



## MEDIA RELEASE

26th July, 2021

### The longest running longitudinal study on church life is on again in 2021

Churches from more than 100 denominational regions will take part in the 2021 **National Church Life Survey (2021 NCLS)**, the largest and longest running survey of its type in the world.

The Australia-wide survey will take place in October and November this year and will provide vital insights into the Australian church; its character, changing face and the role of faith in communities.

“The shape of religion in Australia is constantly evolving and over the decades has changed dramatically. It’s incredibly important that we continue to ask questions to keep pace with these changes for the sake of informed contemporary mission and ministry,” says **Dr Ruth Powell**, Director at NCLS Research.

In 2016, the last **National Church Life Survey** revealed that while church attenders have an ageing profile, there was untapped potential among the younger generations. Between a quarter and a third of Gen X, Y and Z claimed they would like to be more involved. Newcomers to church life were most likely to be young adults.

The **2021 NCLS** will further explore changes amongst church attenders with regard to ages, experiences, backgrounds and attitudes.

“Australia is one of the most multicultural nations in the world and migrant-ethnic communities are a significant part of the changing face of church attendance. This represents both a source of new life for Christian churches and we hope that listening to diverse experiences via the survey will help churches positively and effectively navigate this shift,” explains **Dr Powell**.

Providing the platform for a wide range of voices to be heard, the **2021 NCLS** will not only seek the feedback of both children and adult church attenders, but also leaders and even people in the broader community who may not attend, but have a connection with local churches.

Conducted every five years, 2021 marks a thirty-year milestone for the NCLS, exploring Australian church life as a means of better understanding in order to adapt and serve with a clearer vision.

“We began this mission study in 1991 to support churches,” says **Dr Powell**. “It is humbling now to be the custodians of the largest church life survey in the world, and provide help to other churches internationally to run similar projects.”

The **2021 NCLS** is currently open for churches to sign up via [2021ncls.org.au](https://2021ncls.org.au) with results to be released by March 2022.

**Dr Ruth Powell, Director, NCLS Research is available for phone interviews.**

For more information or to organise an interview with Dr Ruth Powell, please contact:

NCLS Research Office  
Phone: 02 9139 2525  
Email: [info@ncls.org.au](mailto:info@ncls.org.au)



## **NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY FACTS:**

- The National Church Life Survey is the largest and longest running survey of its type in the world.
- The survey runs every 5 years. The next National Church Life Survey will take place in October - November 2021. Churches can now sign up via [2021ncls.org.au](http://2021ncls.org.au) to receive the 2021 survey.
- The shape of religion in Australia is undergoing significant change. The 2021 NCLS will be conducted in the context of a global pandemic. It will provide an important reality check, alongside the 2021 national census.
- The 2021 NCLS will provide an evidence base to inform strategic and pastoral planning. The NCLS finding reports are credible, practical and easy to use.

## **2021 NCLS INTERVIEW TALENT:**

Dr Ruth Powell, Director, NCLS Research-02 9139 2525

## **DR RUTH POWELL:**

Dr Ruth Powell is Director of NCLS Research, a research centre that focuses on church vitality and community spirituality and wellbeing. Ruth has worked with NCLS Research since 1991 and became Director in 2007. She also holds a position as Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University.

Ruth's role involves managing research projects on both church and community life, as well as the development of resources for local churches, denominational leaders and other community agencies. Her own primary research interests lie in assisting churches to reflect on their interaction with the wider Australian community. As well as church health, and tracking changes in church life over time, she has worked on differences between age cohorts, and potential generational influences over time.

She has co-authored NCLS publications on church life such as *Winds of Change*, *Shaping a Future*, *Taking Stock*, *Build My Church*, *Mission under the Microscope* and *Enriching Church Life*. Her doctoral thesis focused on age differences among church attenders.

## **NCLS RESEARCH:**

NCLS Research is a joint venture started by church mission agencies in the early 1990s.

Research areas of NCLS Research include studying Australian spirituality, church health, effective and sustainable leadership, and the connections between church and community.

The most well known five-yearly project is called the *National Church Life Survey*, which has had millions of participants. Co-operating denominations, including Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants, are a network for sharing practical resources to help churches and communities.

## **LINK TO LOGOS AND GRAPHICS:**

<https://www.2021ncls.org.au/media/media-kit-logos-and-graphics/>