Reaching the Nations

Country reports on the LDS Church around the world from a landmark almanac. Includes detailed analysis of history, context, culture, needs, challenges and opportunities for church growth.

Australia

Population: 22.51 millions (#56 out of countries)

By David Stewart and Matt Martinich

Geography

Area: 7,741,220 square km. The only continent-nation in the world, Australia is the sixth largest country and occupies the world's smallest continent. Terrain principally consists of desert plains, plateaus, and basins subject to hot, arid conditions. Located in the heart of central Australia known as the Outback, Ayers Rock (Uluru) is an international icon of Australia that consists of a large, red sandstone rock formation. Fertile grass plains, forest, and hilly terrain occupy some coastal areas in the north and extreme east and southeast.   Temperate climate occurs in the east and south whereas tropical climate characterizes northern areas. The Great Barrier Reef sits of the northeastern coast and is the world's largest reef system. Many unique species of animals and plants are native only to Australia, including marsupial mammals like kangaroos and koalas. Forest fires, cyclones, and droughts are natural hazards. Environmental issues include soil erosion, industrialization, urbanization, increasing soil salinity, desertification, destruction of endemic flora and fauna, water scarcity, pollution, and tourism. Australia is administratively divided into six states and two territories.

Peoples

White: 92%

Asian: 7%

Aboriginal/other: 1%

Population: 22,015,576 (July 2012)

Annual Growth Rate: 1.126% (2012)

Fertility Rate: 1.77 children born per woman (2012)

Life Expectancy: 79.48 male, 84.45 female (2012)

Languages: English (78.5%), Italian (1.6%), Greek (1.3%), Cantonese (1.2%), Arabic (1.2%), Mandarin (1.1%), Vietnamese (1%), Spanish (0.5%), Tagalog [Filipino] (0.5%), German (0.4%), Hindi (0.4%), Macedonian (0.3%), Croatian (0.3%), Australian aboriginal languages (0.3%), Turkish (0.3%), Polish (0.3%), Serbian (0.3%), Maltese (0.2%), Netherlandic languages (0.2%), other (4.4%), unspecified (5.7%). Major languages include English (16.9 million), Italian (317 thousand), Greek (252 thousand), Cantonese (245 thousand), Arabic (244 thousand), Mandarin (221 thousand), and Vietnamese (195 thousand).

Literacy: 99% (2006)

History

Aboriginal tribes arrived in Australia several millennia prior to European exploration in the eighteenth century. Captain Cook claimed Australia for Great Britain in 1770. The first British colony was established 18 years later in Sydney in the state of New South Wales. Convicts condemned of petty offenses constituted a large proportion of the settlers until the mid-nineteenth century. Additional colonies established included Tasmania (1825), Western Australia (1829), South Australia (1836), Victoria (1851), and Queensland (1859), each of which later became administrative states. The population increased in the mid-nineteenth century following the discovery of gold, which also augmented trade and commerce. In 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was established, creating an independent nation with many political and cultural ties with Great Britain. In 1986, the Australia Act removed all remaining British legal authority.[1] During the twentieth century, Australia emerged as a competitive, advanced economy that dominated the region and achieved some of the strongest economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s. Increased immigration from non-European countries has diversified the demographics in urban areas. Today many immigrants originate from China, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Culture

Australians tend to be socially blunt, honest, and forthright. Favorable agricultural conditions in many areas has lead to a visible farming culture. British culture remains the primary foreign influence as a result of over a century of colonial rule. Most foods and dishes are of British origin, but Asian and Mediterranean cuisine are becoming more widespread as a result of the increasing number of immigrants from these regions. Australia is known internationally for its competitive athletes, wine industry, film and television, art, and composers. Secularism has spread from Europe, reducing religious activity and affiliation. Aboriginal art and place names are widespread. Cigarette and alcohol consumption rates compare to U.S. rates and are higher than the worldwide average. Divorce rates are higher than in most nations.

Economy

GDP per capita: $40,800 (2011) [84.8% of US]

Human Development Index: 0.929

Corruption Index: 8.8 (2011)

With abundant natural resources, little corruption, and strong foreign investment, Australia has demonstrated significant economic growth and development over the past several decades. Consistent annual economic growth occurred from the early 1990s until the global financial crisis in the late 2000s. Free trade agreements have perpetuated growth and also limited the effects of worldwide recession. Unemployment rates are low (5.6% in 2009) and wealth is evenly distributed. Natural resources consist of a wide range of minerals, precious metals, natural gas, and petroleum. Australia possesses the world's twelfth largest proven natural gas reserves. Services employ three-quarters of the labor force and generate 70% of the GDP whereas industry employs 21% of the labor force and generates 26% of the GDP. Major industries include mining, equipment, food processing, chemicals, and steel. Agriculture constitutes less than five percent of the labor force and GDP. Grains, sugarcane, fruit, cattle, sheep, and poultry are common crops and agricultural goods. Primary trade partners include China, Japan, and the United States. Australia ranks among the world's least corrupt countries, yet the illicit drug trade is a cause of concern. Tasmania is a large international supplier of opiates and Australia is a major illicit drug consumer of amphetamines and cocaine.

Faiths

Christian: 63.8%

Buddhist: 2.1%

Muslim: 1.7%

other: 2.4%

unspecified: 11.3%

none: 18.7%

Christians

Denominations Members Congregations

Catholic 5,551,065

Anglican 4,023,446

Uniting Church 1,226,398

Presbyterian/Reformed 645,473

Eastern Orthodox 580,925

Latter-Day Saints 132,392 288

Jehovah's Witnesses 66,107 797

Seventh Day Adventists 56,156 424

Religion

Most Australians are Christians. The largest denominations include the Catholic (26%) and Anglican (19%) Churches. Pentecostal and Charismatic Christian groups tend to report the largest increases in adherents, whereas other Protestant Christian groups have experienced the most rapid decline in adherents over the past three decades. The percentage of Australians identifying as Christian declined from 96% in 1911 to 64% in 2006 and continues to decline due to the spread of secularism and increasing numbers of immigrants of other faith traditions. Buddhists and Muslims each account for approximately two percent of the national population whereas Jews account for 0.4%. Hindus constitute 0.7% of the population. Australia's small aboriginal population is predominantly Christian (64%) and only 5,000 follow indigenous religious practices. One-fifth of Australians are nonreligious.[2]

Religious Freedom

Persecution Index:

The constitution prohibits any government interference with the practice of religious freedom, including the government designation of a state religion, establishment of laws which infringe on religious freedom, and setting religious requirements for holding a public office. The government upholds religious freedom and recognizes major Christian holidays as national holidays.   Government registration is not mandatory for religious groups to operate, but is required to obtain tax exemption status. All religious minority groups are permitted to construct religious buildings but some of these groups have experienced some societal abuse of religious freedom. Muslims and Buddhists have in some small cities been refused permits to construct meetinghouses. Religious education in public schools is permitted and attendance is optional. Australia has accepted refugees escaping religious persecution in other nations for several years.[3]

Largest Cities

Urban: 89%

Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide, Gold Coast, Newcastle, Canberra, Wollongong, Sunshine Coast, Hobart, Geelong, Townsville, Cairns, Toowoomba, Darwin, Launceston, Albury.

All 18 of the cities with over 100,000 inhabitants have LDS congregations. 75% of the national population resides in the 18 largest cities.

LDS History

In 1840, a seventeen-year-old English convert became the first LDS missionary to set foot in Australia. A second missionary

arrived the following year from Scotland and the first LDS branch was organized in 1844. American LDS missionaries arrived in the early 1850s in Sydney and faced low receptivity due to the gold rush. Branches were established in Sydney and Melbourne in 1852, but many of the early converts emigrated to the United States to join fellow Latter-day Saints in the Rocky Mountain West. Among early Australian LDS converts was Joseph Ridges, an organ builder who built the historic organ used in the Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City today. The LDS Church did not experience consistent, strong growth in membership and congregations until the 1950s.[4] The status of the Church in Australia has grown over the past century. During the 1950s, most members were tradesmen and laborers whereas today there are members that hold more prominent positions in the community and in business.[5] Difficulties obtaining official government recognition on a national and state level were resolved by the mid-twentieth century. Some difficulties encountered during this time include government refusal to recognize the LDS Church due to a lack of meetinghouses and the performance of LDS marriage ceremonies not registered by the government in some areas. During World War II, many of the smaller branches were closed as a result of limited local leadership manpower, the withdrawal of North American missionaries, and lack of church materials due to the dedication of shipping for military purposes.[6] Seminary and institute began in the late 1960s. In 1988, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir toured Australia and had well attended performances.[7] In 2001, members of the Australia/New Zealand Area met with the Australian prime minister.[8] An aboriginal Latter-day Saint won the 2001 Pax Christi International Peace Prize for his scholarship on aboriginal culture and interethnic relations.[9] In 2002, the Australian prime minister spoke from an LDS meetinghouse against illicit drug use.[10] In 2005, the president of the Australia/New Zealand Area addressed the Australian Parliament.[11]

Missions

The Australian Mission, also known as the Australasian Mission from 1854 to 1898, was organized in1851. In 1898, the mission was divided to create the New Zealand Mission. The Australian Mission was split in 1955 to create the South Australian Mission, later renamed the Australia Melbourne Mission. In 1968, the Australia West Mission was created and was renamed the Australia Adelaide Mission. Additional missions were organized in Brisbane (1973), Perth (1975), Sydney North (1993), and Melbourne West (1998), bringing the total of missions to seven. In 2010, missions headquartered in Melbourne West and Sydney North were consolidated with neighboring missions, dropping the number of LDS missions to five.

Membership Growth

LDS Membership: 132,392 (2011)

In 1900, there were 300 Latter-day Saints. Membership increased to 2,000 by 1940 and 7,000 by 1960. Membership stood at 25,000 in 1970, 40,000 in 1980, and 76,000 in 1990.[12] Most stakes in the Sydney area baptized over 100 converts annually during the early 1990s.[13] In 1998, Church membership reached 100,000.[14] Church membership growth slowed in the early 2000s but accelerated in the late 2000s. Membership increased to 105,087 in 2002, 111,098 in 2005, and 123,650 in 2008. 2001 was the only year in the 2000s that experienced membership decline. Annual membership growth rates fluctuated from a low of -0.6% in 2001 to a high of 5.2% in 2005 and generally ranged from two to four percent.

The Australia census has reported increases in Latter-day Saint membership from 35,500 in 1986 to 45,200 in 1996, and 53,100 in 2006.[15] LDS Church figures for membership were reported at approximately 60,000 in 1986, 87,000 in 1996, and 116,925 in 2006. The percentage of members on LDS Church records that self-identified on the Australian census declined from 59% in 1986 to 52% in 1996 and 45% in 2006. In 2009, one in 170 was nominally LDS.

Congregational Growth

Wards: 206 Branches: 82 (April 2012)

In 1989, there were 204 LDS congregations (112 wards, 92 branches). There were 283 congregations in 2000, increasing to 286 congregations by 2003. The number of congregations reached a high of 288 in 2007. The remainder of the 2000s was characterized by a stagnant congregational growth. By late 2010, there were 284 congregations.   The number of wards has steadily increased in 2000s from 178 in 2000 to 185 in 2003, 195 in 2007, and 203 in 2010.

The first LDS stake was created in 1960 in Sydney followed by two additional stakes in Brisbane and Melbourne later that year. Additional stakes were organized in the 1960s in Sydney Mortdale (1967), Perth (1967), and Sydney Parramatta (1969) bringing the total of stakes to six by 1970. During the 1970s, four new stakes were organized in Melbourne Braeside (1971), Hobart (1977), Eight Mile Plains (1978), and Adelaide (1978) and there were 10 stakes by 1979. By 1990, there were 17 stakes and by 2000, there were 31 stakes. During the 1980s and 1990s, most new stakes were created in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, and several medium-sized Australian cities such as Newcastle, Canberra, Ipswich, and Gold Coast. In 1998, there were 29 stakes and 13 districts.[16] Two additional stakes were created in the 2000s in Bisbane. By year-end 2010, there were 33 stakes and nine districts. Currently functioning districts are headquartered in Wangaratta (1890), Townsville (1964), Cairns (1974), Northern Territory (1974), Mildura (1975), Orange (1975), Rockhampton (1981), Nowra (1992), and Coffs Harbour (1992). Four districts were discontinued in the 2000s (Illawarra, Tamworth, Kadina, and Bundaberg) and were consolidated with nearby stakes.

Activity and Retention

In 1998, converts were baptized at a rate that would be sufficient to create two new stakes a year, although this rate of congregational growth was not achieved due to retention difficulties. A third of the converts baptized in the late 1990s came from member referrals.[17] In 1997, nearly 32,000 Latter-day Saints attended meetings with President Hinckley in five cities.[18]

In 1986, there were 1,600 enrolled in seminary, which accounted for 70-80% of active Latter-day Saint youth at the time. During the 2008-2009 school year, 6,353 were enrolled in seminary or institute, including 2,890 enrolled in seminary. The average number of members per congregation increased from 365 to 446 between 2000 and 2009. In 2001, 2,773 attended the dedicatory sessions of the Perth Australia Temple and 37,000 attended the open house - three times the size of LDS Church membership in Perth at the time.[19] In 2001, 1,800 attended two seminars held in Australia by area leadership to stress the importance of education and missionary service.[20] Approximately 50,000 attended the Brisbane Australia Temple open house [21] and 6,500 Church members attended the temple dedicatory sessions in 2003.[22] That same year, President Hinckley met with 1,500 members in Tasmania.[23]

In late 2010, the Darwin Branch had approximately 200 active members and was one of the largest congregations in the Australia Adelaide Mission. In mid-2010, the Mount Gambier Ward was one of the smallest LDS wards in the Australia Adelaide Mission and had 60 active members. Missionaries reported that the ward had declining active membership primarily as a result of many active members moving away. Most wards appear to have between 100 and 150 active members whereas most branches tend to have 50 to 75 active members. Nationwide active LDS membership is estimated between 30,000 and 35,000, or 25-30% of total membership. At least 50-55% of members appear to be totally disengaged and do not identify the LDS Church as their faith of preference, while the remaining 15-25% are less active but still identify themselves as Latter-day Saints.

Language Materials

Languages with LDS Scripture: English, Greek, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog, German, Hindi, Croatian, Turkish, Polish, Serbian, Maltese, Dutch

All LDS scriptures and most church materials are translated into Greek, Chinese (traditional and simplified characters), Arabic, Vietnamese, Spanish, Tagalog, German, Croatian, Polish, and Dutch. Most church materials and the Book of Mormon are translated into Serbian whereas the Book of Mormon and only select church materials are translated into Hindi and Turkish. Translations of stories from the Bible, Doctrine and Covenants, the Book of Mormon, and some church materials are translated into Maltese.

Meetinghouses

The first LDS meetinghouse was constructed in 1904 in Brisbane.[24] By 1957, there were 10 LDS meetinghouses.[25] In 2010, there were approximately 200 meetinghouse locations throughout Australia, nearly all of which were Church-built meetinghouses.

Public Relations and Finding

In 1986, the Church had between 120 and 200 news or broadcast items aired a month on radio and television in Australia which were overwhelmingly positive.[26] In Perth, the Church in the 1990s held regular roundtables with civic, business, and religious leaders that promoted the importance of family in society. In Brisbane, local members organized shopping mall displays about emergency preparation, nutrition, and family history research.[27] In 2001, Church members in Brisbane organized a parenting conference called "Family Expo" which was attended by approximately 400 parents.[28]

Humanitarian and Development Work

Local members have regularly provided emergency humanitarian relief for victims of brush fires, cyclones, and other natural disasters over the past two decades.[29] In 1990, LDS youth in South Australia distributed fliers on the importance of tree planting and safeguarding against vandalism.[30] The Church has also provided educational tools for aborigines.[31]

Opportunities, Challenges and Prospects

Religious Freedom

The LDS Church faces no restrictions regarding proselytism, assembly, or worship in Australia. Foreign missionaries regularly serve and report few challenges obtaining needed visas. Latter-day Saints report no major societal abuses of religious

freedom.

Cultural Issues

Secularism and low levels of religious participation among self-identified Christians are the primary obstacles for LDS mission outreach activity as receptivity has steadily declined in recent decades especially among the white majority. Conservative political values reduces some secular influences on society, but many moral values are eroded. Full-time missionaries report that many younger women frequently cohabitate and have children with their partners yet seldom marry. Some of these individuals are receptive to Latter-day Saint teachings, but struggle to marry or end cohabitation. The Church has historically faced many cultural setbacks. Emigration of Latter-day Saint converts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries held back the growth of the LDS Church for many decades. Factors which influenced heavy emigration included poor social acceptance of the Church in Australia, few local leaders, and Church policy that encouraged emigration to Utah.[32]

Asian and African immigrants were among the most receptive ethnicities to the Church in the past decade and many missions report frequent baptisms among Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, and Sudanese. The Church has met cultural and linguistic conditions of Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants in particular, with the assignment of full-time missionaries to work specifically with these populations. The operation of two Chinese-speaking congregations in Sydney allows for culturally-sensitive mission outreach directed toward this minority group. Tongan and Samoan-speaking wards and branches also operate and create a favorable environment to adapt to the cultural needs and backgrounds of these Polynesian peoples. Latter-day Saints have yet to adapt mission outreach to meet the cultural background and needs of Sudanese, Indian, Greek, and Middle Eastern ethnicities. In 2010, missionaries reported some discussion of potentially expanding language-specific outreach to include Hindi.

Aboriginal tribes hold some cultural practices which create obstacles of LDS mission outreach. It is disrespectful to speak of the dead in some tribes, many keep family information secretive, and most have no written genealogical records. These challenges complicate efforts for performing family history work and proxy temple ordinances among the deceased kin of Latter-day Saint aborigines.[33] Latter-day Saints have experienced moderate levels of receptivity among aborigines, which are often difficult to reach in remote areas.

National Outreach

Australia receives excellent LDS mission outreach as 82% of the national population resides in the 44 urban agglomerations with over 32,000 inhabitants, all of which receive LDS mission outreach. All administrative states and territories and all cities with over 25,000 inhabitants have an LDS congregation. Mission outreach centers may reach as much as 85% of the population. Australia's five LDS missions each serve approximately four million people; a ratio much lower than in Europe and similar to the United States. Approximately four percent of the Australian population resides in an urban area without a nearby LDS congregation. States or territories that appear to have the highest percentages of Latter-day Saints in the general population and most penetrating LDS missionary outreach as indicated by the lowest ratio of the general population to LDS congregations include Tasmania, Northern Territory, and Queensland (less than 65,000 inhabitants per LDS congregation). States or territories which appear to have the lowest percentages of Latter-day Saints and poorest LDS mission outreach at present include Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, and South Australia.

There remain large urban areas in the major cities which are lesser reached by the Church. The organization of additional congregations will allow for greater mission outreach, but low receptivity and poor local member involvement in missionary work and proselytism reduce the practicality of establishing additional congregations in some of these areas. Nonetheless, congregation consolidations have occurred in some urban areas and have reduced the outreach capabilities of Latter-day Saints. The creation of dependent branches in more distant areas that pose greater potential for future growth appear most feasible for expanding national outreach in lesser reached communities in Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, and Perth.

The LDS Church has made progress entering previously unreached nations and gaining converts from countries with fledging Latter-day Saint communities by reaching out to immigrant groups in Australia. Maltese immigrants have joined the Church for decades and facilitated the establishment of the Church on Malta in the late 1980s.[34] In the late 1970s, the Australia Brisbane Mission opened Papua New Guinea for missionary work. Although uncoordinated, LDS missionary activity has likely affected the development of the Church in several Southeast and Far Eastern Asian nations like China and Vietnam.

The Church has maintained an Internet site for Australia since the early 2000s at http://www.lds.org.au/. The website is fully functional and provides links to other Church websites, area presidency messages, national news, LDS family services, and additional Australia-specific resources. Shortly after the Church launched its first official Internet site in the late 1990s, Australia was the country with the third most visitors to the site.[35] There are few resources for investigators and those desiring to learn more about the Church from the site as it has been primarily designed to meet the needs of Australian Latter-day Saints. Use of the international lds.org and mormon.org sites appear to adequately meet the online proselytism needs for Australia at present, especially through local member participation in creating personal profiles on mormon.org or sharing beliefs and inviting others to learn about the Church through social networking sites like Facebook.

Member Activity and Convert Retention

High-pressure "Pentecost" mission tactics in the late 1970s in which investigators were rushed to baptism with little prebaptismal teaching and no established gospel habits, resulted in many numerical baptisms but very poor convert retention and severely damaged the Church's reputation in Australian society.[36] Poor convert retention has occurred since the late 1990s as manifest by few new stakes organized and stagnant congregation growth despite LDS membership increasing by 25,000 between 2000 and 2009. Approximately two dozen branches matured into wards during this period, indicating that some progress has occurred in retaining some converts or reactivating small numbers of less-active or inactive Latter-day Saints. Lackluster church growth in the 2000s appears to reflect at least in part the increasing proselytism directed toward immigrant groups, which demonstrate higher receptivity to the missionary message but experience poor retention due to language barriers, limited social support networks, transient lifestyles, low religious participation in their country of origin, and in many cases, inadequate teaching and failure to establish basic gospel habits before baptism.

Increasing secularism has also affected Latter-day Saint populations, reducing church attendance percentages and adherence to LDS teachings. Some Latter-day Saints reside in remote, rural communities with few or no fellow members and may be more prone to become inactive due to the lack of a church infrastructure and isolation.[37] In 1990, the Port Headland Branch in Western Australia encompassed an area the size of the state of Utah, with some members living up to ten hours away from the meetinghouse.[38] However, Latter-day Saints residing in isolated, remote areas appear to constitute only a tiny fraction of members that attends Church irregularly or not at all. Rather, a large number of inactive and disengaged members live in neighborhoods and communities with a significant LDS presence, but were lost to inactivity after being rushed to baptism with little preparatory teaching, no gospel habits, and limited member fellowshipping. Intensive efforts to reclaim such inactives have achieved little success, in many cases because such disengaged members never experienced genuine conversion and lack a gospel testimony to fall back upon in times of hardship.

Perhaps the most important single factor needed to improve convert retention going forward is increased emphasis on establishing basic gospel habits and ensuring that prospective converts have experienced genuine and lasting conversion prior to baptism. Proselytism initiatives targeting youth can encourage greater member activity over the long term, especially by increasing the percentage of local members who serve full-time missions. Two young single adult (YSA) units operated in late 2010 in Brisbane and Sydney, but Australia overall is underserved in its potential church growth prospects regarding young adults and youth. Increasing seminary and institute attendance in the late 2000s may indicate positive developments teaching and strengthening the testimonies of youth, which will manifest itself over the long term by the creation of additional congregations.

Ethnic Issues and Integration

White English-speaking Australians continue to account for a strong majority of the population and the lack of ethnic diversity in many areas reduces ethnic integration challenges. Fourteen percent of the population is white but does not speak English as a first language and has greater difficulty assimilating into congregations due to differing religious backgrounds, cultural practices, and language barriers. Asians and Africans are among the most receptive immigrant populations in Australia, but in many areas do not have adequate social support networks at Church. These challenges are exacerbated when converts are rushed to baptism with little opportunity to develop strong friendships with active members before facing the demands and expectations of membership themselves. Middle Eastern and aboriginal peoples are among the least integrated into Australian society and pose the greatest challenges for Latter-day Saints to reach due to cultural differences.

Language Issues

English is spoken by nearly the entire population as a first or second language, limiting the need for language-specific LDS congregations. Nonetheless, the greater receptivity the Church has experienced among immigrant groups, limited English proficiency among many immigrants, and better cultural and social identification of converts with members of similar backgrounds, has created ongoing needs for non-English congregations and proselytism. In late 2010, non-English-speaking units included nine Samoan, four Tongan, two Chinese, and one Spanish-speaking congregation. Some non-English congregations have been discontinued in recent years as immigrants have become proficient in English and assimilated into Australian society. Additional dependent branches or groups may service speakers of these and other common immigrant languages. Some full-time missionaries are assigned to work with specific language groups, nearly all of which are Asian. Language-specific outreach has yet to occur among European immigrant groups, such as Greeks and Italians, but prospective outreach toward Hindi-speakers appears more likely in the future due to low receptivity among most recently immigrated European peoples. Many LDS materials are available in the language of most immigrants. In the late 2000s, senior missionary couples assisted in the translation of some LDS materials into simplified English for use among aborigines in the Northern Territory, but there has been no conscious effort to translate materials into aboriginal languages largely due to the small number of Latter-day Saint aborigines, the lack of written literature in these languages, the small number of speakers, and lack of competent translators.

Missionary Service

In the 1930s, six Australian men were ordained elders and set apart as full-time missionaries. The first Australian missionaries assigned overseas were sent to New Zealand in 1930.[39] At present, Australia remains far from its full-time missionary potential as few young men serve missions. Most Australian missions appear predominantly staffed by North American missionaries, but Australians frequently serve in Asian missions such as in South Korea and Japan. Greater emphasis on missionary preparation in seminary and institute may increase the number of Australians who serve full-time missions.

Increases in the number of Australian missionaries may increase mission outreach capabilities throughout Southeast Asia in the coming years.

Leadership

The Church began to be self-sufficient in leadership as early as the 1970s when all local and regional church leaders were from the Pacific, including mission presidents and regional representativesRobert E. Sackley became the first Australian General Authority in 1998 and served as a Seventy until his death in 1993.[40] Nearly all international and regional LDS leaders from Australia are of European ancestry.

Australian Priesthood leaders have regularly served as mission presidents, area authorities, and temple presidents. In 1989, Ronald William Grear Innis from Sydney began serving as a mission president.[41] In 1990, Kenneth Stanley Wilson from Sydney was called as a mission president.[42] In 1992, Geoffrey J. Liddicoat from Perth was called to preside over the Australia Brisbane Mission.[43] In 1994, John R. Gibson from Brisbane was called as a mission president[44] and Walter John Bailey III from Sydney began presiding over the New York New York South Mission.[45] In 1995, John D. Jury from Hobart was called to preside over the Ireland Dublin Mission[46] and Daniel G. Hamilton from Sydney was called to preside over the Australia Perth Mission.[47] In 1996, Robert M. Cowan from Brisbane began presiding over the New Zealand Wellington Mission.[48] In 2000, Herbert James Pressler from Sydney[49] and Edward James Phipps from Adelaide were called as mission presidents[50] over the Australia Adelaide and Taiwan Taipei Missions.[51] In 2002, Dirk Smibert from Gold Coast was called as a mission president[52] and Peter Roland Barr from Newcastle was called to preside over the Baltic Mission.[53] In 2004, Paul Ross Coward from Sydney was called as a mission president.[54] In 2006, John Galanos was from Melbourne was called to preside over the Greece Athens Mission.[55] In 2007, Carl Ross Maurer from Brisbane[56] was called to preside over the Australia Perth Mission[57] and Barry Lee from Adelaide was called as president ofthe Melbourne Australia West Mission.[58]

In 1992, Walter John Bailey from Sydney and Terence M. Vinson from Sydney were called as regional representatives.[59] In 1994, Leo P. Talbot from Melbourne,[60] Barry Lee from Adelaide,[61] and Raymond Angus Page from Melbourne were called as regional representatives. [62] In 1995, Victor D. Cave from Queensland and Philip Bruce Mitchell from Cherrybrook were called as area authorities.[63] In 2000, Robert M. Cowan from Samford was called as an Area Authority.[64] In 2002, John R. Gibson from Winston Hills was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[65] In 2003, Barry Lee from Adelaide was called as an Area Authority Seventy.[66] In 2005, Dirk Smibert from Queensland was called as an Area Seventy.[67] In 2006, David J. Hoare from Sunbury was called as an Area Seventy.[68] In 2007, Peter F. Meurs from Kignsley and Terence M. Vinson from Kenthurst were called as Area Authority Seventies.[69]

In 1995, John D. Parker from Mittagong was called to preside over the New Zealand Missionary Training Center.[70] In 1999, P. Bruce Mitchell from Sydney was called as the Sydney Australia Temple president.[71] In 2001, Donald W. Cummings from Perth began serving as the Perth Australia Temple president.[72] In 2002, George Mearns from Sydney was called to serve as the Sydney Australia Temple president.[73] In 2003, John Douglas Jeffrey from Gold Coast was called as the Brisbane Australia Temple president[74] and Thomas F. Hooper from Adelaide was called as the Adelaide Australia Temple president. [75] In 2004, John Anthony Grinceri from Perth was called to preside over the Perth Australia Temple[76] and Graeme Edward Cray from Melbourne was called as the Melbourne Australia Temple president.[77] In 2005, Charles Parsons from Adelaide was called as president of the Adelaide Australia Temple[78] and Frank Herbert Hewstone from Sydney was called as president of the Sydney Australia Temple.[79] In 2007, John Murray Lobley from Melbourne was called as the Melbourne Australia Temple president and John Anthony Maile from Perth was called as the Perth Australia Temple president.[80] In 2008, Philip Francis Howes from Adelaide was called as the Adelaide Australia Temple president[81] and Walter John Bailey III was called as the Sydney Australia Temple president.[82] In 2010, Malcolm Royston Mullis from Melbourne was called as the Melbourne Australia Temple president.[83]

Temple

Prior to the completion of the Sydney Australia Temple in 1984, local members attended the Auckland New Zealand Temple. Australian members have demonstrated consistently high levels of temple attendance and activity which has merited the construction of four additional temples in the 2000s. In 1985, 41,341 endowments were performed in the Sydney Australia Temple and 53,889 names were submitted, making the temple one of the few in the Church at the time that was self-sufficient in submitting names for proxy ordinances.[84] Additional temples were announced for Brisbane (1998), Melbourne (1998), Adelaide (1999), and Perth (1999), and were all built and dedicated between 2000 and 2003. Each of the four temples built in the 2000s operate far below capacity. In 2010, the Adelaid Temple scheduled one to two endowment sessions Wednesdays through Saturdays, the Brisbane Temple had four to five sessions Wednesdays through Saturdays, and the Perth Temple had three to four sessions Wednesdays through Saturdays. Endowment sessions and other temple ordinances occur on an appointment basis for the Melbourne Australia Temple. Australia nonetheless exhibits a high degree of self-sufficiency regarding temple ordinance work as nearly all temple presidents have been local Australian members and temple attendance among active members has merited the construction of additional temples. Distance has been a major factor in the construction of additional temples. At present, there are no foreseeable prospects for additional temples to be constructed in Australia as all metropolitan areas with over one million inhabitants have an LDS temple.

Comparative Growth

LDS Church growth trends in Australia have shared many similarities with growth in New Zealand, although Latter-day Saints

constitute a larger percentage of the New Zealand population largely due to early successes among the Maori in New Zealand and heavy emigration and low receptivity in Australia over the first century of LDS proselytism. If the percentage of Latter-day Saints in Australia was the same as New Zealand, there would be more than half a million Latter-day Saints meeting in over a thousand congregations. The percentage of members that self identified as Latter-day Saints on both the Australian and New Zealand censuses in 2006 was identical (45%). New Zealand has demonstrated greater self-sufficiency regarding full-time missionary manpower, likely due to the large number of Pacific Islander and Maori Latter-day Saints which tend to have higher activity rates and rates of missionary service than whites. In 1989, Australia was the country outside the United States with the ninth most stakes[85] whereas in 2010 Australia had the eleventh most. In late 2010, Australia had the fifth most LDS temples, twelfth most missions, and fourteenth most congregations.

Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are the most rapidly growing religious groups in recent years, principally due to immigration. Most missionary-minded Christian groups experience slow growth comparable to Latter-day Saints, but some Christian groups tend to have higher convert retention and stronger congregational growth.   In 1998, the LDS Church was reported by a Sydney newspaper to be the seventeenth largest church in Australia, but was the church that had the most rapid membership growth rate year to year.[86] However, high convert turnover and member attrition have prevented the LDS Church from becoming more prominent nationally. Seventh Day Adventists generally baptize 1,000 converts a year and experience slow congregational growth as the number of churches increased from 410 to 424 from 2001 to 2009. Jehovah's Witnesses experienced growth trends similar to Seventh Day Adventists. Pentecostals have ranked among the fastest growing Christian groups since the 1980s.

Future Prospects

The consolidation of two LDS missions in 2010 has occurred on the heels of a decade of growth in nominal membership disproportionate to the small number of congregations created, reflecting low convert retention and high member turnover. Membership growth rates remain higher than most Western nations and illustrate moderate levels of receptivity, but prospects for future real church growth depend on improved baptismal preparation of prospective converts, stronger local member-missionary approaches, tailored mission outreach to nominal Christians and the nonreligious, increased language-specific mission outreach and church planting, and augmentation of the native full-time missionary force. The history of the LDS Church in Australia demonstrates that an established, strong priesthood leadership comprised of native members does not ensure strong church growth. Latter-day Saints appear to have become more socially entrenched in their congregations over time, reducing their ability to relate with the general population and employ effective member-missionary skills and habits.

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