

# THREE ANTECEDENTS OF EVANGELICAL INVOLVEMENT IN POST-INDEPENDENCE GOVERNMENT CHURCH/STATE POLICY FORMATION IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN THE 1980s

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## **Introduction**

My purpose, through this paper, is to identify those factors, which informed the September, 1982, decision of the Evangelical Alliance of the South Pacific Islands (EASPI)<sup>1</sup> to endorse the National Youth Movement Program (NYMP) and join the National Youth Council (NYC). This represents an essential precursor to an understanding of the nature and extent of the EASPI's influence on government initiatives to redefine church/state relations in PNG in the early post-independence years.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 highlights major events relevant to this investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> The EASPI is an alliance of over 30 evangelical churches, missions, and service organisations. Established in 1964, the EASPI is one of two ecumenical councils in PNG. In 1990, there were 315,421 adherents, representing nine percent of the national population. See figure 7.

<sup>2</sup> This is the primary issue, addressed in chapter seven of my Th.D. dissertation. I defend the thesis that the influence of the relatively-small EASPI upon PNG government initiatives to redefine church/state relations, through youth development in the 1980s, reflected a revitalised continuity of evangelicalism's socio-political activists roots. R. D. Fergie, "A study of church/state relations in PNG, with particular reference to the EASPI, and its involvement in the government's National Youth Movement Program during the 1980s", Th.D. thesis submitted to the Australian College of Theology, December, 2000.

Figure 1  
CHURCH/STATE ASSOCIATIONS THROUGH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
1970-1993

	1964 New elitist education policy introduced to prepare for an early independence 1965 EASPI founded, also the Melanesian Council of Churches (MCC) founded
<b>1970</b>	1971 Education Act (most missions joined the national education system, which, while removing the burden of teacher salaries, also meant that they forfeited national representation) 1972 Government investigation into the viability of establishing a national youth service (John Guise committee) 1974 EASPI and MCC representatives attended the Lausanne Congress on Evangelism
<b>1975</b>	1975 INDEPENDENCE (September 16) 1976 National Congress on Evangelism held at Lae cosponsored by the EASPI and MCC (Osei-Mensah speaker) 1977 <i>Pacifique 77</i> meetings in the Solomon Islands (strong liberation theology emphasis) 1978 A government-sponsored National Youth Conference held in Port Moresby 1979 NYC established, with representation for the mainline churches
<b>1980</b>	1980 NYMP established 1981 The Christian Declaration on Youth and Development prepared (Lae) 1982 Office of Youth, Women, Religion, and Recreation established, with a Religious Affairs Division 1982 O'Connell presented paper on government youth work and church youth work (September, Mt Hagen) 1983 The EASPI joined the NYC, and was elected onto the executive committee (March) 1983 The National Policy on Youth endorsed by the government's NEC (November) 1984 The EASPI took a leading role in joint-churches leadership resource project ( <i>Serving like Jesus</i> ) 1984 Religious Affairs Division hosted a heads of churches' policy integration workshop (Goroka)
<b>1985</b>	1985 Department of Youth and Development established (later Department of Home Affairs and Youth) 1986 Religious Affairs Division hosted a second heads of churches' policy integration workshop (Goroka) 1987 Religious Affairs Division replaced by the Censorship Board
<b>1990</b>	1990 NYMP replaced by the National Youth Service, and the NYC by the National Youth Advisory Board 1991 A non-government organisations division established with the Department of Home Affairs and Youth 1993 A national NGO policy endorsed by the government's NEC

Towards the close of 1982, the EASPI accepted an invitation from the Papua New Guinea Minister of Youth to join the NYC as a one of six

church youth-wing members.<sup>3</sup> The invitation came soon after Chris O'Connell, the Principal Program Coordinator of the government's new NYMP, presented a paper, endorsed by the Minister, to the September, 1982, national EASPI youth conference at Mt Hagen.<sup>4</sup> While O'Connell and his colleagues actively sought out the EASPI endorsement, they were surprised at the enthusiastic willingness of the EASPI to participate. They had hoped that the EASPI would, at least, lend tacit support to the NYMP, without expecting them to become too involved in issues perceived to be unrelated to spiritual development. In this, they were pleasantly surprised. In 1991 O'Connell wrote: "we were able to secure the conscious and informed consent of the *hitherto purely spiritually-orientated Evangelical Alliance* to participate in the NYMP, at all levels, including the National Youth Council" (emphasis added).<sup>5</sup> Was this a case of the EASPI inconsistency, or of revitalised continuity, consistent with evangelicalism's historical roots? The following discussion of three antecedents of the 1982 EASPI decision to participate in the government's NYMP/NYC is informative in this regard.

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<sup>3</sup> The other denominations represented on the NYC were the Roman Catholic, United, Lutheran, SDA, and Anglican churches, most of whom were members of the Melanesian Council of Churches.

<sup>4</sup> C. O'Connell, "Government Youth Work and Church Youth Work", Mt Hagen PNG: unpublished paper presented to the EASPI National Youth Conference, September 11, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> C. O'Connell and R. Isaiah Zarriga, "Papua New Guinea's National Youth Movement", in S. Sewell, and A. Kelly, *Social Problems in the Asia Pacific Region*, Brisbane Qld: Boolarong Publications, 1991, pp. 230, 231. Derek Tidball notes common faulty assumptions about evangelicalism's attitude to socio-political activism: "It [evangelicalism] is conservative in theology, so it is assumed to be conservative in politics, and, therefore, with the *status quo*. It is committed to converting sinners, so it is presumed to be indifferent to changing society. It is characterised by individualism, as seen in its stress on personal conversion, so it is imagined to lack a social ethic. It is concerned about heaven, so it is thought to have little concern with earth." D. J. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?: tracing the roots of today's movements*, London UK: Marshall Pickering, 1994, p. 177. See also the extended discussion of evangelicalism in chapter 3 of my Th.D. thesis.

**1. Pre-Independence Antecedents**

The EASPI’s decision to join the NYC, and participate in the NYMP, was influenced, in large measure, by two developments during the 1970s. The first was an offshore event in 1974, which inaugurated the Lausanne movement – a springboard of global evangelical thought and engagement, with no small impact on PNG. The second development was much more local, and related to an abject neglect of a large segment of PNG young people, as a consequence of accelerated preparations for independence in the 1960s and 1970s.

**1.1 The Lausanne 1974 Watershed – the Case of a Revitalised Continuity of Evangelicalism’s Socio-Political Activist Roots in the TPNG**

In one sense, O’Connell’s perception of evangelical “pie in the sky” pre-occupations was not altogether unjustified. While the roots of evangelicalism demonstrate a vital concern to put the “sky in the pie”, as David Bebbington and others have documented,<sup>6</sup> there was a distinct period of evangelical withdrawal from socio-political activism between the late 1920s and the late 1960s (see figure 2).

Figure 2

**THE THREE PHASES OF EVANGELICALISM’S INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL ACTION**

<p><b>PHASE 1 ACTIVISM</b> c1730s-1920s <i>Strong commitment to socio-political activism, as per the Clapham sect in England</i></p>	<p><b>PHASE 2 WITHDRAWAL</b> c1930s-1960s <i>A general evangelical withdrawal from socio-political activism, as a reaction to liberalism’s “social gospel”</i></p>	<p><b>PHASE 3 ACTIVISM REVIVED</b> c1970s- <i>A renewed commitment to socio-political activism, commonly linked with the Lausanne movement</i></p>
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This great reversal very definitely impacted Australian evangelicalism, as Robert Linder has demonstrated, with respect to Australian Methodism. Methodists had been very active in politics, particularly through the trade

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<sup>6</sup> D. Bebbington, “The Decline and Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern: 1918-1980”, in Wolf, J., ed., *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal*. See also: J. Stott, *Issues facing Christians today: a major appraisal of contemporary social and moral questions*, Basingstoke UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984, pp. 6-10.

union movement, and the Labor Party, up until the late 1920s. John Verran, the first Labor Premier of South Australia, in 1910, said, "I am an MP [Minister of Parliament] because I am a PM [Primitive Methodist]." <sup>7</sup> However, this changed, following inroads made by liberalism's "social gospel", in particular. <sup>8</sup> John Stott, et al, noted that "some of them confused the kingdom of God with Christian civilisation in general, and with social democracy, in particular, and they went on to imagine that, by their social programmes, they could build God's kingdom on earth." <sup>9</sup>

Stuart Piggin has suggested that the attitudes of Australian evangelicals, during this period were also transferred, to some degree, at least, to Australian territories. He argues that evangelical commitment to overseas mission became a form of escapism, in that, going away from liberal Australia, represented a fresh opportunity to "express orthodox faith, in an environment uncontaminated by liberalism". <sup>10</sup> If this be true, then this escapism, in some ways, may account for the diluted withdrawal tendencies of evangelicals in the TPNG. Certainly, evangelicals, working in the TPNG between the wars, were not shy of involvement in both social service and social action aspects of Christian social responsibility. <sup>11</sup> The missions all but carried health and education

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<sup>7</sup> R. D. Linder, "The Methodist Love Affair with the Australian Labor Party, 1891-1929", in *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review* 23 & 24 (June and December, 1997-1998), pp. 35-61.

<sup>8</sup> Bebbington outlines this, together with a range of other factors associated with this withdrawal. The spread of premillennial teaching reacted against modernism, and the emphasis on building the kingdom of God on earth. Keswick sanctification teaching generated a wariness of social responsibility emphases advocated by liberal Protestants following the 1924 Conference on Christianity, Politics, Economics, and Citizenship (COPEC). The rising ascendancy of the Anglo-Catholic Party, advancing liberal theological views, and becoming increasingly involved in socio-political activism, caused many evangelicals to withdraw from similar involvement, lest they be seen to be associated with liberalism. Bebbington, "The Decline and Resurgence of Evangelical Social Concern 1918-1980", p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Lausanne Occasional Paper # 21, *Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*, Grand Rapids MI: A Joint Publication of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the World Evangelical Fellowship, 1982, p. 19.

<sup>10</sup> S. Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia, Spirit, Word, and World*, Melbourne Vic: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> The Grand Rapids report made a helpful distinction between "social service" (described as relieving human need, philanthropic activity, ministry to individuals and families, and works of mercy) and "social action" (defined in terms of removal of the

welfare services before the Second World War, taking the lion's share of responsibility up to, and beyond, independence. By virtue of their common, if often reluctant, role as *de facto* agents of the administration, in most remote localities, they exercised no little involvement in social action activities before independence. Even so, many evangelicals saw their involvement in social service and social action as little more than useful pre-evangelistic tools, subordinate to preaching for conversion.

This predominant attitude began to change gradually following the war, although it was evident among some of the early leaders of the EASPI, who continued to be wary of the "social gospel" pre-suppositions of some within the Melanesian Council of Churches (MCC).<sup>12</sup> However, the influence of visiting overseas evangelical leaders challenged this thinking,<sup>13</sup> as did participation in various national forums, which exposed evangelicals to alternative ways of understanding the application of the gospel.<sup>14</sup> Arguably, the most significant catalyst for the revitalisation of evangelical commitment to socio-political activism was the inaugural Congress on World Evangelisation, held at Lausanne in 1974. Delegates

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causes of human need, political and economic activity, transformation of structures of society, and the quest for justice). Lausanne Occasional Paper # 21, *Evangelicalism and Social Responsibility*, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Reporting on a meeting with the MCC in 1971, the President of the EASPI (K. Liddle) recorded: "We are concerned that the WCC is influenced by theologians, who believe in revolution, and that the WCC has channelled funds to organisations, engaged in armed revolution [e.g., Mataungan Association]. However, this should not be misinterpreted as meaning that the EA was not concerned with the social and economic development of Papua New Guinea. We do help in every way we can, and encourage Christians to participate in community and national life. But we do not regard it as a function of the church itself to be engaged in politics." K. Liddle, "Report to Executive of EASPI on meeting of MCC 1971" (R. D. Fergie archives), about mid-October, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> UFM missionary, Bill Merrywether, suggested to me that African Bishop Festo Kivengere's 1959 visit to the TPNG influenced the UFM mission to see its education ministry in much broader terms than pre-evangelism: "*he was very insistent that we ought to see the need to give people this education, as well as giving them a Christian education.* The feeling was that the people had not been prepared for independence, as they had not been educated enough to take over the running of their own countries" (emphasis added). B. Merriweather, interview by R. D. Fergie, April 10, 1999, Melbourne Vic: R. D. Fergie interview transcript, 1999, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> Just as MCC was invited to send delegates to the 1976 "Seminar on Evangelism:", so EASPI representatives were invited to attend the MCC-sponsored "Pacifique 77" meetings in the Solomon Islands, and the joint MCC and Melanesian Institute "Religion and Development" conference in 1977.

from the TPNG, representing both the EASPI and MCC, attended this international gathering. They carried back to their constituencies an enlarged awareness of global evangelicalism, and the Lausanne Covenant, which, among other things, advocated a strong, and necessary, codependency between evangelism and socio-political activism.

Soon after the TPNG delegates returned from Lausanne, a major joint EASPI/MCC conference on evangelism was convened in Lae.<sup>15</sup> The main speaker was Gottfried Osei-Mensah, a Ghanaian, who had not long before been appointed as the first executive secretary of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelisation. One of his four addresses enunciated the thrust of the Lausanne Covenant, with respect to evangelism and social concern.<sup>16</sup> He called for the church, as the community of God, to recover the sense of Christian vocation, in using God-given gifts and employment opportunities to prosper the cause of the gospel. For the church to influence society for good, he suggested that Christians needed to get involved in community life as “salt” and “light”, with the purpose of preserving what is good, and exposing what is not. Through examples of modesty and generosity, Christians were to responsibly steward their resources and energies, consistent with Jesus’ parable of the shrewd manager (Luke 16:1-15). He suggested that Christians needed to maintain a prophetic ministry, individually and corporately, through the teaching of the law of God, and the public rebuking of violations of God’s law. Further, he suggested that this would, at times, require a call for personal and national repentance. Finally, Osei-Mensah challenged the church to produce constructive alternatives, rather than just negative criticism to the growth pains of a rapidly-changing society. He suggested that Christians need to give careful thought to what society ought to be like.

During the following decade, there were many instances of these strategies being put in place by leaders from both the MCC and the EASPI. To some degree, at least, the seeds for these later actions were

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<sup>15</sup> David Price, at that time the Vice-Principal of the EASPI Christian Leaders’ Training College, played a leading role in the coordination of this conference.

<sup>16</sup> G. Osei-Mensah, “Evangelism and Social Concern”, in G. Osei-Mensah and J. Daimoi, *Why Go, Serve and Tell in Melanesia?*, Banz PNG: a joint MCC and EASPI publication, 1979.

planted at the Lae seminar by Osei-Mensah. The MCC reference, in its 1977 *Long Range Programme*, to the “unusual success” of the Lae seminar, supports this conclusion. The peculiar character that the EASPI’s national *On Target* youth ministries took, during the 1980s, reflected a similar legacy.

## **1.2 Out-of-School, Out-of-Work Youth Development – a New Context for Evangelical Involvement in PNG by the Late 1970s**

The theological validity of holistic ministry for evangelicals was sharpened further during the 1970s, as it became clear that most imported youth programs, with their focus on spiritual and social development, were incomplete in addressing the needs of a growing proportion of young people. London Missionary Society missionary (and later a national politician) Percy Chatterton’s “imported solutions for imported problems” slogan was found wanting by the late 1970s, though there were a number of creative attempts to contextualise programs like the Boys’ Brigade.<sup>17</sup>

In its hurry to prepare the TPNG for an early independence, the Australian administration replaced its earlier education policy of gradualism towards universal primary education. In its place, an elitist education policy was implemented, to fast-track a small cadre of young people through secondary and tertiary education, in preparation for national leadership responsibilities.

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<sup>17</sup> R. D. Fergie, “Minors, Mandarins, and Missions: Legacies of Boys’ Brigade Australia in Papua New Guinea church and state youth development, 1966-1980”, in M. Hutchinson, and G. Treloar, eds, *This Gospel Shall be Preached: Essays on the Australian Contribution to World Mission*, Sydney NSW: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1998, pp. 66-85.

Figure 3

POST-WAR EDUCATION WELFARE DEVELOPMENTS IN TPNG

1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s
A UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION GRADUALISM Post-war “new deal” paternalism	AN ELITIST EDUCATION GAMBLE  Growing international anti-colonial sentiment and early independence preparation	A SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS  Dealing with the negative consequences of elitist education policy.	A NATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT TRIAL  A new church/state partnership in non-formal education.	AN EDUCATION SYSTEM OVERHAUL  Formal education revision, non-formal education malaise.
<i>Gradualism . . .</i>	<i>ACCELERATED Preparation . . .</i>	<i>a reverse-side school-leaver dilemma . . .</i>		

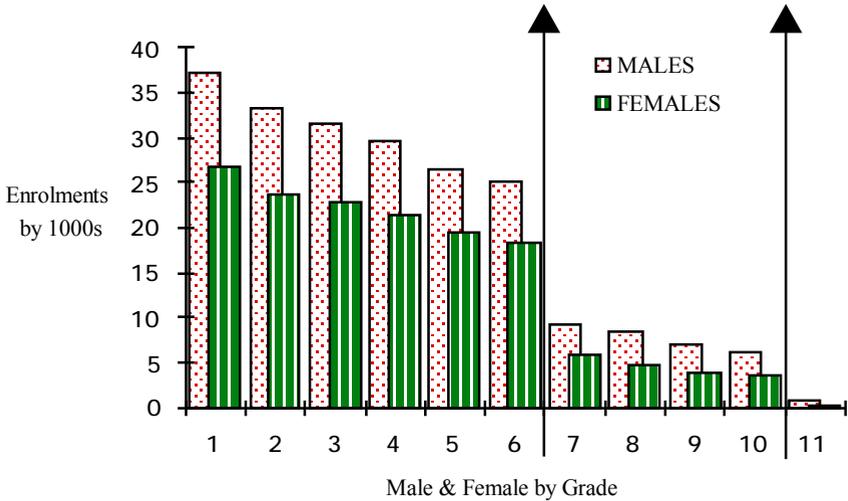
Because of the proportionally-higher costs associated with secondary and tertiary education, many school-aged children were unable to enter primary school. Of those who did begin, a large proportion were unable to continue beyond grade six into high school. The phenomena of school drop-out attrition (more accurately “push-outs”) soon took on serious law-and-order connotations, as young people, in frustration, migrated into towns, in search of bright lights and employment.<sup>18</sup> Many, struggling with an imposed state of *anomie*, joined *raskol* gangs, in an attempt to find acceptance, a survival livelihood, and a means of getting even with a society that they felt had betrayed them with false hope and rejection.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> It was estimated, in 1982, that, of the 40,000 school leavers looking for jobs each year, only 4,000 new jobs were available. This represented a 90 percent unemployment rate prospect for school leavers. C. O’Connell, and R. Isaiah Zarriga, “Papua New Guinea’s National Youth Movement”, in S. Sewell, and A. Kelly, *Social Problems in the Asia Pacific Region*, Brisbane Qld: Boolarong Publications, 1991, p. 214.

<sup>19</sup> I discuss this at length in my thesis: Fergie, “A Study of Church/State Relations in Papua New Guinea”, chapter 2: Pre-independence education policy for government youth development strategies, 1962-1979.

Figure 4  
 FIRST TO 11TH GRADE ATTRITION (1979-1989)  
 (Source: 1991 Papua New Guinea Education Sector Review)



While there were some innovative attempts by churches to deal with this situation,<sup>20</sup> most maintained programs, which were largely ineffective in addressing the vocational needs of the large number of out-of-school, out-of-work, young people, during the 1970s.<sup>21</sup> The government continued to direct almost all of its education budget into the national education system, and pressured the churches to do the same. While token efforts were made to provide non-formal training, through vocational schools, and the like, these initiatives were hopelessly under-resourced, and, even worse, were commonly viewed by communities as a second-best option for their young people. It would seem that they had been charmed by the attractive, though illusive, cargo-cult expectation that formal education would automatically lead to well-paid jobs in the formal economy.

<sup>20</sup> I deal with the Lutheran *yangpela didiman* (young farmers) program, the Roman Catholic Young Christians program, and the contextualised Boys' Brigade program, in my thesis: Fergie, "A Study of Church/State Relations in Papua New Guinea", chapters 4-6.

<sup>21</sup> The EASPI convened the national youth conference in September, 1978, in an attempt to grapple with the escalating school-leaver problem – a move that led to the establishment of a national EASPI youth coordination committee.

Throughout the 1970s, there was a range of attempts by the government and churches to identify solutions for this problem. At one end of the scale, there were some, who advocated a punitive control solution, in the form of a compulsory para-military national youth service. Others, including most church youth workers, wanted programs that developed effective ways of helping young people find their place in society, as productive and valued members of their communities. This approach was clearly the preferred option of senior *Pangu Pati* ministers who, together with Prime Minister Michael Somare, commissioned the development of what became known as the National Youth Movement Program (NYMP). While subsequent coalitions committed unprecedented amounts of money to the NYMP, it was understood that the success of the program would depend largely on the support and involvement of the churches, given their extensive community networks, and pool of dedicated and experienced personnel.

Figure 5

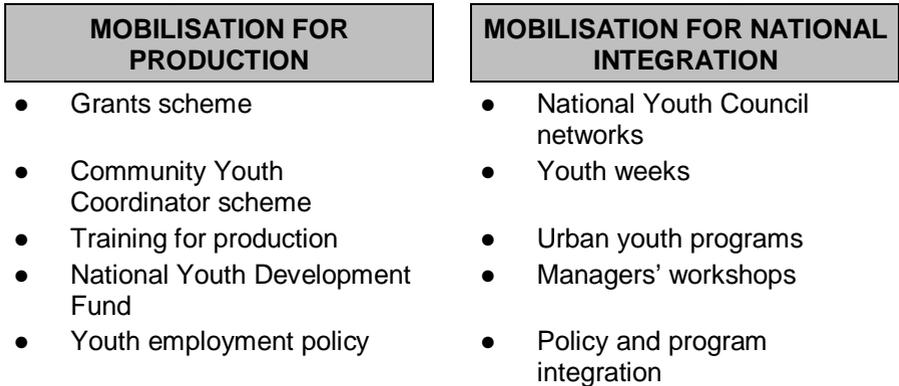
NATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT PROGRAM – OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

**To productively involve youth in the development of their communities and to encourage maximum participation in the economic, social, political, cultural, and spiritual life of the nation**

through activities related to:

**Self employment training  
Community service  
Sports, recreation, and leisure  
Culture  
Spiritual development**

incorporating two main strategies



**2. An Early Post-Independent Antecedent – the 1982 O’Connell Paper**

In some respects, the NYMP/NYC strategy paralleled earlier partnerships of mutual convenience between the Australian administration and missions, in education and health welfare. These were not necessarily instances of symbiosis, as both parties brought to these partnerships their own peculiar, and, in some respects, different, agendas. Rather, joint ventures were more commonly characterised by a spirit of cautious

cooperation, particularly for the churches, who, despite government rhetoric to the contrary, were often treated as junior partners. Even so, this caution was also tempered by a degree of pragmatic opportunism, as churches sought to further their particular purposes, through association with the government.

## **2.1 Courtship Manoeuvring – EASPI Responses to Government Advances**

Senior officers, responsible for government youth development planning, were very keen to tap into the extensive networks of the churches.<sup>22</sup> By late-1982, the involvement of the larger denominations had been secured, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm.<sup>23</sup> Conspicuous by their absence, however, were the smaller, post-war evangelical missions, most of whom were members of the EASPI. Towards the end of 1982, a concerted effort was made to initiate discussions with the EASPI, with the view to securing their involvement, as the sixth, church youth-wing member of the NYC. The challenge was essentially threefold. Firstly, the government needed to allay suspicions that registration with the NYMP would compromise each EASPI member's organisational and operational autonomy. Secondly, access to government grants, and an assurance of fair and consistent administration, was important.<sup>24</sup> Finally, opportunities for the EASPI to participate in, and contribute to,

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<sup>22</sup> Government-subsidy provision, in most cases, meant a far greater maximisation of the productivity of government money, given the high motivation, integrity, and experience of many church youth workers. Church representation on the NYC was expected to strengthen the credibility of the NYMP, in the eyes of the general public. It provided easier access to influential church leaders, and major youth development resources, under their care. Further, the NYMP and NYC were seen as potential catalysts in helping build a greater cooperative spirit among churches, as a counter to competitiveness and conflict, which had often frustrated social development in the past.

<sup>23</sup> For example, while the Roman Catholic national youth directors were very keen, the Anglican church leaders were far more ambivalent, later withdrawing, for a time, from any active involvement on the NYC.

<sup>24</sup> The earlier experience of groups, like the Boys' Brigade, whose expanding programs floundered in the late 1970s, when government funding was unexpectedly withdrawn, remained fresh on church leader's minds. Cf. Fergie, "Minors, Mandarins, and Missions".

government policy forums on national youth development were required.<sup>25</sup>

When the NYMP was first launched, most EASPI leaders knew very little about it. Even so, there was a tentative openness to a government youth program, which seriously addressed the issues of economic development, and social integration, in ways that church programs had struggled to do. In any case, the government seemed determined to follow through with the NYMP, and so most church leaders wanted, at the very least, to find out more about it. Preparations for the EASPI's second national youth conference at Mt Hagen, in September, 1982, accelerated this resolve. Early in August, 1982, and in my capacity as coordinator of the EASPI conference, I met with Chris O'Connell (the Principal Program Coordinator of the NYMP) in Mt Hagen. Much of our initial discussion focused on a shared concern for a holistic approach to youth development.<sup>26</sup> By the conclusion of this first meeting, I felt cautiously positive about the possibilities of EASPI participating in the NYMP. Certainly, we both agreed that there was good reason to further pursue dialogue. Following consultation with other EASPI leaders, the Minister for Youth Affairs, Tom Awasa, was invited to attend the conference, and present a paper, outlining the government's position, with respect to church/state partnership, through the NYMP. Awasa agreed, although he deputised O'Connell to present a paper on his behalf.

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<sup>25</sup> Church representation on district, provincial, and national youth council forums was the primary vehicle made available. In one sense, this redressed one of the consequences of the Education Act of 1971, which merged mission education into the new government national education system. While this removed the large burden of maintaining teacher salaries, it effectively withdrew the opportunity for church representation at the national level, which, to some, dangerously marginalised church involvement and influence in national policy debate.

<sup>26</sup> The importance of holistic ministry for EASPI youth leaders is well demonstrated by the peculiar breadth of focus of papers presented to the 1982 National EASPI youth conference. The nine papers, in order of presentation, were: "Government youth work and church youth work" (Chris O'Connell); "Urban Youth Work" (Wayne Pate); "Evangelism and Youth Ministry" (Brian Winslade); "Youth Work with Gangs" (William Longgar); "Prison Ministry" (Gaius Helix); "Village Youth Work" (Terry Logan); "Community Development and Youth Work" (Lawrence Williams); "Training Effective Christian Youth Leaders" (Bob Fergie). Copies of these papers, and related action committee reports, are held in: R. D. Fergie *Personal Papers* (thesis archives box B, 1982 file).

## **2.2 A Partnership Proposal – the O’Connell Paper and its Significance for the EASPI**

O’Connell’s paper, “Government Youth Work and Church Youth Work”, was one of nine papers presented to the 80 EASPI delegates. While presenting a general orientation to the NYMP, and promoting its benefits to EASPI churches, the central thrust was much broader. O’Connell presented a carefully-argued rationale for church/state cooperation and partnership, which largely expounded the 1981 Christian Declaration on Youth and Development. His paper became the basis for subsequent government dialogue with heads of churches throughout the 1980s, representing something of the official government position on church/state relations.

The paper reaffirmed the post-war administration’s consistent concern to keep the churches on side, and involved, as major welfare providers.<sup>27</sup> It appealed to a compatibility of interest and values between the churches and the state, and attempted to defuse suspicions that the NYMP would compromise churches’ control of their own youth programs.<sup>28</sup> O’Connell pointed to the involvement of a number of clergy in key positions on the NYC, to demonstrate the government’s commitment to leadership partnership with church representatives.<sup>29</sup> He also suggested that the holistic character of the NYMP was entirely consistent with both the government’s and churches’ commitment to integral human development, as set out in the National Constitution.<sup>30</sup> He gave assurances that there

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<sup>27</sup> There are many parallels between the endeavours of Groves and Gunther, representing the Administration, at the first Administration/Missions conference following World War II, as the Administration sought to take control of welfare policy, while, at the same time, maintaining the participation and contribution of the missions.

<sup>28</sup> This concern was raised during a 1978 youth conference convened in Port Moresby by the government. Reports and recommendations from this conference were incorporated into documents prepared by the interim NYC-engaged international youth consultants, whose recommendations greatly influenced the ethos and structure of the NYMP. Cf. Fergie, “A Study of Church/State Relations in Papua New Guinea”, chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> The first chairman of the NYC was a United church clergyman, Revd Tauta Gauga, for example. He represented the Western Province Youth Council. Revd Jobson Misang, representing the United church, was also a member of the NYC and its executive for nine years.

<sup>30</sup> O’Connell, “Government Youth Work”, p. 2. Referring to “integral human development, the first of five National Development Goals and Directive Principles”, O’Connell argued that this is common to, and binding on, both churches and state,

would be “no strings attached” to government youth grants, apart from reasonable and necessary accountability requirements. More particularly, he suggested that the churches had a vital “mediation” role to play between their communities and the government.<sup>31</sup>

The EASPI responded to O’Connell’s paper through a comprehensive action committee report. In the three months following the EASPI national conference, the Office of Religion, Youth, and Recreation invited the EASPI to three meetings. In my capacity as the new national EASPI coordinator, I was flown to Port Moresby on October 1, 1982, for discussions with senior staff of the Office of Religion, Youth, and Recreation.<sup>32</sup> Later that month (October 13), I attended the NYMP’s National Youth Managers’ Workshop at Goroka for a week. Between December 1-8, Ertius Lisam (the EASPI Executive Officer) and I were invited to attend the NYC Executive meetings, as observers, at Banz. Following that meeting, senior members of the EASPI met with senior officers of the Office of Religion, Youth, and Recreation to further discuss issues raised in O’Connell’s September paper.<sup>33</sup> Discussions covered a number of other areas as well – planning for a joint NYMP and church youth wings workshop on Christian leadership for holistic community development; preparation for a meeting between the church representatives and the Minister of Youth in January, 1983; the feasibility of developing a distance education program for the NYMP, modelled on the Theological Education by Extension approach developed by the EASPI’s Christian Leaders’ Training College.

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implying that all development activities must look at the whole man, and, therefore, involve state agencies and churches harmonising their specialties to achieve this end.

<sup>31</sup> Even so, there was some suspicion that the reference to “church mediation” may reflect more the intention for churches to be used as endorsement catalysts, and program conduits, for government policy implementation.

<sup>32</sup> NYMP, *Youth on the Move* vol 2, no 3 (September-December, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> In particular, the Office of Religion, Recreation, and Youth were interested in establishing common ground between churches and the state, with respect to social realities, understood by the EASPI to affect the interpretation of salvation through Christ. In essence, this sought comment from the EASPI, with respect to the contents of the Christian Declaration on Youth and Development. Clarification was also sought, with regard to a common understanding of evangelism, church, salvation, youth, development, and movement. Mechanisms for dialogue, particularly through the NYC, were also discussed at length, with the result that the EASPI were informally invited to be represented on the NYC.

By late 1982, the EASPI had made public its intentions to work cooperatively with the Office of Religion, Recreation, and Youth, through the NYMP and the NYC. The December, 1982, edition of the EASPI's youth magazine (*On Target with Jesus*) recorded:

For the EA[SPI], this is a very important new opportunity to have a *voice at a national level*, and, thus, have a unique opportunity to be *salt for the nation*. It also means that we are able to take advantage of various resources, which the NYMP, through its projects grant scheme and leadership training courses, make available to youth workers. We, too, have resources and ideas to share with others within the NYMP.<sup>34</sup>

The EASPI was not slow in interacting with government youth development policy, particularly the assumptions undergirding the Christian Declaration on Youth and Development. It was this document that O'Connell promoted as the authoritative development framework for all churches in PNG. He challenged the EASPI "to discover the meaning of evangelism in Papua New Guinea at the end of the 20th century", consistent with the declaration's liberationist hermeneutic for Christian socio-political conscientisation.<sup>35</sup> While recognising the importance of addressing the issue of socio-political responsibility, EASPI leaders expressed reservations about its appropriateness, as the final and binding expression of holistic Christian responsibility.<sup>36</sup> It was seen to be inadequate, when compared with the Lausanne Covenant's comprehensive statements about socio-political activism.<sup>37</sup> This is not to

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<sup>34</sup> The Evangelical Alliance, "The NYMP and EA Youth Groups", in *On Target with Jesus* vol 1 (December, 1982), p. 11. For a more detailed development of this initial statement see: The Evangelical Alliance, "EA/NYMP relations in 1983", in *On Target with Jesus* vol 2 (August, 1983), pp. 13, 14.

<sup>35</sup> O'Connell, "Government Youth Work", p. 2. This liberationist perspective is confirmed by O'Connell's reference to the 1978 national workshop on "Christianity and Development", the 1981 production of the "Christian Declaration on Youth and Development", and the Roman Catholic "Justice and Development for Papua New Guinea" publication by Sister Pauline Grutzner, written from a Marxist perspective.

<sup>36</sup> The declaration had been shaped as a strategic tool, intended to direct the churches to an acceptance of, and compliance with, the NYMP development agenda.

<sup>37</sup> Perhaps the most important published work from PNG was the papers, published in 1979, by the Melanesian Council of Churches and Evangelical Alliance of the South Pacific Islands Seminar on Evangelism Committee. Of particular relevance, was the

say that it was rejected outright. Rather, EASPI personnel were concerned that an adequate balance be understood, and acknowledged, and incorporated into the government's 1983 national youth policy.<sup>38</sup>

### **2.3 Broader Outcomes of the O'Connell Paper for Future Church/State Relations**

O'Connell suggested four necessary outcomes for satisfactory church/state partnership in youth and development, which, in many respects, set the parameters for subsequent church/state dialogue. Firstly, he raised the need to immediately develop a common language, clarifying concepts like evangelism, church, salvation, youth, development, and movement. As a way to avoid misunderstanding of spiritual and secular terminology, O'Connell anticipated a degree of dynamic equivalence in this respect, suggesting that "we may find that each spiritual term has its secular equivalent (more or less), and visa-versa".<sup>39</sup> Understanding each other was one thing, but to suggest that there would always be functional equivalents was ambitious, even when imposing, as O'Connell did, through the Christian Declaration, a Marxist interpretive framework.

Secondly, O'Connell signalled the need to quickly formalise mechanisms for policy dialogue between churches and the state. Before independence, there had been a number of clearing-house arrangements, in the form of biannual administration/missions conferences, and various national councils and boards, which afforded generous church

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paper by Gottfried Osei-Mensah, "Evangelism and Social Concern", in which he suggested a number of biblical concepts to guide Christian involvement. As a key African figure, involved in the Lausanne movement, his contribution was received very warmly by leaders from EASPI and MCC member churches. G. Osei-Mensah, and J. Daimoi, *Why Go, Serve and Tell in Melanesia?: Papers from Papua New Guinea Seminar on Evangelism*, Banz PNG: Christian Leaders' Training College, 1979, pp. 36-48.

<sup>38</sup> During the NYC's April, 1983, evaluation of an early draft of the National Youth Policy, the EASPI representative successfully moved a motion to insert into the policy, as a precursor to the "nine pressing social realities", drawn from the Christian Declaration of Youth and Development, a statement, which noted that the "foundational social reality . . . relates to the fallen nature of mankind . . . a bias to self-centredness (i.e., sin), which alienates, through human rebellion, men from their Creator, and from one-another. This sinful nature, therefore, requires us to address the contemporary social realities, not only from social, political, [and] economic standpoints, but also from the spiritual standpoint. Essentially, this a call for men and women to return to God, in order that He can do a complete work in bringing a total healing to our society (Matt 6:33)."

<sup>39</sup> O'Connell, "Government Youth Work", p. 6.

representation opportunities. These mechanisms worked reasonably effectively, not only because of mutual goodwill and interdependence, but also, because the colonial administration remained stable. By way of contrast, the post-independence political landscape constantly changed, as elected coalition governments struggled to complete the normal full five-year term of office.<sup>40</sup> In this unsettled environment, it was difficult to maintain any continuity of dialogue between the churches and the state.<sup>41</sup> O'Connell's paper advocated improved communication linkages, particularly through clearing-house mechanisms, like the NYC.

Thirdly, O'Connell called for the churches and the state to clarify what they meant by "youth and development", particularly in terms of the roles of youth, programs, and resources. In many respects, this was an appeal to extend earlier discussion on the churches' role in national development.<sup>42</sup> However, it was also a strong, and not so subtle, directive to the Christian Declaration on Youth and Development.

Since youth is the focus of our institutions [wrote O'Connell], we need to be clear about the roles, which we want young people to play within our institutions and society. This will also require us to spell out the arenas for action, those areas, where we have to define our roles. Inevitably, this raises, in some minds, the issue of youth power and influence, within our institutions, and within society. Providing we are clear on roles and

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<sup>40</sup> Mark Turner and Sean Dorney provide helpful insight into circumstances related to the various post-independence coalitions through to the late 1980s. M. Turner, *Papua New Guinea: the Challenge of Independence*, Ringwood Vic: Penguin Books Australia, 1990, and S. Dorney, *Papua New Guinea: People, Politics, and History Since 1975*, Sydney NSW: Random House Australia, 1990.

<sup>41</sup> Boards and councils, with narrow frames of reference (health, education, youth, women, media coordination, etc.), were more stable mechanisms, with specific, and more regular, connections with government departments. But, they, too, suffered from the constant change of governments, as well as endemic departmental isolationism within the public service. See M. Tony, and M. Bray, "Church-Government Relations in the National Education System and the Role of Church Education Secretaries: an Equal or an Unbalanced Partnership", in *Papua New Guinea Journal of Education*, 20-2 (1984), pp. 151-156. The problem of departmental isolationism is well demonstrated with respect to the Department of Education and the Department of Youth and Development in the mid-1980s, where mutual ambivalence, and, at times, competitiveness and contempt, were normative.

<sup>42</sup> During the 1970s and early 1980s, this issue of church and development dominated discussions through the Melanesian Institute's *Point* and *Catalyst* journals.

arenas, we need not become obsessed with subsidiary issues of authority.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, O'Connell appealed to cooperation, based on mutual respect:

There are signs that we are about to start *a new era in terms of a joint action between churches and the state* in the arenas related to youth and development. I am not talking, either, simply about financial aspects. What is far more exciting, is the nature of the projects, around which joint action is being considered. These include training materials; leadership courses; management of programs; policy development; and community work. It follows, from my earlier comments, that joint action has to be based on the recognition of each other's autonomous, but related, value systems, and a respect for what each can contribute to the process of integral human development<sup>44</sup> (emphasis added).

It was this opportunity that seemed to have caught the imagination of the EASPI leaders, following O'Connell's presentation. Yes, there were areas of concern, as noted, with respect to the Christian Declaration on Youth and Development. However, these were not seen to be insurmountable, nor necessarily inconsistent with evangelical theology and practice.

### **3. Postscript**

While the EASPI chose to enthusiastically participate in the NYC, and to encourage its member churches to register with the NYMP, it was not an uncritical acceptance, or passive conformity. Nor was it motivated, primarily, by a desire to access government subsidy. It represented a concern to constructively participate in a more equal partnership, which provided an opportunity to facilitate better stewardship of government and churches' resources, and personnel, alike.<sup>45</sup> The subsequent experience of the EASPI's involvement in the NYMP and the NYC,

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<sup>43</sup> O'Connell, "Government Youth Work", p. 7. One of the criticisms of the NYMP, by sociologist Maev O'Collins, was that treating youth as a separate sub-group within society, drove a wedge between young people and their elders. M. O'Collins, *Youth in Papua New Guinea: with reference to Fiji, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu*, Canberra ACT: ANU Press, 1984, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> O'Connell, "Government Youth Work", p. 7.

through the rest of the 1980s, built on this resolve, such that their contribution was acknowledged very positively.<sup>46</sup> However, it was not without difficulty and challenge, consistent with N. T. Wright's observations of church/state relations in the New Testament.

If it is true that the church is called to announce to the world that Jesus Christ is Lord, then there will be times when the world will find this distinctly uncomfortable. The powers that be will need reminding of their responsibility, more often, perhaps, as the Western world moves more and more into its post-Christian phase, where, even when church-going remains strong, it is mixed with a variety of idolatries, too large to be noticed by those who hold them, and where human rulers are more likely to acknowledge the rule of this or that "force" than the rule of the creator. And, if the church attempts this task of reminding, of calling the powers to account for their stewardship, it will face the same charges, and perhaps the same fate, as its Lord.<sup>47</sup>

The story of this experience has yet to be told, particularly with respect to the EASPI's post-1983 NYMP/NYC involvement, and associated contributions to a number of government attempts to produce a national church/state policy, through the Religious Affairs Division.<sup>48</sup> If the three

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<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, O'Connell was not only pleased by the success in securing the EASPI's involvement, he went on to acknowledge that their representative "proved to be one of the most constructive and supportive members of the Executive Committee". O'Connell and Zarriga, "Papua New Guinea's National Youth Movement", p. 231.

<sup>46</sup> In his March, 1984, "Ex-post NYMP Evaluation", submitted to the Prime Minister, O'Connell rated the EASPI's involvement in the NYMP as the best of all the churches. O'Connell reported that: "While the Evangelical Alliance has adapted remarkably well and positively to the NYMP, followed by the SDA, and United churches, this has not been the case with other churches [i.e., the Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and the Lutherans, who, ironically, provided some of the main architects of the Christian Declaration on Youth and Development]". C. O'Connell, *Ex-Post Evaluation Report, National Youth Movement Program*, Waigani PNG: Unpublished report to the Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, March 15, 1984, p. 78.

<sup>47</sup> N. T. Wright, "The New Testament and the State", in *Themelios* 16-1 (October/November, 1990), p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> EASPI personnel were involved in the production of a major joint-churches leadership training project in 1984, which produced a series of *Serving like Jesus* booklets, addressing holistic development. They were also involved in two major policy integration workshops, organised by the Religious Affairs Division. The first, in 1984, attempted to

antecedents to the EASPI's decision to participate in the NYMP/NYC, discussed above, are any indication, however, the contribution of the relatively small EASPI to both these endeavours might well have been substantial, reflecting a revitalised continuity of evangelicalism's socio-political activist roots. This is the subject of the final chapter of my Th.D. thesis. (Figure 6, below, provides a summary outline of the main issues, covering the various developmental phases of the 1980s investigated.)<sup>49</sup>

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draft a national policy on religion. The second, in 1987, helped shape the government's Church Development Assistance Program. Later in 1992/1993, EASPI personnel took leading roles in the formulation of the government's national non-government organisations. This document drew heavily on the mid-1980s NYMP/NYC experience, and an unsuccessful attempt to prepare a national policy on religion in 1985. It represented, in essence, the government's national policy on religion, given that churches represented by far the largest bloc of non-government organisations at that time. Cf. Fergie, "A Study of Church /State Relations in Papua New Guinea", chapter 7, particularly pp. 24-63.

<sup>49</sup> The final chapter of my Th.D. thesis addresses this period in some detail, and preliminary conclusions indicate that EASPI personnel were, indeed, key players in efforts by churches and the state to clarify and implement an effective church/state relations model and policy for PNG by the early 1990s – particularly with respect to the 1993 national NGO policy.

Figure 6  
 EASPI CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
 DURING THE 1980s

	LEADERSHIP TRAINING	RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	PROGRAM DESIGN	POLICY INPUT
DESIGN: 1977-1979	<i>1978 National EASPI youth conference (Banz, September, 1978)</i> <i>MCC/EASPI workshop on partnership in mission and development (Lae, January 15-24, 1979)</i>	<i>National EASPI youth conference papers</i>	EASPI consultative input into various government forums/ committees investigating models for a national youth program	EASPI consultative input into various government forums/ committees investigating models for a national youth program
INAUGURATION: 1980-1982	National youth leaders' workshop sponsored by ESCAP and the government (Lae, November 17-December 5, 1980) <i>National EASPI youth conference (Mt Hagen, August, 1982)</i> National managers' workshop (Goroka, October, 1982)	Distance education method for NYMP training materials using the CLTC Theological Education by Extension model (Port Moresby, October, 1982) <i>Design of EASPI On Target youth ministries model, and preparation of related training resources (Banz, 1982)</i> <i>CBM publications on youth, discipleship, and marriage and family, etc.</i>		<i>EASPI responses to O'Connell's "Government youth work and churches youth work" paper (Mt Hagen, September, 1982)</i>

Figure 6 (continued)  
 EASPI CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
 DURING THE 1980s

	LEADERSHIP TRAINING	RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	PROGRAM DESIGN	POLICY INPUT
GRANTS SCHEME CRISES: 1983-1984	Certificate course in youth and development (Lae, 1983) <i>CLTC Youth Leaders' certificate course (Banz, 1984)</i> CYC training (Lae, 1984) On Target youth leadership seminars ( <i>Mt Hagen, Baiyer River, Balimo, Mendi, Wewak, Port Moresby, Lae, Banz, Manus, 1983-1984</i> )	Joint churches Christian leadership resource workshop (Goroka, September, 1983) On Target Youth magazines ( <i>English and Pidgin</i> ) <i>EASPI youth leaders' resources</i> <i>Serving like Jesus</i> manuals: first edition published	Planning for IYY (International Year of Youth), together with the NYC executive and senior Office-of-Youth officials Consultative input into the development of the NYDF (National Youth Development Fund), through the NYC executive	National youth policy church/state policy and program integration workshop (Goroka, February, 1984)
REVIVAL: 1985-1987	<i>1985 National EASPI youth conference (Port Moresby)</i> <i>CLTC POM Centre youth leadership courses</i> National managers' workshop (October 27-November 3, 1985) National managers' workshop (Goroka, June, 1986)	<i>EASPI pastors' youth leadership seminar manual (Banz, 1985-1986)</i> Drafting of the <i>Serving like Jesus</i> trainer's manual Addressing destructive issues NYC initiative (Port Moresby, 1986) NYC executive current affairs response subcommittee (Port Moresby, 1988)	Youth Pioneers workshop (Kokoda, 1985) Church development assistance program (CLTC POM Centre, 1986) 1987 National Youth Week theme development – "the hope within" (Port Moresby, 1987)	Review of the NYMP (CLTC POM Centre, 1986) Review of CYC scheme (Port Moresby, 1987)

Figure 6 (continued)  
 EASPI CONTRIBUTIONS TO GOVERNMENT YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
 DURING THE 1980s

	LEADERSHIP TRAINING	RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT	PROGRAM DESIGN	POLICY INPUT
NETWORK CRISIS: 1988-1989	<i>CLTC POM Centre youth leadership courses</i> On Target <i>youth leadership seminars (particularly through graduates of the 1984 CLTC youth course)</i>	Drafting of <i>Serving like Jesus</i> vols 2 and 3 – social and livelihood leadership development foci (Port Moresby, July, 1988) <i>Serving like Jesus</i> manuals: second edition published	Regular meetings with senior members of the Department of Home Affairs and Youth to review existing programs and to evaluate new program drafts (e.g., National youth projects revolving fund, national issues liaison proposal (January, 1988), NYC secretariat development plan (August, 1988) National youth training institute proposal, a youth hostels proposal, (February, 1989)	Regular meetings with senior members of the Department of Home Affairs and Youth to evaluate youth development policy (e.g., review of National youth policy) CDAP screening committee (1989)

Note: *Italics* indicate a EASPI initiative, while non-italics indicate a government initiative.

Figure 7

RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN PNG ACCORDING TO THE 1990 CENSUS<sup>50</sup>

No religion stated	3%	Salvation Army	0%
Anglican	4%	Seventh-day Adventist	8%
EASPI	9%	United church	13%
Pentecostal	7%	Other Christian churches	4%
Evangelical Lutheran	23%	Non-Christian Religions	0%
Roman Catholic	29%		

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<sup>50</sup> This chart is based on 1990 national census figures, recorded in Theo Aerts, ed., "Religious Groups in PNG, According to the 1990 Census", in *Melanesian Journal of Theology* 10-1 (June 1994), pp. 93, 94.

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