Alliance." Sriani Abeyasuriya.

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Sydney Alliance, or attending a 2-day training in August, please contact the Church office on 9868 3574.