



Headquarters of the Trans Australia Union Conference at 3 Norfolk Road Surry Hills, Victoria from 1969 until 2000.

From the *Record*, January 22, 1973.

Trans-Australian Union Conference, South Pacific Division

BARRY OLIVER

Barry Oliver, Ph.D., retired in 2015 as president of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Sydney, Australia. An Australian by birth Oliver has served the Church as a pastor, evangelist, college teacher, and administrator. In retirement, he is a conjoint associate professor at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored over 106 significant publications and 192 magazine articles. He is married to Julie with three adult sons and three grandchildren.

Territory and Statistics¹

The Trans-Australian Union Conference (TAUC), formerly known until 1977 as the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference,² was a constituent union conference of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1949 until 2000, in the territory of the South Pacific Division of the General Conference. Its headquarters were located at 3 Norfolk Road, Surrey Hills, Victoria, Australia. For a short time before it was disbanded, the union headquarters were co-located with the Victorian Conference headquarters at 141 Central Road, Nunawading, Victoria, Australia.³

The TAUC was organized in 1949⁴ and dissolved in 2000 by action of the South Pacific Division as part of a reorganization and reduction in the number of union administrative offices operating within the South Pacific Division.⁵ The newly formed Australian Union Conference took over the administration of the conferences and institutions in the territory that was previously administered by the Trans-Australian Union Conference. The TAUC ceased to operate on December 31, 2000.⁶

The activities of the TAUC were governed by a constitution which was based on the model union conference constitution of the South Pacific Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SPD). Its real and intellectual property was held in trust by the Australasian Conference Association Limited, an incorporated entity based at the headquarters office of the SPD in Wahroonga, New South Wales.

The territory of the TAUC was "The Australian Capital Territory, the states of South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, Western Australia, Cocos and Christmas Islands and the part of the state

of New South Wales lying to the south and the west of a straight line from the entrance of Lake Illawarra to, but not including, Yerranderie, then due north to the Capertee River, following the river west to the 150th meridian of East Longitude, then north to and including Cassilis, then a line running north-west from Cassilis to a point just west of the town of Coonabarabran but east of the 149th meridian of East Longitude, and then direct west to the South Australian border parallel with the Queensland border; comprising the South Australian, South New South Wales, Tasmanian, Victorian, and Western Australian Conferences."

In the *2000 Annual Statistical Report of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, the Trans Australian Union Conference was listed as having 5 constituent conferences, which in turn had a total of 188 church congregations and 41 companies. Church membership at the end of 1999 was 20,447.⁸ The TAUC and its conferences had 674 active employees. The total tithe receipts for the TAUC in 1999 were US\$8,261,264. Its tithe and offerings per capita were US\$409.60.⁹

Institutions of the Trans-Australian Union Conference

Warburton Hospital, established in the converted home of W. D. Salisbury in Warburton in 1910,¹⁰ was moved to its present site in 1912,¹¹ where it was promoted as the "Victorian Home of Health." A hospital building was added in 1923 and later replaced by a weatherboard section in 1950. The name "Warburton Hydro and Hospital"

was in use from 1936 to 1947.¹² From 1947 to 1976, the institution was called the "Warburton Sanitarium and Hospital." The name was changed to "Warburton Health Care Centre and Hospital" in 1976. In 1992, the name of the institution was again changed to simply "Warburton Hospital" with the Warburton Health Care Centre continuing as a division of the hospital.

In July 1997, Warburton Health Care Centre changed its name to Warburton Health Resort. It continued to maintain a high standard of health promotion and lifestyle programs for those seeking to lose weight, stop smoking, manage stress, or to simply rest, relax, and enjoy the best in vegetarian cuisine and hydrotherapy or massage. However, due to a number of factors, including the increasingly high cost of operating this unique facility, the TAUC and the hospital board voted to advertise the complex for sale in 1998. After almost two-and-a-half years of uncertainty, a sale was made in September 2000 to Prospa Property Limited and the church ceased operations at the complex on March 14, 2001.¹³

Lilydale Academy, established as a boarding academy in 1964, was originally owned and operated by the Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference.¹⁴ With a change of name from Trans-Commonwealth Union to Trans-Australian Union in 1977, it continued to be operated by that entity until reorganization of the unions in the SPD in 2000 moved it under the administration of the AUC. It remained so until January 1, 2014, when it was transferred to the Victorian Conference as a day school. It is now operating as Edinburgh College following the amalgamation by the Victorian College of Lilydale Academy and Edinburgh College.¹⁵ It is located at 33 – 61 Edinburgh Road, Lilydale, Victoria, 3140, Australia.

Significant events in the history of the organization of the Trans-Australian Union Conference

An Australian Conference with its territory being the country of Australia was organized in 1888.¹⁶ Subsequently, a number of organizational changes occurred in rapid succession. An Australasian Union Conference was organized during the time of the Australian camp-meeting, January 15-25, 1894. It comprised District No. 7 of the General Conference Districts, and included the conferences of Australia and New Zealand. The stated object of the union was "to unify and extend the work of the third angel's message, under the general direction of the General Conference, in the Australasian field."¹⁷ It was anticipated that as the work expanded, other conferences would be organized.¹⁸

Arthur Daniells described the further steps taken to organize the conferences in Australia. He wrote: "At the beginning of 1894 it was felt that the Australian Conference had more territory than it could well manage, so the colonies of Queensland and West Australia were separated from the Conference, and placed under the care of the Union Conference as Mission Fields. Near the close of 1895 another change was made. New South Wales was separated from the Australian Conference by the organization of the New South Wales Conference. At that time the name of the Conference was changed from the Australian to the Central Australian Conference."¹⁹ On

October 29, 1899, the Queensland Conference was organized,²⁰ and on November 25, 1899, the South Australian Conference was organized.²¹ On January 1, 1900, Tasmania became a mission field under the care of the Australasian Union Conference. What had been known as the Central Australian Conference was renamed the Victorian Conference.²² It now comprised only the colony of Victoria.²³

Until 1949, the Australasian Union Conference, also designated as the Australasian Division after 1922, operated as a collection of conferences and missions.²⁴ In 1949, four union conferences were organized within the territory of the Australasian Division, which also was known as the Australasian Inter-Union Conference:²⁵ “1. Central Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Suva, Fiji; 2. Coral Sea Union Mission with headquarters in Lae, Papua New Guinea; 3. Trans-Commonwealth Union Conference with headquarters in Melbourne, Victoria; and 4. Trans-Tasman Union Conference with headquarters in Gordon, New South Wales.”²⁶

The conferences in Australia were divided between the Trans-Tasman Union and the Trans-Commonwealth Union. The Trans Commonwealth Union contained South New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, and Western Australia. The Trans-Tasman Union included Greater Sydney, North New South Wales, Queensland, and North Queensland. It also included the North New Zealand Conference and the South New Zealand Conference.

The territory of the Trans-Australian Union Conference remained fixed until the end of 2000.

In 2000, a major reorganization of the unions in the South Pacific Division occurred at the Division session. The number of unions was reduced from five to four.²⁷ The action which dissolved the Trans-Australian Union Conference read:

VOTED: to approve the formation of:

1. An Australian Union Conference comprising the nine conferences in Australia.
2. A New Zealand Pacific Union Conference made up of the North New Zealand Conference, South New Zealand Conference, French Polynesia Mission, New Caledonia Mission, Cook Islands Mission, and Pitcairn Island Church.
3. A Western Pacific Union Mission with headquarters in Fiji, comprising the Samoa Mission, Tonga/Niue Mission, Fiji Mission, Tuvalu Attached District, Kiribati and Nauru Mission, Vanuatu Mission, Malaita Mission, Eastern Solomons Mission and Western Solomons Mission.

And

FURTHER: That the above new organisational structure be operative from January 1, 2001, and

FURTHER: That this body direct the Division Executive Committee to amend the relevant sections of the Division Working Policy.²⁸

Some Significant Events in the Trans-Australian Union Conference During the Time of Operation:²⁹

The development of a special ministry for Australia's indigenous communities

The winding up of the Warburton Hospital and Healthcare Facility with the knowledge that it did make a significant contribution to the mission of the Church over a long period of time.

Transfer of the Northern Territory from South Australian Conference to Northern Australian Conference

The move to new shared premises just a short time before the Tran-Australian Union Conference was dissolved.

List of Executive Officers

Presidents: W. T. Hooper (1949-1950), H. G. Moulds (1951), T. C. Lawson (1952-1963), J. B. Keith (1964-1967), S. M. Uttley (1968-1978), C. D. Judd (1979-1985), D. B. Hills (1986-1995), A. D. C. Currie (1996-2000).

Secretary/Treasurers: R. E. G. Blair (1949-1959), P. A. Donaldson (1960-1967), W. J. C. Sawyer (1968-1980), R. E. Clifford (1981-1985), D. B. Mitchell (1986-1988), W. H. Stokes (1989-1991), B. M. Reynolds (1992-2000).

SOURCES

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"Fifty Years of Service." Accessed November 18, 2018. <https://www.edinburghcollege.vic.edu.au/about/college-history/>

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Marshall, Sue. "Hospital Builds New Wing." *Record* [South Pacific Division], November 20, 1993.

"Organization in Australia." *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, October, 1888.

Parmenter, K. S. "Australasian Division Mission Field Development." *Australasian Record*, May 14, 1973.

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Robinson, A. T. "The Work in Victoria." *Union Conference Record*, February 1, 1900.

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<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1894.pdf>

Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook. "Trans Australian Union Conference." Accessed November 21, 2018.

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Teasdale, George. "The Warburton Sanitarium Home." *Union Conference Record*, September 19, 1910.

Victorian Conference Executive Committee Minutes. May 27, 2013, action 2013.459. Victorian Conference archives, Nunawading, Victoria.

NOTES

1. The author acknowledges the assistance of Peter Brewin, a retired church administrator, in compiling this article. Also contributing were Roselee Power, Michael Worker, Lorraine Atchia, and Sue Marshall.
2. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Trans Australian Union Conference," accessed November 21, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1977.pdf>
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Trans Australian Union Conference," accessed November 21, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2000.pdf>
4. H. E. Piper, "Special Session, Australasian Union Conference," *Australasian Record*, September 13, 1948, 2-3.
5. South Pacific Division Quinquennial Session Minutes, Action 2.5, October 31, 2000, South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives.
6. Ibid.
7. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Trans Australian Union Conference," accessed November 21, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB2000.pdf>.
8. *138th Annual Statistical Report 2000*, accessed November 21, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/ASR/ASR2000.pdf>.

9. Ibid.
10. George Teasdale, "The Warburton Sanitarium Home," *Union Conference Record*, September 19, 1910, 5.
11. "Late Actions of the Australian Union Conference Committee," *Australasian Record*, February 13, 1911, 8.
12. Eileen M. Robson, "News Notes from Warburton," *Australasian Record*, February 24, 1936, 8.
13. Sue Marshall, "Hospital Builds New Wing," *Record* [South Pacific Division], November 20, 1993, 10.
14. "Fifty Years of Service," accessed November 18, 2018, <https://www.edinburghcollege.vic.edu.au/about/college-history/>
15. Victorian Conference Executive Committee, May 27, 2013, action 2013.459, Victorian Conference archives, Nunawading, Victoria.
16. "Organization in Australia," *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, October, 1888, 152.
17. *Seventh-day Adventist Online Yearbook*, "Australasian Union Conference," accessed April 30, 2018, <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Yearbooks/YB1894.pdf>
18. Ibid.
19. A. G. Daniells, "Our People in Tasmania," *Union Conference Record*, January 1, 1900, 13.
20. A. G. Daniells, "Organization of the Queensland Conference," *Union Conference Record*, December 1, 1899, 12-13.
21. A. T. Robinson, "The Work in Victoria," *Union Conference Record*, February 1, 1900, 12.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. H. E. Piper, "Special Session, Australasian Union Conference," *Australasian Record*, September 13, 1948, 2-3.
25. Ibid.
26. K. S. Parmenter, "Australasian Division Mission Field Development," *Australasian Record*, May 14, 1973, 1.
27. South Pacific Division Quinquennial Session Minutes, Action 2.5, October 31, 2000, South Pacific Division of the General Conference archives.
28. Ibid.

29. Peter Brewin, last Secretary Treasurer of the Trans-Tasman Union, email to author, September 26, 2018.

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