

Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG).

Chapter 1: Explanatory notes

Classification criteria and their application

The classification criteria are the principles by which classification categories are aggregated to form broader or higher-level categories in the classification structure. Three classification criteria are used in the ASCRG to form the categories of the classification:

- + similar religious beliefs;
- + similar religious practices; and/or
- + cultural heritage.

Religious Groups are combined to form the Narrow Groups (middle level) of the classification on the basis of their similarity in terms of these criteria. Although the Religious Groups are not necessarily identical in any particular characteristics, the Narrow Groups formed are relatively homogeneous in terms of the set of classification criteria.

The Broad Groups were developed in a slightly different manner. On the basis of the number of adherents, worldwide, the major world religions are generally accepted as: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Tao, Confucian, Tribal, Animist, and Jewish. It would seem appropriate to designate these major religions as Broad Groups in the classification, particularly as they are broadly homogeneous in terms of the classification criteria (beliefs, practices, and cultural heritage). However, consideration of the number of adherents of each of these religions (in Australia) indicates that it is unacceptable in terms of the statistical balance of the classification to include Tao, Confucian, Tribal and Animist religions as Broad Groups. Furthermore, the usefulness and acceptability of the classification would be impaired by such a decision.

Thus, on the basis of a broad application of all the classification criteria, supported by the size of the religions in Australia, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism comprise Broad Groups within the classification. This application of the criteria enables the delineation of appropriate Narrow Groups (constructed on the basis of a more rigorous application of the criteria) as subsets (sub-categories) of these major groups. The classification criteria are then applied so that other major world religions and residual Narrow Groups form a meaningful and useful classification structure within a residual Broad Group: Other Religions.

The structure can legitimately be described in conventional terms: Religious Groups (base-level units) grouped to form Narrow Groups on the basis of similarity in terms of the classification criteria; Narrow Groups grouped to form Broad Groups on the basis of a broader similarity in terms of the classification criteria.

A further Broad Group (No Religion) has been included in the classification for practical reasons and to make the classification more useful (see: Scope of the classification). Because this group consists of entities not considered to be Religious Groups it was, obviously, not developed in accordance with the classification criteria.

Classification structure and expanded classification

Classification structure

The ASCRG has a three-level hierarchical structure.

The third and most detailed level of the classification consists of the base units which are Religious Groups as described above (see: Definition of religion). The classification consists of 107 base or

third-level units. Some Religious Groups are 'not elsewhere classified' (nec) categories, which contain entities that are not listed separately in the classification. This level of the classification can be termed the 'Religious Group' level.

The second level of the classification comprises 33 Narrow Groups of Religious Groups similar in terms of the classification criteria. Narrow Groups contain between one and 14 Religious Groups.

The first and most general level of the classification comprises seven Broad Groups. These are formed by aggregating Narrow Groups (and hence Religious Groups) which are broadly similar in terms of the classification criteria. Broad Group seven comprises entities which are not of the order of Religious Groups (see: Scope of the classification).

Expanded classification

The base-level units of the classification are Religious Groups which are of the order of groups of religions, religions, and subsets of religions (see: Definition of religion). Therefore, many of the base-level units are comprised of a number of further discrete religious entities which can be separately itemised. These entities are related to particular Religious Groups on the basis of administrative or organisational links, or because of a close similarity in terms of the classification criteria. An expanded classification structure listing these sub-third-level entities is provided so that the definition, nature, extent and boundaries of the base units of the classification is clearer. This will improve the usefulness of the classification for data analysis, policy making and service provision. It should be noted, however, that the purpose of this listing is to provide indicative information on the content of each base-level unit, and should not be considered as exhaustive or prescriptive. More detailed information on the content of each base-level unit may be found in Appendix 3.

Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG).

Chapter 2: Classification structure.

Expanded structure

Christianity

2 Christianity

201 Anglican
2011 Anglican
Anglican Catholic Church in Australia

Anglican Church in Australia
Episcopalian Church
Philippine Independent Church

203

Baptist

2031 Baptist
Baptist Reformed Churches

Baptist Union Churches
Independent Baptist Churches
Strict and Particular Baptist Churches
Strict and Particular Baptist Churches of Australia

205

Brethren

2051 Brethren
Armenian Evangelical Spiritual Brethren

Christian Brethren
Christian Gatherings (New Testament Assemblies)
Churches of God (Hopkins, Needed Truth, Spring of Truth)
Exclusive Brethren (Plymouth Brethren IV)
Reunited Brethren (Kelly, Lowe, Glanton)
The Local Church (Assembly Hall, Little Flock)

207

Catholic

2071 Western Catholic
Catholic Church in Australia
2072 Maronite Catholic
2073 Melkite Catholic

Greek Catholic

2074 Ukranian Catholic
2079 Catholic, nec
Armenian Catholic

Chaldean Catholic
Coptic Catholic
Ethiopian Catholic
Malabarese Catholic
Malankarese Catholic
Russian Catholic
Syrian Catholic

211

Churches of Christ

2111 Churches of Christ (Conference)
2112 Church of Christ (Nondenominational)
2113 International Church of Christ

213

Jehovah's Witnesses

2131 Jehovah's Witnesses

215

Latter Day Saints

2151 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)

2152 Reorganised Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints

217

Lutheran

2171 Lutheran

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Danish Lutheran Church

Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Reformation

Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia Inc.

German Evangelical Lutheran Church

Indonesian Lutheran Church

Latvian Lutheran Church

Lutheran Church of Australia

Orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Church

St Mathew's Lutheran Church, Montague Farm

Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church

221

Oriental Christian

2211 Ancient Church of the East

2212 Armenian Apostolic Church

2213 Assyrian Church of the East

Holy Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East

2214 Coptic Orthodox Church

2215 Syrian (Jacobite) Church

The Malankara Syrian Orthodox (Indian)

2219 Oriental Christian, nec

Ethiopian Orthodox Church

223

Orthodox

2231 Albanian Orthodox

2232 Antiochian Orthodox

2233 Greek Orthodox

Autocephalic Greek Orthodox Church Of Australia

Greek Orthodox (Australian Archdiocese)

Greek Orthodox (Old Calendar)

2234 Macedonian Orthodox

2235 Romanian Orthodox

The Lord's Army

2236 Russian Orthodox

Orthodox Church in America (Australian Mission)

Russian Orthodox (Ecumenical Patriarchate)

Russian Orthodox (Moscow Patriarchate)

2237 Serbian Orthodox

2238 Ukrainian Orthodox

Ukrainian Autocephalic Orthodox Church

2239 Orthodox, nec

Byelorussian Autocephalic Orthodox Church

Old Believers (Russian)

Old Orthodox Church of the Holy Nativity

Polish Orthodox

225

Presbyterian and Reformed

2251 Presbyterian

Australian Free Church Inc (Chadstone)

Bible Presbyterian Churches

Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia

Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland

Free Presbyterian Church (Ulster)

Grace Presbyterian Church (Caboolture)

Independent Presbyterian Church (Gold Coast)

Korean Presbyterian Church (Gae- hyuk)

Presbyterian Church of Australia

Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia

Presbyterian Church (Oceania Synod)

Presbyterian Community Church (Coonabarabran)

Presbyterian Reformed Church of Australia

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia

Saesoon Presbyterian Church

Southern Presbyterian Church of Australia

Sun Presbyterian Church

Tamworth Reformed Church

Welsh Calvinist Methodist (Presbyterian) Church

Westminster Presbyterian Church

2252 Reformed

Free Hungarian Reformed Church of Australia

Hungarian Reformed Church of Australia

Reformed Churches of Australia

2253 Free Reformed

Free Reformed Churches of Australia

227

Salvation Army

2271 Salvation Army

231

Seventh-day Adventist

2311 Seventh-day Adventist

Adventist Reform Movement

ALMA Torch of Brisbane

Good News Unlimited

International Missionary Society of the Seventh Day

Remnant Ministries

Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement

The Branch Davidians

233

Uniting Church

2331 Uniting Church

24

Pentecostal

2401 Apostolic Church (Australia)

2402 Assemblies of God

2403 Bethesda Churches

Bethesda Movement

2404 Christian City Church

Christian City Churches International

2405 Christian Life Churches International

2406 Christian Outreach Centres

2407 Christian Revival Crusade
2408 Faith Churches
2411 Foursquare Gospel Church
2412 Full Gospel Church
Full Gospel Churches of Australia Ltd.

Lysterfield Christian Fellowship
Obed Mission Full Gospel (Caboolture)
Olive Branch Full Gospel (Ferntree Gully)
Torres Pentecostal Outreach (Darnley Island)
2413 Revival Centres
Australian Christian Assemblies

Revival Centres Fellowship
Revival Centres International
Revival Centres (Geelong)
2414 Rhema Family Church
2415 United Pentecostal
United Pentecostal Church of Australia
2499 Pentecostal, nec
Apostolic Church of God (Seventh Day)

Associated Christian Assemblies International
Associated Christian Fellowships of Australia
Associated Christian Ministries International
Australia for Christ Fellowship (Rowville)
Body-felt Salvation Church
Bride's Tidings Tabernacle Teaching
Calvary Life Assemblies
Cathedral of Love Ministries
Christian Church of Australia
Christian Fellowship Centres International Inc
Church of God of Prophecy
Churches of God in Australia Inc
Elim Pentecostal Church of Australia Inc
End Time Believers
Finnish Pentecostal Churches of Australia
Holy Spirit Church of Christ
Hope of God
Kingsway Fellowship International
Life Ministries Centre (Chirnside Park)
New Life Churches
New Testament Church of God
Northern Beaches Christian Fellowship (Gosford)
Potters House Christian Centre
Reach out for Christ Churches
Romanian Christian Pentecostal Church (Philadelphia) Shiloh Faith Centre
Slavic Evangelical Pentecostal Churches of Australia
The Church of Jesus Christ End of Time Revival Centres
The Holiness Church
The True Jesus Church
Universal World Church
Vineyard Christian Fellowship
Waverley Christian Fellowship

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Other Protestant

2801 Aboriginal Evangelical Missions
Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship (AEF)
Aboriginal Inland Mission (AIM)
Aborigines Bible Fellowship, WA Inc. (ABF)
United Aboriginal Ministries (UAM)
2802 Born Again Christian

2803 Christian and Missionary Alliance
 2804 Church of the Nazarene
 2805 Congregational
 2806 Ethnic Evangelical Churches
 Adonai Messianic Fellowship (Jewish)
 All for Jesus Christian Fellowship (Filipino)
 Armenian Evangelical Church
 Armenian Missionary Association
 Assyrian Christian Church
 Australia Ling Liang Church
 Austral-Asian Christian Church (Adelaide, Canberra, Perth and Darwin)
 Bethal Mission Church (Korean)
 Chinese Christian Church
 Chinese Christian Church of Brisbane
 Chinese Methodist Church in Australia
 Church of Tonga
 Constitutional Church of Tonga
 Cook Islander Christian Churches
 Evangelical Chinese Church
 Free Church Of Tonga
 Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga
 Greek Bible Fellowship
 Greek Evangelical Churches
 Greek Free Churches
 Indonesian Church
 Kehillat Ha Mashicah (Jewish)
 Samoan Methodist Church of Australia
 Sungrak Baptist Church (Korean)
 Sydney Evangelical Church (Korean)
 Tokaikolo Fellowship (Tongan)
 Turkish Evangelical Groups
 United Church of Tonga
 Vietnamese Evangelical Church in Australia
 West Sydney Christian Church
 2807 Independent Evangelical Churches
 Calvary Gospel mission
 Evangelical Free Church in Australia
 Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches
 Grace Bible Churches
 Knoxfield Jubilee Bible Church, Inc
 Marsfield Community Church
 Mt Evelyn Evangelical Church
 Southern Christian Fellowship
 Truth and Liberation Concern
 2808 Wesleyan Methodist Church
 2899 Other Protestant, nec
 Apostolic Christian Church of God (Nazarene)
 Association of the Church of God in Australia
 Huon Community Churches
 Hussite Church (Czechoslovak Church)

29

Other Christian

2901 Apostolic Church of Queensland
 2902 Christadelphians
 2903 Christian Science
 2904 Gnostic Christians
 2905 Liberal Catholic Church
 2906 New Apostolic Church
 2907 New Churches (Swedenborgian)

Australian Friends of the New Revelation
Conference of the New Church in Australia
General Church of the New Jerusalem
2908 Ratana (Maori)
2911 Religious Science
Divine Science

Infinite Way Study Centres

International New Thought Alliance

New Thought Centres

Science of Mind Study Groups

The Seeker's Christian Fellowship

United Church of Religious Science

Unity

Unity School of Christianity

2912 Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

2913 Temple Society

2914 Unitarian

2915 Worldwide Church of God

2999 Other Christian, nec

Apostolic Church of Holland

Apostolic Society

Australian Catholic Church

Bible Students (Millennial Dawnists/Bereans)

Catholic Apostolic Church

Catholic Traditionalist Movement (Pius X Society)

Christian Bible students (New Covenant Fellowship)

Christian Churches of God

Christian Israelite Church

Church of Christ (Iglesia ni Cristo)

Church of God International

Church of God (Seventh Day)

Church of God (Seventh Day) - Messianic Jews

Church of the Kingdom of God (Friends of Man)

Father Divine - Peace Mission Movement

Global Church of God

House of David

Metropolitan Community Churches

Molokans (Church of the True Christians)

Moral Rearmament, Australia

Nameless House Church

Old Catholic Church (Utrecht)

Philadelphia Church of God

Restoration Church of Jesus Christ

Restored Apostolic Sending Congregations

The Family

United Church of God

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In 1983, the High Court of Australia defined religion as 'a complex of beliefs and practices which point to a set of values and an understanding of the meaning of existence'.

At the time of European settlement, the Aboriginal inhabitants followed their own religions which were animistic in nature, involving beliefs in spirits behind the forces of nature, and the influence of ancestral spirit beings.

During the 1800s, European settlers brought their traditional churches to Australia. These included the Church of England (now the Anglican Church), and the Methodist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Baptist churches.

Section 116 of the 1900 Act to constitute the Commonwealth of Australia (Australian Constitution) provides that:

The Commonwealth of Australia shall not make any law establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth.

With the exception of a small but significant Lutheran population of Germanic descent, Australian society in 1901 was predominantly Anglo-Celtic, with 40% of the population being Anglican (then Church of England), 23% Catholic, 34% other Christian and about 1% professing non-Christian religions.

Further waves of migration helped to reshape the profile of Australia's religious affiliations over subsequent decades. The impact of migration from Europe in the aftermath of World War II led to increases in affiliates of the Orthodox Churches, the establishment of Reformed bodies, growth in the number of Catholics (largely from Italian migration), and the creation of ethnic parishes among many other denominations. More recently, immigration from South-East Asia and the Middle East has expanded Buddhist and Muslim numbers considerably, and increased the ethnic diversity of existing Christian denominations.

In response to the 2001 Census of Population and Housing question, Australians' stated religious affiliations were: 27% Catholic, 21% Anglican, 21% other Christian denominations and 5% non-Christian religions. Just over one-quarter of all Australians either stated they had no religion, or did not adequately respond to the question to enable classification of their religion.

A question on religious affiliation has been asked in every census taken in Australia, with the voluntary nature of this question having been specifically stated since 1933. In 1971, the instruction 'if no religion, write none' was introduced. This saw a seven-fold increase from the previous census year in the percentage of Australians stating they had no religion. Since 1971, this percentage has progressively increased to about 16% in 1996 and 2001. Table 12.19 provides a summary of the major religious affiliations at each census since 1901.