

Methodist, Presbyterian, Orthodox, Baptist, Lutheran, Pentecostal, Churches of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormons, Brethren, Oriental Christian, Congregational, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish and Hindu. With regard to indigenous peoples, the report notes that while some may be included among adherents of Christian faiths, these peoples also have their own beliefs which are manifested by their sacred ties to the Earth and which have to be taken into account as part of Australia's religious diversity.

The report provides separate commentary on the Muslim and Jewish religious minorities and combined narrative on the Buddhist and Hindu minorities because the information received on them was similar. The situation of smaller communities, such as the Church of Scientology and The Family, is also considered.

With regard to the situation of Muslims, the report refers to statements by Muslim religious and civilian representatives asserting: Muslims are free to carry out their religious activities, including religious services and traditions, as well as the management of business relating to their religious institutions; imams are allowed freedom of expression, particularly for sermons given in mosques; the call to prayer is allowed, but without microphones except at the end of Ramadan; requests for official recognition of religious days was generally granted so that believers — adults in the workplace and young people in school — did not have to work on those days if they so chose; concerning religious education, the Muslim community has 23 religious schools (Madrassa) for 8,000 students, the curriculum must conform with Department of Education criteria and includes subjects such as Islam and the Arabic language; state subsidies may be granted to these private schools; and the Muslim community has 107 mosques and places of worship in Australia. The report notes cases in which non-Muslim residents oppose or have opposed the construction of mosques in their neighbourhoods generally involved fears that there would be noise and traffic as believers arrived and left but these types of cases occur only sporadically and are resolved through dialogue. The report concluded by noting that the Australian Muslim community is characterized by experience based on sound community structures, including cultural centres, places of worship, schools, and a network of associations enabling Muslims not only to preserve their cultural and religious identity, but also to integrate into Australian society.

The harmony achieved between Muslims and others in society may sometimes be disturbed, however, as a result of the impact of international events (the Gulf war, for example) and national events (political statements against "foreigners" by an MP, for example). However, these appear to be more incidents of racism based mostly on ignorance and not manifestations of religious intolerance. The incidents relating to the Gulf war and cases of verbal aggression against Muslim women wearing the head scarf are viewed as indicative of the ignorance of persons who associate Saddam Hussein with Islam and, in general, terrorism with Arabs and Muslims. The report

notes that much of this confusion is created by Australian and foreign media. The SR stated that these incidents were handled in a positive way through dialogue between the various denominations which led, for example, to the dissemination of a joint statement by religious communities, as well as by political and security authorities calling for tolerance.

The section considering the situation of the Jewish community notes, *inter alia*, that: there are no obstacles for Jews carrying out their religious activities freely, particularly in the areas of religious services, traditions and the management of the business of religious institutions; the Jewish community has about 20 schools which can be partly funded by public subsidies; there are about 70 synagogues and no problems encountered with regard to the construction of places of worship; many incidents of vandalism against synagogues and Jewish cemeteries have been reported and are manifestations of anti-Semitism, apparently committed by small groups; the Jewish community is fully integrated into Australian society, and its public participation in the building of the country, particularly by top political leaders, is recognized; and the community had made some requests related to the elimination of Christian insignia in public life, including prayers during the opening of Parliament, the official election day on Saturday, which is the Sabbath, and the cross on the national flag.

The commentary on the situation of Buddhists and Hindus notes, *inter alia*, that: Buddhists and Hindus may freely carry out their religious activities, including religious services and traditions and the management of the business of their religious institutions; and the authorities have allowed foreign religious leaders to come to Australia to meet the spiritual needs of the Buddhist and Hindu communities and to encourage them to integrate more fully into Australian society. The report notes that: leaders of both communities play an important role in establishing an inter-faith dialogue with the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities; referring to official recognition of religious days, the authorities indicated that negotiations with companies were possible and that there was an ongoing process of negotiation; obstacles to religious education had occasionally arisen, related to applications for building permits for private training schools — with residents in the area of a future building site opposed to such projects out of fear of "an Asian invasion" which would upset local cultural and social characteristics and lower property values, and lack of conformity between the applications for permits and relevant legislation; the government had undertaken a programme of public education campaigns designed to combat racism resulting from ignorance, not religious intolerance; and the situation of the Buddhist and Hindu minorities in religious and non-religious matters seems to be satisfactory, despite a few isolated incidents attributable not to religious intolerance, but rather to ignorance fuelling manifestations of racism that are encouraged by some isolated extremist political statements.