

Guildford NSW Australia Meeting

Guildford, NSW Australia Meeting

February 20-24, 1954

Revised Sept. 30, 2019

Report of Guildford NSW Meeting – February 20-24, 1954

Withdrawal of the Guildford NSW Report – April 20, 1955

Record of Events Regarding the Guildford Report

As reports have gone forth regarding recent happenings in Victoria, we feel that it is necessary to put on record events which have led up to the present & so clarify the situation.

After the late leader of Victoria, W. C. Carroll, passed away & was buried, Tom Turner returned via Sydney to Queensland. While in Sydney, he had a talk with John Hardie and they thought a meeting with the elder workers was due to consider matters of general concern to the work in Australia, including the matter of the oversight of the work in Victoria. An elder's* meeting of this sort had often been wished for & suggested in past years, but Wm. Carroll was not in agreement, not considering it necessary, stating that conventions were sufficient.

As John Hardie was not well, he asked Tom Turner to convene the meetings.

All States & New Zealand were asked to send a representative & each leader, including Chris Williams, (appointed leader of Victoria by Wm. Carroll) accepted the invitation, but the other workers in Victoria wrote back to Tom Turner, in a letter signed by all the workers except Chris Williams, that they did not see the need for a worker's meeting. This was done while Chris wrote from Tasmania accepting the invitation.

The meetings at Guildford were to be held from Feb. 20th & notice to that effect was sent out. Others invited to the meetings were Walter Pickering, Alex Mitchell, Les Hawse & Harry Morgan. Altho Chris had earlier accepted the invitation, at a later stage he began to object to coming & it was only by telephoning him at the last moment that his confirmation as leader in Victoria was sure, that he & Walter Pickering agreed to come.

In all, eleven attended the meetings which began with prayer & were conducted in a godly manner. Each day for four days, the same procedure was followed & many items were brought forward. Tom Turner was asked to lead the meetings. It was recognized that the three youngest members at the meetings were not representing any State in Australia & their voting in the meetings did not influence the affirmation or negation of the matters in discussion. Alex Mitchell asked if it would be in order for them to vote & the Chairman said, "Why not?" If each State in Australia & New Zealand had one representative, giving each one a vote, then the findings at Guildford would remain the same. Without the extras, W. Pickering, J. Williamson, A. Mitchell, L. Hawse, and H. Morgan, there would have been no alteration to the decisions made. This should be borne in mind, as some objections have been made regarding the constitution of the meetings.

MEETINGS HELD IN GUILDFORD N.S.W. Feb. 20-24, 1954

Present: John Hardie, T. M. Turner, J. Williamson, C. Williams, W. Pickering, W. F. Hughes, J. C. Baartz, L. Hawse, W. Schloss, A. Mitchell & H. Morgan.

In Chair: T. M. Turner.

FIRST MEETING:

1. Confirmation of Chris Williams as worker in charge of Victoria.
2. Exchange of workers between States as a good thing to encourage.
3. The 'border' question. Reference to perplexities – that they would be done away with as much as possible & all concerned seek to foster a spirit of love & give & take.
4. Agreed that Victorian workers cooperate with other States & consider the opinion of others.

SECOND MEETING:

5. The question of saints being put out of fellowship in Victoria without a hearing. Some cases dealt with. (Deferred until next day).

THIRD MEETING:

6. That all are agreed that we, as servants of God, should be on the same lines as at the beginning. (unanimous)

7. We are agreed that anything which would cause contention should be avoided. It would have been more expedient if objections to the permanent residence at "Rosebud", Victoria had been considered. The "Rosebud" dwelling had been a cause of contention in other countries as well as in Australia & it should have been done away with to save trouble & brethren from stumbling. Paul said, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth." It is agreed that anything similar should not occur again. (eight for, three against)

8,9,10 omitted

FOURTH MEETING:

11. Proposed that for unity between countries on this side of the world, each country: India, Ceylon, Malaya, Indonesia, each State of the commonwealth & New Zealand, at any future meeting of the elder workers be represented. (A senior worker should be appointed to oversight.) Eleven workers (elders) in all & one with the power to convene meetings to decide matters when called upon by elders of any State or country. Something without a leader tends to lack of unity. The elder appointed would also give the advice necessary.

REGARDING WORKERS BEING SENT TO THE EAST:

It was proposed that John Hardie be appointed to this place. (Carried unanimously)

12. Will we all give an assurance that, as much as is in our power, we will go back to our States to show to our fellow laborers that we are all united & that we will foster this spirit of cooperation in this work of God? (Assurance given unanimously)

13. It is with great reluctance that we brothers should have to register our disapproval of certain things that happened in connection with our departed brother's life. Two sister workers & a brother stayed with him at "Rosebud" to look after him, when there were open homes who would gladly receive him & cater for his needs & do the superintending of his meals necessitated by the fact that he was a diabetic. This went on for ten years. These workers had no gospel meetings while at "Rosebud"—this, we greatly regret. We feel that what happened has been a digression from the way in which the work began—both in our day & Jesus' day. We trust there will never be a repetition of these happenings. We feel the responsible workers should have been consulted with regard to getting their approval of who should succeed our departed brother in the oversight in Victoria.

This last paragraph was unanimously voted to be included in the report. Each of the workers present was given a copy & others were sent to responsible workers throughout the world.

We separated at Guildford with high hopes that unity & harmony would prevail & all would be well. Harry Morgan, Les Hawse & Alex Mitchell parted on friendly terms from Chris Williams & had his approval re-visiting in Victoria. Within a few days of the return to Victoria of Chris Williams & Walter Pickering, a meeting of the Victorian workers was held at Dandenong to discuss the Guildford report. Those workers drew up a circular which was signed by Chris Williams & delivered by hand to the Melbourne churches & sent by post to the churches throughout the State. After making a solemn promise before God to cooperate with all States & work for peace & harmony, Chris & Walter sent this circular which showed that there was no desire whatever to cooperate. Men who were at Guildford were branded as traitors. It was stated that a personal attack had been made on the life & testimony of the late Wm. Carroll & that the meetings were held for that purpose. Others at the Guildford meetings can state that there was no such purpose and no attack was made on Wm. Carroll's life and testimony. It was all thru a matter of principles, not personalities. Many matters were brought up and dealt with concerning all States, New Zealand and overseas.

Then the Victorian workers convened a meeting at the Dandenong Town Hall of all in & around Melbourne where the full report of the workers meeting held the previous week was read. This report was later read at various centers throughout the State. The following are extracts from this report.

"—for these days are very evil & we are not fighting against flesh & blood, but against principalities, princes (those who have great dominion) & principalities & powers & spiritual wickedness in high places. Very subtle enemies & very powerful —"

"They explained about the Victorians not being willing to cooperate with other States. Well I don't think there was any brother more willing to cooperate with other States than our elder brother, but we know that the others would not cooperate unless they could dictate or interfere with Victoria, so therefore, they really would not cooperate with us unless they had that privilege, as it were. We know it is not the right thing for any man or elder to interfere with another State. We know that the reason for this thing happening is because there is such lust for power & place."

"It is really only ungodly men that could speak against the work of God in Victoria & all their meeting was really against Victoria & they got all their evidence from ungodly men who had departed from the faith—."

Following a reading of this report in Geelong by John Hardie & helpers, at which Chris Williams & several workers & elders from Melbourne were present, Chris stated that he meant to stand behind the testimony of Wm. Carroll, & John replied that he means to stand by the testimony of Jesus Christ.

3/54, the day on which the meeting was held in Dandenong Town Hall, Chris wrote to John Hardie as follows:

"My dear John: We have plunged into a sea of sorrow since we came back from the meetings at Guildford. All the Victorian workers & some of the elders & saints have felt it very much that the "Rosebud" question was brought up, involving our brother who was so much loved & RESPECTED for the Christ he loved & preached.

"We have told all the people around Melbourne that we did not stand for it ever being discussed & testimonies have been given by the workers that lived with Wm. Carroll & we cannot deny that they received 'treat' benefits that helped in the gospel. It has raised such a feeling that a breach even greater, seems imminent." "Could it not all not be withdrawn?" "If you would receive it, a copy of all that was said at the meeting would be sent to you." "Only desiring that Christ shall be upheld in us & for His sake, Yours by mercy, Chris Williams."

To this, John replied on 16/3/54: that he expected if his health permitted, to be in Albury in the near future & invited Chris to meet him there & talk the matter over, which would be far better than writing. Chris did not answer this letter, and although he was in Wodonga, just across the river, the weekend John came to Albury, he made no attempt to meet him, or even speak to him on the telephone. Instead of taking the matter to the responsible workers who were at Guildford, Chris Williams vented his feelings & the whole matter amongst the people of God. The circular was sent out to the churches & this followed by the Dandenong report, caused great shock & suffering & confusion & even separating of the people. As a result of this, many wrote to John from Victoria appealing for help, saying they could not associate themselves with the stand the Victorian workers had taken. It is important to notice that these appeals for help came not from those who were out of fellowship, but from those who were still in fellowship. Many had declared their determination to stand by the older workers before any attempt was made to acquaint them of the true facts.

It was felt that these appeals could not be ignored, especially as Chris took no notice of John's offer to talk things over with him & accordingly, early in April, John came into Victoria to help those who cried for help—those such as had been told by workers that if they were not satisfied, the door was open. Alex & Harry Morgan also came with John, followed later by Tom Turner & Willie Hughes. True fellowship for many had almost ceased since workers & saints in many churches were constant in their *"preaching against"* those in their midst who they felt were questioning the stand taken by the Victorian workers. As a result of this end, the true facts being made known, a great many expressed their desire & determination to stand behind the elder workers in fellowship with the other States & countries against which the Victorian workers have stood out.

Beside the attempt at conciliation made by John Hardie, before the trouble was ventilated by the Victorian workers, a further attempt was made by Tom Turner & Alex Mitchell with Chris Williams & Walter Pickering, but the latter two refused to discuss the matter.

Signed by:

John Hardie, T. M. Turner, W. J. Hughes, J. C. Baartz,
W. Schloss, A. R. Mitchell, R. L. Hawse & H. Morgan

TTT Editor's Note: William Charles Carroll (Bill) was born August 15, 1876, at Newtown, Moynalty, Kells, County Meath, the eldest of 6 children. Bill Carroll and Margaret (Maggie) Hastings were married on June 6, 1901, in the Church of Ireland at Rathmolyon, County Meath. Their only child, a daughter, May (Carroll) Shultz, was born in 1902 in Ireland. They entered the work in 1903 and arrived in Australia in 1913. Maggie died in 1944, and Bill died on November 13, 1953.

*In Australia, an "Elder" is a Worker.

The Guildford Report Withdrawal Dandenong, Victoria April 20th 1955

The Overseers of Australia and those from Overseas being met together to consider the difficulties that exist concerning the work in Victoria, are agreed that the statement contained in the Guildford Report reflecting on the life and ministry of our late Brother (W.C. Carroll) is now unconditionally withdrawn.

The Victorian workers and saints who met at Dandenong also wish to express their regret for the statements made reflecting on the Elders and Workers from other countries and these are unconditionally withdrawn, also the letter sent out from Dandenong to the several Churches in Victoria.

Regarding the residence at Rosebud, we feel it is our duty to state that we cannot accept such an arrangement as a precedent that could be repeated.

We would add that in our opinion, when an Overseer in any State or Country, through infirmities or other circumstances is unable to personally carry out his responsibilities, he should call to his aid a Brother who has the approval and confidence of his Brethren and who can eventually assume the oversight.

In order to give assurance to all concerned that every effort will be made to restore confidence and promote unity and true fellowship amongst Workers and in the several Churches in Victoria we will endeavour to find an impartial Brother from overseas who will supervise and co-operate in the Oversight of the Work for such time as may be considered necessary.

Dandenong, Victoria

April 20th 1955

GEO. WALKER

J. FORBES

J. T. CARROLL

W. J. HUGHES

J. HARDIE

T. TURNER

J. BAARTZ

J. WILLIAMSON

C. WILLIAMS