

**A HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
SAMOA (CCCS) AT FAIRFIELD, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA,  
FROM 1984 TO 2016**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to the Faculty of Church History**

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**In partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree**

**BACHELOR OF THEOLOGY**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

This research paper has come about as a direct result of wanting to formalise and construct a history account of the CCCS Fairfield Church. As a member of this church, I am intrigued by its growth, from its humble beginnings in 1984 to where it is now, as one of the biggest and well established CCCS Churches in the state of New South Wales as well as Australia as a whole.

## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP OF THESIS**

I, \_\_\_\_\_

hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at Malua Theological College or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in thesis. Any contribution made to the research by colleagues with whom I have worked at Malua Theological College or elsewhere during my candidature is fully acknowledged.

## Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to the members of the CCCS Fairfield Church, past and present.

*“Malo le galulue, malo le fai mea sili mo le Atua ma lana galuega.”*

If you don't know your past, you won't know your future!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Secondly I would like to express special heartfelt thanks to pensioned Rev. Elder Peleti Toese Toailoa and wife Senetenari, for the various interviews, the parting of knowledge and wisdom from your forty six years of service in God's ministry is valued highly with esteem and much appreciation. The interviews and personal accounts along with your prayers and words of encouragement have made this research possible.

Thirdly, I would like to express my special thank you to my *Faife'au* (parish minister) Rev Dr. Peletisala Limā and *faletua* Michiko, as well as our congregation at Fairfield for their support in many ways, through prayers and words of encouragement, also in availing themselves to be interviewed for this research. I am forever grateful. Special thanks is conveyed to Levale Peseta and Tauanuu Lemu Iese for availing themselves to be interviewed about the early establishment of the CCCS Fairfield Church.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, my father Tupaivaililigi Loli Fauēna Leilua, my mother Ualolo Siloma; my siblings and all of my family and friends in Australia, New Zealand and Samoa, to whom I wish to convey very sincere gratitude and best wishes. Thank you for your support in so many ways, along with your prayers. To the memory of my late grandparents, Leilua Tiuli Loli Mafuatu and Lemaunosamoa Taualeo'o Seumalo.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Consent Form	ii
Abstract	iii
Declaration	iv
Dedication	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: <i>O LE SAILIGA MĀLO</i>: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CCCS IN AUSTRALIA</b>	<b>2 - 8</b>
Introduction	1
1.1 Samoan Migration to Australia	2 - 4
1.2 Origin of the CCCS in Australia	4 - 6
1.3 Growth of the CCCS in Australia	6 - 8
<b>CHAPTER TWO: <i>O LE MAOTA TAUAVE</i>: ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CCCS CHURCH IN FAIRFIELD</b>	<b>9 - 16</b>
Introduction	9
2.1 Samoan population in Fairfield	9 - 12
2.2 Preparation for the new church	12 - 14
2.3 The Covenant: <i>Osiga o le Feagaiga</i>	14 - 16
<b>CHAPTER THREE: <i>AUA LE TOSOA LE ATUA I LE ALA</i>: PROGRESS OF THE CCCS CHURCH IN FAIRFIELD</b>	<b>17 - 27</b>
Introduction	17
3.1 Growth of the CCCS Fairfield Church	17 - 19
3.2 Important events and developments	19 - 22
3.3 Construction of the New Church and Hall	23 - 24
3.4 Issues and challenges	24 - 27
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>28 - 29</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>31 - 32</b>

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

CCCAS	Congregational Christian Church American Samoa
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church Samoa
LMS	London Missionary Society
EFKS	Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa



## **Introduction**

This research paper documents an inaugural history of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa in Fairfield (CCCS Fairfield Church) in the state of New South Wales, Australia, from its formation in 1984 to 2016.

There are several important questions that guide this research. Firstly; Who were the people that founded the Church? What contributing factors that led to the formation of the Church? What were the reasons for the Church being established at Fairfield? How was the church formed? What were the key events from its formation in 1984 until 2016. And what challenges did they face in developing a Samoan Church in a foreign country like Australia?

There is little published material concerning the history of the CCCS Fairfield Church. There is a short and brief history in Ioane Aloalii's 2010 thesis, *A history of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) in the State of Queensland, Australia, from 1983 to 2010*. There are also accounts found in the book, *O Vavega O Le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Fa'apotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa*, written by the late Rev. Elder Oka Fauolo, and important references by Leulu Felise Va'a, in his book *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*. However it is the hope and aim of this research to look into more detail at the origin and development of this Church.

## **Scope**

This research looks at 32 years from 1984 when the CCCS Fairfield Church was established, to 2016 when there was a change of guard at the helm, with the appointment of Rev. Dr. Peletisala as Church Minister with his wife Michiko Limā, taking over from the now pensioned Reverend Elder Peleti Toese To'ailoa and his wife Senetenari.

## **Outline of Chapters**

This research paper has three chapters. Chapter 1 looks at the establishment of the CCCS in Australia. Chapter 2 documents the establishment of the CCCS Fairfield Church in 1984 in the state of NSW. Chapter 3 highlights the progress of the Church since it was established. The conclusion analyses important issues in this short history of the CCCS Fairfield Church.

# CHAPTER ONE

## *O le Sailiga Mālo: Establishment of the CCCS in Australia*

### Introduction

*O le Sailiga Mālo* in its basic translation means “A search for a win”. This meaning is most common in Samoan legends in which victory is gained through warfare. One of the most renowned legend that highlights this is the story of Nafanua, the Samoan war goddess who defeated her enemies in the war of A’ea i Sasa’e ma le A’ea i Sisifo and gained *mālo* giving her control over all political authority in Samoa.<sup>1</sup> In Samoa the phrase *saili malo* also encapsulates one’s journey in search for a better future in order to improve oneself and family, economically and socially. This is one reason why Samoans leave home and migrate to places such as Australia and New Zealand. The economic recession of the 1970s in New Zealand saw Samoans leaving New Zealand in droves searching for greener pastures across the Tasman, a journey which one can call “*sailiga malo*”. This chapter therefore looks at the *sailiga malo* of Samoans in Australia which in effect led to the establishment of the CCCS in Australia. It looks at Samoan migration to Australia highlighting factors for migrating, including the mass migration of the late 1980s and 1990s. It then looks at the origin of CCCS in New South Wales, Australia. This chapter argues that the origin of the CCCS in Australia was because of the *sailiga malo* of Samoans.

### 1.1 Samoan Migration to Australia

Before the arrival of Christianity in Samoa in 1830, Samoans had traversed beyond the Pacific on boards of European ships. A Samoan by the name Siovili for example in the early 1820s ended up in Queensland Australia where he observed Christianity and upon his return spread the Siovili Cult in Samoa.<sup>2</sup> Hence the earliest Samoans to set foot on Australian soil were most likely Samoans who worked on trading and whaling ships of the 1820s. However, Samoans who ended up in Australia and New Zealand during this period were few and sporadic. It was not until the arrival in Samoa of the London Missionary Society (LMS) in

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<sup>1</sup> The story goes that later Malietoa Fitisemanu in the hope of obtaining some of this authority went to Nafanua requesting a share, a journey which is referred to in Samoan oratory as *sailiga malo*. As the story goes Malietoa was too late, for Nafanua had already given the *mālo* away. However in reply to Malietoa’s request Nafanua answered “*tali i lagi se ao o lou mālo*” meaning await the heavens for a head of your state. These famous words are often referred to as Nafanua prophesying the arrival of Christianity or “*mālo o le Atua*” which was accepted years later by Fitisemanu’s son Malietoa Vainuupo. Personal Interview, Loli F. Leilua, Fairfield Heights, Sydney Australia, 22 January 2018.

<sup>2</sup> John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1985, p. 4, 85.

1830, the Wesleyan Methodist Mission Society (WMMS) in 1835 and the Roman Catholics in 1845, that more Samoans began to make frequent contact with Australia as part of the mission.<sup>3</sup> When the Wesleyan mission for example came under Australia in 1857, Samoans were sent to Australia for training to become pastors.<sup>4</sup> Likewise the Roman Catholic Church in Samoa sent 14 Samoans to study for the priesthood at a Catholic seminary near Richmond, New South Wales in 1863.<sup>5</sup> Latai Latai also writes that many Samoans entered Australia through LMS missionary work in the Torres Strait Islands and Papua New Guinea during the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>6</sup> These early Samoan migrants to Australia however were few and far between. Leulu Felise Va'a highlights findings from a A. Deacon's<sup>7</sup> research where it recorded 85 Samoans living in Australia in 1901, 124 in 1911 and 109 in 1921.

A much more steady migration of Samoans to Australia however began in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Australian census of 1976 shows 259 Western Samoan-born people in Australia. These figures however, do not include New Zealand and Australian-born second generation Samoans.<sup>8</sup> It was not until the late 1980s that Samoan migration to Australia on a large scale eventuated. According to Va'a, economic motive was a driving factor, with most Samoans migrating to Australia after residing in New Zealand for a period of time, a result of the economic recession there of the mid-1970s. A sample survey conducted by Va'a in 1992 and 1993 listed the top three reasons for migrating, as scarcity of jobs, worsening economy, and high cost of living in New Zealand.<sup>9</sup> The Trans-Tasman Agreement of 1975, which allowed New Zealand citizens to travel freely to Australia and vice versa was instrumental with the majority of Samoans entering Australia under this category as New Zealand citizens.<sup>10</sup> The recession of 1975 in New Zealand had a debilitating effect on the Samoan community. The scarcity of employment opportunities in New Zealand saw

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<sup>3</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, University of the South Pacific Institute of Pacific Studies and National University of Samoa, 2001, 67.

<sup>4</sup> John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1985, 123.

<sup>5</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, University of the South Pacific Institute of Pacific Studies and National University of Samoa, 2001, 129-132.

<sup>6</sup> Latai, Latai, *Covenant Keepers: A History of Samoan (LMS) Missionary wives in the Western Pacific from 1839 to 1979*, PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 2016 : Nokise, Feterika, *The role of Samoan LMS missionaries in the evangelisation of the South West Pacific, 1839-1930*, :PhD Thesis, The Australian National University, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Deacon, A. . "Samoans in Australia". In James Jupp (ed); *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, its people and their Origins*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1988.

<sup>8</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 67.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>10</sup> The Australian government policy in 1973 by the then ruling Whitlam government declared all "future admissions would be universal in the sense of ignoring race, ethnicity, religion or cultural background" and later moved against racial discrimination in setting up a Commissioner for Community Relations and passing the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 67.

Australia becoming the new frontier offering plentiful of jobs, and a new start for many struggling Samoan families. As their numbers increased, a chain migration effect was triggered with the first arrivals to Australia encouraging more of their relatives and friends in New Zealand to make the move across to Australia. The intention was of reuniting families and church members, a process which is still happening to this day.<sup>11</sup> Their experience of social living in New Zealand was invaluable in adapting to their new environment in Australia. This resulting in the formation of a new Samoan community, bonded by its cultural and religious beliefs.<sup>12</sup>

Statistics by the Bureau of Immigration and population research as quoted by Va'a had the total of Samoans migrating to Australia between 1981/1982 to 1992/1993 at 3,672. Of that total 2,890 or 79 per cent were New Zealand citizens, with well over 50 per cent residing in the state of New South Wales.<sup>13</sup>

## 1.2 Origin of the CCCS in Australia

As religion is one of the pillars of Samoan society, it was a natural progression that the migrants to Australia desired to establish a Samoan Church. In their quest for economic and other benefits for migrating to Australia, they maintained their ethnic identity as Samoans; with strong cultural and religious values, preferring to worship in a Samoan church using the Samoan vernacular or language. As we will see, it was this *sailiga malo* that finally resulted in the establishment of the CCCS Church in Australia.

The first unofficial Samoan Church was established in the state of New South Wales in 1976, where a small gathering of Samoan migrants formed a religious group. The group was made up of a Samoan by the name Ilimaliota<sup>14</sup>, a couple of families, children of pastors who were missionaries in Papua New Guinea,<sup>15</sup> and scholarship students from Samoa. Ilimaliota is quoted by Va'a as saying; "we used to meet at the home of Sava and Luisa and in time we began to see ourselves as one big family."<sup>16</sup> There was no Samoan *faifeau* at the time; as such the group would attend European church services at the Anglican Church at

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 97.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>14</sup> Ilimaliota as cited by Va'a he said "we used to meet at the home of Sava and Luisa and in time we began to see ourselves as one big family." Ibid

<sup>15</sup> These children were born in Papua New Guinea while their parents were posted there as missionaries. At the time Papua New Guinea was under Australia administration and therefore they were entitled to Australian citizenship, one can ascertain that they must be some of the first Samoans to migrate to Australia.

<sup>16</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 109.

Marrickville, a suburb not far from the city. This continued until the arrival of Rev. Pouesi and wife Mataileupu, with Samoan language services being held at the same Marrickville church on Sunday evenings.<sup>17</sup>

For several years this small gathering continued meetings for worship until it was officially launched as a CCCS parish in 1980. The official opening of this new church was held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1980 at Balmain by the late Rev. Tapa Faletese<sup>18</sup> and his wife Mei.<sup>19</sup> It was while they were on a three weeks holiday visiting their daughters who had migrated to Australia the previous year; that Faletese conducted the first service, during the second week of July. Prior to his arrival in Australia, Faletese's three daughters had established a prayer group in Strathfield. They also had been distributing their father's business cards among the Samoan patrons of the Sydney pubs, spreading the word of a religious service to be held at the Uniting church in Strathfield. Those in attendance agreed after the second service<sup>20</sup> to officially establish a Samoan church, with its first official service on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1980.<sup>21</sup>

The new congregation was made up of 15 members, which included a visiting *faifeau* Rev. Ketu Magalo<sup>22</sup> and wife Moevanu, Faletese's three daughters, Fa'apio, Faalu and So'o, as well as Isaako and the children of Samoan pastors who served in Papua New Guinea. Magalo was appointed secretary, Fa'apio treasurer and Sagato as chairman of the development committee. In the same year Faletese and Mei attended the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the first European missionaries in Samoa, leaving the congregation to the interim care of Rev. Talalelei Poasa Te'o. It was at this time church services shifted from the Uniting church in Strathfield to the St Andrews church in Balmain.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 109.

<sup>18</sup> Rev Tapa Faletese is recognized as the founder of the CCCS Church in Australia. Born on 3 March 1926, he was a product of Misi Uaita School, Leififi Primary, Avele and Maluafofua colleges in Samoa. He also attended Malua Theological College and upon graduating in 1955, he and his wife Mei were appointed as *faifeau* of a village in Fagaloa. He was made director of the boy's brigade in 1959, a post he held for 10 years. He became pastor for a Pacific Island's church (PIC) in Christchurch New Zealand in 1970. In 1974 he did a refresher course at a theological college in Dunedin New Zealand and upon returning to Christchurch in 1975 he was appointed *faifeau* of a Samoan church, until he moved to Australia in 1980. Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001.

<sup>19</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> According to Va'a, those in attendance at the first service were asked whether they wanted to form a Church, to which they said no. Many of them did not turn up to the second service; however those at the second service who had not spoken up during the first meeting expressed their desire for a Samoan church to be established. Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 110.

<sup>22</sup> Rev Ketu Magalo and wife Moevanu had been Minister at Taelefaga Fagaloa, for 12 years before moving to Australia. After graduating from Malua in 1951, he and his wife served in Papua New Guinea for almost seven years after their ordination in 1952, before returning to Samoa, and serving at Aleisa Sasa'e for another 12 years. Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

The new venue was chosen as it was available, however it meant the church members had to travel further, as Balmain was far from where most lived.<sup>23</sup>

It wasn't all plain sailing at the start, as the congregation soon struck difficulty. One such difficulty as Va'a explains in his book was that the CCCS mother church in Samoa had not approved the establishment of a church in Sydney. This was due largely to the pressure from the Uniting Church of Australia demanding the CCCS in Samoa to bring all Samoan Congregationalists under its administration.<sup>24</sup> Another likely reason as his wife Mei alludes to in Va'a's book, was Faletese's method of appointing deacons, without the usual preparations, which the mother church disapproved of. Another possible reason also highlighted in Va'a's book, was the church had disapproved of Faletese becoming *faifeau* in the newly formed church, without firstly resigning his post as *faifeau* from the church in Christchurch. It was not until May 1985<sup>25</sup> at the CCCS General Assembly in Samoa that the *Matagaluega Ausetalia* or District Australia was finally recognized and approved.<sup>26</sup> A year later in 1986 Faletese finally left Balmain when he took up a ministerial appointment as *faifeau* of the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS) at Aloau, American Samoa. With Faletese's departure, Rev. Luteru Vaifale<sup>27</sup> became CCCS Balmain's new *faifeau*.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.3 Growth of the CCCS in Australia

The establishment of the CCCS Balmain in 1980 saw the birth of the CCCS not only in New South Wales, but on Australian soil. Due to the growth of the Balmain congregation as mentioned previously, CCCS Canterbury/Marrickville (NSW) was established with Rev. Ket

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<sup>23</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 110.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>25</sup> A key and important event in the beginning of the CCCS in Australia was in 1985 at the annual Fono tele in Malua, for it was at the Fono Tele of 1985 while Tofilau Eti Alesana was Chairperson that the Matagaluega Ausetalia was officially recognised and accepted by the EFKS mother church in Samoa. The Australian delegation for this momentous occasion, included Faletese and his wife Mei, Toailoa and his wife Senetenari, Ket and his wife Moevanu, Nu'ausala Cowley and a deacon Anesone Tavui from CCCS Balmain, as well as Tepoe and Pelenato both relatives of Faletese's wife Mei from the village of Satuimalufilufi. Tepoe and Pelenato both relatives of Faletese's wife Mei from the village of Satuimalufilufi. It was during the Fono Tele celebrations at the malae in Malua that Reverend Fuafiva Leiataua of CCCS Newcastle passed away of an unexpected illness. Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> Fauolo Oka: *O Vavega o le Alofa Laveai: O le Tala Faasolopito o le Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano i Samoa*, (Apia: Malua Printing Press, 2005), 680.

<sup>27</sup> Rev. Luteru Vaifale according to Ioane Aloalii in his thesis, graduated from Teachers Training College, Malifa in 1957 and from Malua Theological College in 1970. He served as a faifeau in Salelologa village in Savaii Samoa for six years and at Wainuiomata, New Zealand for another six years. He was holidaying in Australia when he was approached by the Balmain congregation to be their *faifeau*.

<sup>28</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

Magalo and wife Moevanu along with six deacons from the Balmain congregation on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1982. The CCCS New Castle followed two years later, established on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1984 with Rev. Fuafiva Leiataua<sup>29</sup> and wife Ruta. The CCCS Fairfield Church was established two months later on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1984 with Rev. Toese Peleti Toailoa and wife Senetenari. The CCCS Campsie now called CCCS Moorebank with Rev. Litaru Tuimauluga<sup>30</sup> and wife Levei was established seven months later on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1984. The CCCS Sydney was established next, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 1985 with Rev. Ketu Magalo and wife Moevanu. The establishment of CCCS Sydney was a result of a disagreement<sup>31</sup> at CCCS Canterbury, which saw part of the congregation breaking away and forming CCCS Marrickville/Bexley, inviting Rev. Fosi Palaamo<sup>32</sup> to be their Church Minister. Those that remained with Ketu meanwhile moved from Marrickville to Bexley, and to Ashfield, forming CCCS Sydney.<sup>33</sup> The CCCS Ashbury was next established in 1986 inviting Rev. Malua Keilani a recent graduate of Malua Theological College to be their first Church Minister. The CCCS Mt Druitt was to follow on 8<sup>th</sup> August in 1992 with Rev. Simeona Taefu<sup>34</sup> as Church Minister with his wife Alofa.<sup>35</sup>

In hindsight, we have seen how Samoan migration to Australia in the 1980s set the scene for the establishment of the CCCS in Australia. The early growth of the CCCS in New South Wales shows the steady growth of Samoans living in Australia. This also coincided with the mass migration of the late 1980s with Samoans searching for a better way of life in their *sailiga malo*. This alongside with the desire of migrants to have a Samoan church where they can worship in their own language fulfilling their spiritual and cultural aspirations.<sup>36</sup> The growth of the CCCS in New South Wales is still continuing, at current count there are thirty

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<sup>29</sup> Fuafiva Leiataua and wife Ruta according to pensioned Rev. Elder Peleti Toese Toailoa had been *faifeau* in Taga Savaii, before migrating to Australia. Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Received his early education in Samoa, graduated from both Malua Theological College and Pacific Theological College, Suva. He taught at Malua Theological College for three years. Wishing to gain practical experience overseas he applied and got a job as a pastor of a Uniting Church parish in Tasmania where he served for three years. A two year stint was followed with another parish in Tasmania, after which he and his family returned to Samoa. It was while they stopped over in Sydney that the Campsie members approached Litaru to be their *faifeau* which he accepted.

<sup>31</sup> According to Va'a, the disagreement was over whether the congregation should grant a private loan to Rev. Ketu Magalo in order to pay off some outstanding debts in Samoa.

<sup>32</sup> Rev. Fosi Palaamo was former *faifeau* of CCCS Vailoa Western Samoa.

<sup>33</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 112.

<sup>34</sup> Rev Simeona Taefu graduated from Malua Theological College in 1987, he became a teacher at Nuuausala College in Samoa, and he was also *faifeau* at Taelefaga Fagaloa before migrating permanently to Australia in 1989. He attended CCCS Fairfield Church before the establishment of CCCS Mt Druitt in 1992.

<sup>35</sup> *Api o le Pulega Sini 1989-1998*

<sup>36</sup> Ioane Aloalii, *A History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) in the state of Queensland*, B.D. Thesis, Malua Theological College, Samoa, 2010, 20.

six parishes with two *Matagaluega* or Districts, along with five sub-districts or *pulega*, Sini i Matū, Sini i Saute, Sini i Sasaē, Sini i Sisifo and Sini Tu Totonu. In the next chapter we will look at the establishment of the CCCS Fairfield Church which was the fourth CCCS Church to be established in NSW in 1984.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *O le Maota Tauave: Establishment of the CCCS Church in Fairfield*

#### Introduction

The Samoan phrase “*maota tauave*” literally means ‘a house being carried’. In Samoan culture everything a chief holds dear and of value is stored in his house. *Maota tauave* therefore describes the carrying of culture, language, heritage and religion, to wherever a Samoan migrates. Rupi Apaola in his thesis, *Maota Tauave: A cultural Hindrance in the Ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), Australia-A case study in CCCS Liverpool, Sydney Australia* describes it as; “Where-ever a Samoan migrates, he/she takes with them their culture and religious values.”<sup>37</sup> This chapter therefore looks at the establishment of the CCCS in Fairfield as part of this *maota tauave*. It begins by looking at the Samoan population in Fairfield, highlighting some of the reasons for it becoming a popular destination for Samoan people migrating to NSW. It then looks at the preparation for the establishment of the new church and the formalization of its first covenant or the *Osigala Feagaiga* with their first Church Minister and wife. The overall aim of this chapter is to document the establishment of the CCCS in Fairfield.

#### 2.1 Samoan population in Fairfield.

Fairfield is situated in the Western part of Sydney about 16,000 kilometres from Sydney City (See Figure 1 below). Fairfield is considered one of the most ethnically diverse suburbs in NSW due to its melting pot of different nationalities from around the world.

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<sup>37</sup> Apaola Rupi, *Maota Tauave: A cultural Hindrance in the Ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS), Australia-A case study in CCCS Liverpool, Sydney Australia* (B.Th., Malua Theological College, 2016), 7.

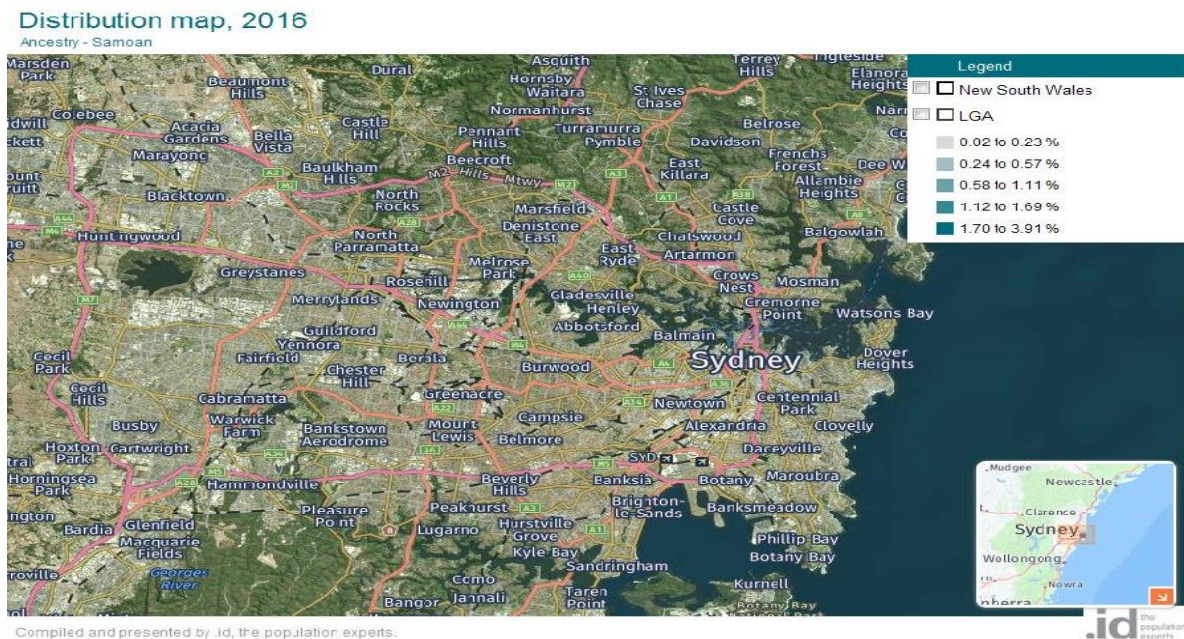


Figure 1: Map of Sydney and its surrounding suburbs.<sup>38</sup>

The 2016 Australia census has Fairfield's population at 198,817 (See Figure 2 below). The most common ancestries in Fairfield being Vietnamese with 39,581 or 16.8%, followed by the Chinese with 26,945 or 11.4%. Australian ancestry is next with 18,326 or 7.8%, followed by the English with 16,255 or 6.9% and lastly the Assyrian with 13,437 or 5.7%.<sup>39</sup>

The Samoan population is recorded at 2,623 or 1.23% of the total population. This was out of 27,429 Samoans living in NSW at the time.<sup>40</sup> Hence the Samoan population is a minority ethnic group both in NSW as well as in Fairfield.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> <http://multiculturalnsw.id.com.au/multiculturalnsw/ancestry-introduction?COIID=109#> accessed 7 November 2017, 11:45am.

<sup>39</sup> [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA12850?opendocument#demographics](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/LGA12850?opendocument#demographics) accessed 7 November 2017, 12:00pm.

<sup>40</sup> <http://multiculturalnsw.id.com.au/multiculturalnsw/ancestry-introduction?COIID=109#> accessed 7 November 2017, 12:30pm.

<sup>41</sup> There was a 26.5% increase since 2011 (from 21,680), 13.4% were born overseas and arrived between 2011 and August 2016. There were more men with Samoan ancestry (13,861) than women (13,573), 43.4% of the population with Samoan ancestry were children (under 19 years of age), 36.7% were young adults (aged 20 to 44 years), and 19.9% were older adults (aged 45 years and over). The 2016 Australian Census records 8,316 people in greater Sydney who were born in Samoa. Of these 4,017 or 48.3% were male and 4,299 or 51.7% were female. Just over half of them at 54.4% were not Australian citizens, and the remaining 43.5% were. The distribution of people with Samoan ancestry living in NSW is listed in the table (Figure 2), with Fairfield fourth on the list with 2,623 people in 2016, an increase of 958 or 1.32% from 1,665 in 2011.

Figure 2: Table showing population with Samoan Ancestry in NSW 2011-2016.<sup>42</sup>

Ancestry - Top 10 NSW LGAs ranked by size					
Ancestry - Samoan	2016		2011		Change
Area	Number	Samoan %	Number	Samoan %	2011 to 2016
Campbelltown City	4,587	2.92	3,555	2.44	+1,032
Blacktown City	5,729	1.70	4,629	1.54	+1,100
Liverpool City	2,827	1.38	2,237	1.24	+590
Fairfield City	2,623	1.32	1,665	0.89	+958
Griffith City	288	1.12	245	1.01	+43
Penrith City	1,826	0.93	1,193	0.67	+633
City of Canterbury Bankstown	2,017	0.58	2,019	0.63	-2
Camden Council	375	0.48	153	0.27	+222
Cumberland Council	963	0.45	887	0.46	+76
Bayside Council	450	0.29	414	0.30	+36
Greater Sydney	24,760	0.51	19,575	0.45	+5,185
Regional NSW	2,614	0.10	2,054	0.08	+560
New South Wales	27,429	0.37	21,680	0.31	+5,749

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id, the population experts.  
<https://home.id.com.au>


 id the population experts

Figure 2: Table showing population with Samoan Ancestry in NSW 2011-2016.<sup>43</sup>

As the table in Figure 2 shows, and the map on Figure 1 highlights, the highest concentration of Samoan people tend to live a distance away from the city or downtown Sydney in areas such as Campbelltown, Blacktown, Liverpool and Fairfield. Rev. Peletisala Limā believes that migration especially Samoans and CCCS migrants, shift to the cheaper suburbs where there is affordable housing, education and healthcare, as well as where there is the availability of employment opportunities. This he believes follows a similar pattern in New Zealand with the early development of the CCCS church, in areas such as Otara and Mangere in Auckland and Porirua in Wellington.<sup>44</sup> Balmain where the first Samoan CCCS church in Sydney was established was and is still prime land being closure to the city and its world famous harbour.

There was a reason why they moved away from Balmain, you must remember Balmain is prime land, but it follows a similar pattern of how the EFKS has developed in NZ, because migration shift to the cheaper land and suburbs, as it was too expensive in the city. Here was the area where they could afford housing health and education and more job opportunities. That's why you have more in areas like Mount Druitt, Rooty Hill, Campbelltown. It's no different from areas like Porirua in Wellington, Otara, Mangere in Auckland, it follows a similar pattern. They move

<sup>42</sup> <http://multiculturalnsw.id.com.au/multiculturalnsw/ancestry-introduction?COIID=109#> accessed 7 November 2018, 12:50pm.

<sup>43</sup> <http://multiculturalnsw.id.com.au/multiculturalnsw/ancestry-introduction?COIID=109#> accessed 7 November 2018, 12:50pm.

<sup>44</sup> Personal interview, Peletisala Limā, Fairfield NSW Australia 23 January, 2018.

further away as it is cheaper, and that's why Mt Druitt has the biggest church, as the majority of the Samoan population live out that way. You also have Rooty Hill, Riverston, St Marys and others, because of the high concentration of Samoans out that way.<sup>45</sup>

According to data on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website, the average median monthly mortgage repayment in Balmain is \$3,000 compared to Fairfield where it is \$1,769. The average median weekly household income in Balmain is \$2,550 compared with Fairfield which is \$1,125. The average median weekly rent in Balmain is \$600 compared to Fairfield which is \$350.<sup>46</sup>

From this data we can gauge that it was a strategic decision based on affordability of housing, and the availability of employment opportunities out in the Western Suburbs of Sydney, that drove our people to settle in Fairfield and its surrounding suburbs, and in turn establish the CCCS Fairfield Church. The data as shown in Figure 2 highlights the growth of the Samoan population not only in Fairfield but its surrounding suburbs, like Campbelltown, Blacktown and Liverpool. As Leulu Felise Va'a also highlights in his book, the CCCS church in Fairfield came about as a result of the families living in Fairfield wanting their own church because they lived some distance from the inner city of Sydney.<sup>47</sup>

## 2.2 Preparation for the new church

CCCS Fairfield Church came about as a direct result of those living in the outskirts of the city, particularly in the Western Suburbs of Sydney desiring to have a place of worship, within a close vicinity to their place of residence<sup>48</sup> where they can congregate and worship in their own Samoan language. According to Tauanuu Lemu Soi Iese one of the founding members of CCCS Fairfield Church, he alongside Tago Samuelu and wife Ula, Fetu Fai'ai and wife Maugamu all attended CCCS Balmain under the leadership of Rev Faletese.<sup>49</sup> During this time they were all residing in Fairfield, and at times it was difficult travelling to Balmain every Sunday for church and any other time during the week for unexpected events.

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<sup>45</sup> Personal interview with Rev. Dr Peletisala Limā, Fairfield NSW Australia 23 January, 2018.

<sup>46</sup> [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat). accessed 7 November 2017, 12:00pm.

<sup>47</sup> Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 112.

<sup>48</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984-1994*

<sup>49</sup> Tauanuu Lemu Soi Iese, *Personal Written Account*, Sydney 2018.

Their desire to have a CCCS in the Western suburbs was great, and this was also realised by Faletese.<sup>50</sup>

It was in 1980 at the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the first European missionaries in Samoa held at Sapapalii Savaii where Faletese and wife Mei attended, that Toailoa was first approached about becoming a *faiifeau* in Sydney Australia. Faletese and his wife Mei after the celebrations, attended a church service at the village of Satuimalufilufi in Upolu where Toailoa was serving as *faiifeau*. It was from this encounter that an informal invitation was extended to Toailoa by Faletese to migrate and become a *faiifeau* in Sydney Australia.<sup>51</sup> Toailoa resigned from his post at Satuimalufilufi on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1983 where he had been *faiifeau* since 1970, and took up residence at his family home in Faatoia Upolu.

In the following year on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1984, Toailoa and his family<sup>52</sup> finally migrated to Australia, after being formally invited by Faletese and the families of the soon to be established CCCS Fairfield Church. Toailoa and family arrived at Sydney International airport at 9pm in the evening where one of the founding couples of the Church, Tago and wife Ula were waiting to take them to their family home. At Tago and Ula's home, the Toailoa family were welcomed by Faletese and wife Mei, the other founding couple Fetu Fai'ai and wife Maugamu<sup>53</sup> and a young man named Lemu Iese.

According to the "Api o le Galuega 1984 to 1994", Faletese and his wife Mei were instrumental in the establishment of the new church. They helped greatly in assisting with the arrangements for Toailoa and his family to travel to Australia as well as in the preparation for the establishment of the new church.

There were three *matafale*<sup>54</sup> or families at the beginning of CCCS Fairfield Church. As already mentioned, they were Tago Samuelu and wife Ula from the villages of Aufaga and Apolima, Fetu Fai'ai and wife Maugamu from the villages of Sapapalii and Afega, and Lemu Soi Iese<sup>55</sup> from the village of Vaovai Falealili, who was a young unmarried man at the time. They with their children were the founding members of the CCCS Fairfield Church.

The following day after the arrival of Toailoa and his family, the new Church Minister and his family were finally sworn in in a Covenant Ceremony or *Osiga Feagaiga*.

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<sup>50</sup> Tauanuu Lemu Soi Iese, *Personal Written Account*, Sydney 2018.

<sup>51</sup> Personal Interview with pensioned Rev Elder. Peleti Toese Toailoa, Faatoia, Samoa, 27 November, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Toailoa's wife Senetenari, daughters Betty and Satui, sons Iosefa and Peniamina and family relative Pa'i Pulusi.

<sup>53</sup> Now attending CCCS Smithfield under the leadership of Rev Va'alele Tapaleao and wife Tupulaga.

<sup>54</sup> *Matafale* also refers to members of the congregation that contributes financially and partakes in church activities

<sup>55</sup> Lemu Soi Iese is the only founding member of CCCS Fairfield Church remaining at EFKS Fairfield. He alongside his wife Pa'i and children are active members of CCCS Fairfield Church to this day.

Arrangements were made with the Anglican Church in Canley Vale Road Fairfield, and this was to become a temporary place of worship until a permanent location was found.<sup>56</sup> In preparations for the big day, each family were to contribute fine mats, boxes of canned corn beef, as well as money and plates of food for the feast.<sup>57</sup>

### 2.3 The Covenant: *Osiga o le Feagaiga*

On Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> of May in 1984 at 11am, the CCCS Fairfield Church was officially established and recognised, with the formalization of a covenant or *Osiga o le feagaiga*<sup>58</sup> between Toailoa and the founding members. The day's proceedings began with a church service led by Faletose. Those in attendance included Rev Karamelu Leaupepe from the Samoan Presbyterian church who read the New Testament scripture during the Church service, Mrs Taeipo Taeleiupu Aiono wife of Reverend Elder Aiono from the village of Malie who read the Old Testament scripture. She was on holiday from Samoa at the time, visiting her children who resided in Sydney. The prayer was conducted by Faletose, with the sermon for the congregation prepared by Rev Ketu Magalo of the CCCS Canterbury. The sermon for the *fai'feau* was prepared by Rev Fuafiva Leiatua of the CCCS New Castle. Rev Elder Faafouina Iofi<sup>59</sup> of CCCS San Diego also preached a word of encouragement for the *fai'feau* in addition to Leiatua and Faletose. The sacrament of the Holy Communion was conducted by Toailoa.<sup>60</sup>

The church service was followed with a feast prepared by members of the newly established CCCS Fairfield Church. The day's proceedings ended with the presentation of gifts or *fa'aaloalo*<sup>61</sup> as per Samoan custom *fa'asamoa*,<sup>62</sup> by the newly established CCCS

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<sup>56</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984-1994*

<sup>57</sup> Tauanuu Lemu Soi Iese, *Personal Written Account*, Sydney 2018.

<sup>58</sup> According to Faalepo Tuisuga the "osiga feagaiga" concept is when the village congregation and the *fai'feau* commit themselves into a feagaiga or covenant in which then they are bonded to work together for the ministry of Jesus Christ until the death of the *fai'feau*. What is important as Tuisuga points out is the fact that this Samoan cultural phenomenon is the representation of the theological mutual partnership between the Church congregation and God, through his representative, the *fai'feau*. Faalepo Tuisuga, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa: A Hermeneutical critical analysis of the Cultural-Theological Praxis of the Samoan Context*, PhD Thesis, Melbourne, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Reverend Elder Faafouina Iofi of the CCCS San Diego was on his holiday at the time.

<sup>60</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984-1994*

<sup>61</sup> Reciprocal gifts of *fa'aaloalo* or respect between two parties, where fine mats food and money is presented. According to Tuisuga, this is borne out of the Samoan concept *fa'aaloalo* or respect it is reflected in the social attitude and outward behavioural expressions of the Samoans. Tuisuga Faalepo, *O le Tofa Liliu a Samoa* PhD Thesis, Melbourne, 2009.

<sup>62</sup> Samoan way of doing things, which incorporates culture and beliefs. According to Ronald James Crawford, *faa-Samoa* has a strong, positive, evaluative connotation, it should be seen as tied more to preservation of a

Fairfield Church to the visiting Church Ministers who partook in the Church service, as well as the Samoan community at large that came to witness the special occasion. Those in attendance also presented monetary gifts for the newly established church, in total \$1,738 AUD plus \$100 USD. According to the “*Api o le Galuega 1984-1994*”, the contributions are as follows; CCCS Balmain \$100, CCCS Canterbury \$100, CCCS New Castle \$100, Metotisi Samoa \$200, AOG \$100, Samoan Presbyterian \$200, Campsie \$50, Petaia family \$500, Rev Elder Faafouina Iofi \$100USD, Paulo Fomai \$50, Faatele \$200, Leota (Tiakono Toeaina) \$50. The day’s celebration ended with everyone singing hymn 356 “*Lota nuu ua ou fanau ai*” and a parting prayer conducted by Toailoa.<sup>63</sup>

For the newly established church, this was the beginning of a journey that would see it growing to be one of the most successful churches in Australia. The establishment of this church was the result of the need of those in Fairfield to have a Church in which they can freely worship God as Samoans. Rev. Dr Peletisala Limā states that, the new migrants to Australia, could have attended any of the mainstream *palagi* churches that were already established, however it was their desire to maintain their cultural identity or *faasinomaga* as well as their connection to the mother church in Samoa was one of the reasons for the establishment of CCCS in Australia. This as Limā states follows a similar pattern in New Zealand.<sup>64</sup>

Samoans could off easily joined any of the established churches but that is the whole thing about who they were as Samoans, when they migrated to Australia they left their families and villages, but the church served that purpose, that’s all part of the culture and CCCS church served that purpose, not only is the *faifeau* Samoan, they worship in *gagana* Samoa, and they also partake in all aspects of the Samoan culture, they identified with that. The church became the village community; the church replaced what was missing. They identify and relate especially earlier on, and that’s why CCCS still exists in Australia, the question of cultural identity is still very important today.<sup>65</sup>

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Samoan identity. Ronald James Crawford, *The Lotu and the Fa'aSamoa: Church and Society in Samoa 1830-1880*, PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1977.

<sup>63</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984-1994*.

<sup>64</sup> Personal interview, Peletisala Limā, Fairfield NSW Australia 23 January, 2018.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*.

Peleti's view is in line with Apaola's concept of *maota tauave* as one that identifies with Samoans living in diaspora. As Apaola<sup>66</sup>, highlights "*maota tau'ave*" refers to Samoans where-ever they migrate, they take with them their culture and religious values.<sup>67</sup> This was evident in the desire of the new arrivals to establish a Samoan church in Australia and in particular with the founding of the CCCS Church at Fairfield.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Apaola Rupi, *Maota Tauave: A cultural Hindrance in the Ministry of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa*, 2016, 7.

<sup>67</sup> According to Rupi Apaola, "*Maota Tau'ave* means, the high chief's house title, the name of the land on which it is situated, and its cultural status, were to be transmitted or transferred wherever a chief goes because its cultural values and etiquette are important to his/her family....This is the way the Samoans think of their culture, something which they are proud of to take with them wherever they go."

<sup>68</sup> Ioane Aloalii, *A History of the Congregational Christian Church Samoa (CCCS) in the state of Queensland*, B.D. Thesis, Malua Theological College, Samoa, 2010,17.



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Aua le tosoa le Atua i le Ala: Progress of the CCCS Church in Fairfield*

#### Introduction

*Aua le tosoa le Atua i le Ala*, simply means “Do not drag God by the wayside.” It was one of the messages of Toailoa’s sermon on their first Sunday worship at their newly purchased land and Church in 1987. According to Toailoa this was the message that inspired the newly formed congregation as they planned to build their new Church and Hall which was dedicated in 2006. Toailoa passionately preached “We live in nice houses, yet we drag God from hall to hall, in the rain and in the sun. If we look at the Lebanese, the *palagis*, they build the grandest of buildings as temples for their gods, why don’t we?”<sup>69</sup> This as Toailoa recalls motivated and encouraged the congregation before the work started on the new Church and Hall. This chapter therefore sets out to explore the progress of the CCCS Fairfield Church, looking at the important roles of Toailoa and Senetenari as well as members of the Church in the development of the Church. It also looks at important events in the church, its growth as well as issues and challenges that comes with a young and growing church.

#### 3.1 Growth of the CCCS Fairfield Church

From its humble beginnings in 1984 to 2016, the CCCS Fairfield Church membership grew steadily to become one of the biggest and well established CCCS Churches in Australia. The Church when it was launched on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1984 had three *matafale* or families, together with Toailoa and Senetenari and their children. The *Api o le Galuega* records forty three members which included both adults and children. There were two Deacons, Fetu Faiai and Tago Samuelu who was also elected as the Secretary of the Church. Their wives were Ula Tago and Mu Faiai. The first Treasurer was Lemu Soi Iese who was a *taulealea* or young man at the time.<sup>70</sup> These were the first members of the Church who pioneered the difficult task of developing and growing the Church.

Three years later, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1987 when the church was moved to its permanent location in 391 Cabramatta Road Cabramatta, there was an increase in membership from three *matafale* in 1984 to twelve with a combined population of seventy.

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<sup>69</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Faatoia, Samoa, 29 May, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984 – 1994*

The members include Toailoa and Senetenari, Faulalo Iese who was the Treasurer, Levale Peseta who was the Secretary, Peti and Seao who were Lay Preachers and Deacons Fetu Faiai, Naseri, Taufi, Manufou and Fetuao. The mothers group consisted of Mu, Filoi, Ane, Lusi, Tali, Aliitasi, Amelia and Fetu Naseri. The *Taulelea* at the time were Lemu, Leuma, Pio, Simanu, Tamai, Iona, Viliamu, Aviata, Kome and Samu, with the wives of two *taulelea*, Pa'i Lemu and Mareta Leuma. The *tamaitai* or unmarried women were Violeta, Isa, Mary and Viola. They along with their children, ten girls and twenty six boys made up the seventy members of CCCS Church in Fairfield in 1987.<sup>71</sup>

These were the families together with the original members who worked hard in raising funds that finally purchased the first properties of the Church in 1987 which included an old Church, a Hall and a small residence for the Church Minister.

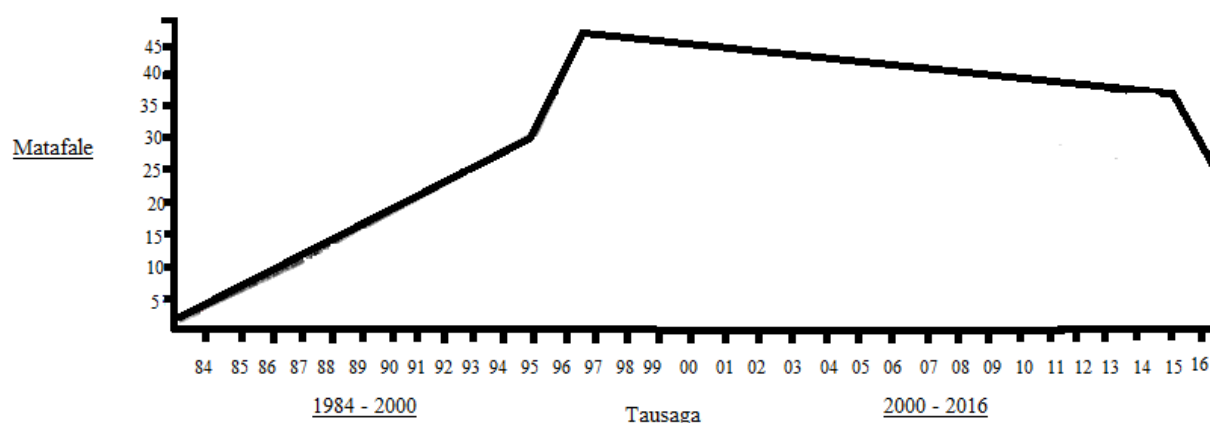


Figure 3: Graph showing trend of membership from 1984 to 2016.<sup>72</sup>

Two years later in 1989, the church continued to grow with four new families joining making it a total of sixteen families.<sup>73</sup> Six years later in 1995 the church grew again to thirty two *matafale* doubling the number of families,<sup>74</sup> and at one stage in the following years there were forty six active *matafale*.<sup>75</sup> As shown this was a period of significant growth of the Church. Toailoa stated that one of the factors for this growth was because the Church now had its own Church. He indicated that one way to keep people in the church is the attainment

<sup>71</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984 – 1994.*

<sup>72</sup> The only data available as per the *Api o le Galuega* included in 1984 at the forming of the church there was 3 *matafale*. In 1987 with the move to 391 Cabramatta Road there were 12 *matafale*, 1989 there were 16, 1995 there were 32, and at one stage thereafter according to Toailoa the church grew to 46 *matafale*. From 1995 to 2015, there are no records of church membership numbers. At the time of handover from Toailoa to Limā the *matafale* count was at 24 plus the *faifeau*.

<sup>73</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Faatoia, Samoa, 29 May, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1995 – 2015.*

<sup>75</sup> *Api o le Galuega 1984 – 1994*

of assets such as a Church building, a hall or a residence for the Minister. This as he believes encouraged the people for they saw that the church was growing physically and the Minister was proactive.

One way to stop people from leaving a church is to purchase property, for in that way the people can see the church is evolving and forming, this was the case with us at Fairfield.<sup>76</sup>

One can see the truth in Toailoa's theory with the growth of membership as the church had its highest number of *matafale* between 1995 and 2006. It was during this time that the church was free of any debt and was saving money towards the building of the new church building and hall. As Toailoa indicates above, it was during this period that the *matafale* count sat at forty six. However after 2006 when the new Church and Hall was completed, there was another decline due to some members leaving due to financial reasons particularly the paying off of the 1.1 million loan incurred. Hence the growth of the CCCS Fairfield Church had changed from time to time due to various reasons.

In 2015 the Church also faced another major drop with seven *matafale* leaving. This was during the time when Toailoa had retired and left the church. As a result some families were free to establish new churches. As is the case with the recent formation of CCCS Smithfield with Rev. Va'alele Tapaleao and wife Tupulaga, and CCCS Cecil Hills with Rev. Roy Saipaia and wife Pito in 2016. Tapaleao and Saipaia had been serving under Toailoa for many years, and upon his retirement, these two ordained ministers felt that it was time for them to establish their own congregations. Prior to them was CCCS Penrith with Rev. Gafoaleata Faitua and wife Lagiraea in 2010. Hence in 2016 with the handover of leadership from Toailoa to Limā, there were only twenty four active *matafales*.<sup>77</sup>

### **3.2 Important accomplishments and developments**

One of the most important accomplishment in the early development of CCCS Fairfield Church was the purchase of the land and Church building at 391 Cabramatta Road in 1987 which was to become the permanent home for the Church. Levale Peseta who was church Secretary at the time and worked as a business advisor, alongside lawyer James Dupri QC were instrumental in the purchase of the property. It was a great achievement, for at the

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<sup>76</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Faatoia, Samoa, 29 May, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Peletisala Limā, *Personal Written Account*, Sydney 2018.

time they had no asset to guarantee such a big loan, and none of the banks had heard of the CCCS Church. It was equally important because at the time none of the other CCCS churches in Australia had achieved such a milestone in obtaining an important asset, but as Toailoa testified that “It was the way of the Lord for it was James Dupri QC and his trust fund account that guaranteed the loan.”<sup>78</sup>

James Dupri QC had represented the Australian bar of lawyers to a lawyers’ conference held at Papauta, in Samoa in 1985. It was at this conference that Toailoa and Sentenari met Dupri. They then performed an *asiga* and also took Dupri to their village of Fasitoo where an *aiava* was performed. Upon returning to Australia, Dupri promised Toailoa and Senetenari’s family at Fasitoo that he would help with whatever they needed for the church.<sup>79</sup>

Toailoa was also a member of the Fraternity of Pastors in the Fairfield and Liverpool area, and it was at one of their weekly meetings that Toailoa voiced his desire for a permanent place of worship for the CCCS Fairfield Church. It was at the same time according to Toailoa that St Stephens Anglican church in Cabramatta was merging with the Anglican Church at St Johns Park because St Stephens was going bankrupt. This meant that St Stephens Anglican Church at 391 Cabramatta Road was up for sale. Levale Peseta with his business knowhow assisted in the process of setting up the Board of Trustees and organising an Australian Business Number (ABN) for the church as well a seal stamp. All of these helped greatly in the process of obtaining a loan with the State Bank.<sup>80</sup>

In obtaining the \$197,000AUD loan in 1988 from the State Bank of Australia, combined with the \$30,000AUD which they had raised, the CCCS Fairfield Church was able to purchase the property at a cost of \$225,000AUD. As mentioned above, Dupri was instrumental in the process as it was his trust fund account that was used to guarantee the loan. Before releasing the funds however, the bank requested a down payment of \$25,000 AUD. Senetenari testified that “It was difficult at the time for the church had no money.

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<sup>78</sup> Toailoa further stated that, “It was the grace of God, James Dupree a supreme court lawyer, he was of great help in the beginning of the church. It was his trustfund account that was used as guarantor for our loan”.

Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

<sup>79</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Fa’atoia, Upolu Samoa, 29 May, 2018.

<sup>80</sup> Personal Interview, Levale Peseta, Fairfield, Sydney, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

However that same Sunday after the service, the church had a *loto fuatiaifo* where \$30,000 AUD was raised.<sup>81</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1989 after renovations, the church building was blessed with a *fa'aulufalega*, where the then Chairman of the CCCS, Rev. Vavae Toma attended. It was a momentous occasion for as Senetenari stated it was the first *fa'aulufalega* on Australian soil. The property had a church building, a small hall and a house, that was previously owned by the St Stephens Anglican Church. Senetenari recalls conversing with Dupri as to how the church was going to repay the loan where she replied;

...in Samoan culture we have what is called a *fa'aulufalega*, whenever a new church building is blessed, people come with monetary gifts, that money is used to help pay any outstanding debt.<sup>82</sup>

The term of the loan with the bank was for thirty years, however the church was able to clear the loan within four years in 1992. This was a great accomplishment for it meant that the church building and property was freehold. In setting out to purchase the property in 1987, Toailoa recalls his first sermon at the new church, in which he preached about the story of Jacob, conversing with God as told in Genesis 35, where God commanded Jacob to go back to Bethel and build him an altar there.<sup>83</sup> Toailoa in his sermon told the members of the church, "If you look at the Labanese and people from other countries they build the finest and grandest of buildings to worship God, whereas we are dragging our God from hall to hall in the rain and in the sun"<sup>84</sup> It was from this moving sermon that inspired, motivated and encouraged the congregation, and in four years the church paid off the loan. The church now had a permanent place where they were free to worship whenever and however they like.

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<sup>81</sup> Personal Interview, Senetenari Toailoa, Fa'atoia, Upolu Samoa, 29 May, 2018

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.



Figure 4: Toailoa's first sermon at the new church in 1987.<sup>85</sup> Figure 5: Toailoa conducting the faamanatuga at the new church in 1987.<sup>86</sup>



Figure 6: First Church building at 391 Cabramatta Road.<sup>87</sup> Figure 7: Toailoa and wife Senetenari with lawyer James Dupri QC and wife.<sup>88</sup>

In 1996 the adjoining property at 3 Grant Avenue at the back of the Church came up for sale, and this was purchased with a loan of \$143,000AUD. This newly purchased land was earmarked for the building of a new *faiifeau* residence. The congregation set about servicing the new loan and in 2000 this loan was cleared. By the time work started the congregation had raised \$167,000AUD, through different forms of fundraising which included *tausala* and *taleni*.<sup>89</sup> This money was used for the new *faiifeau* residence and building was done by Masterton Builders with the work completed in 2001 at a total cost of \$197,000AUD, all paid for by the church. By 2001, the Fairfield CCCS Church had finally purchased all of the necessary facilities for the church which included a church building for worship, a hall and a house for the minister and his family. However, many felt that the church building then was too small and they needed a bigger church to cater for the growing membership. Hence was the new plan to build a new Church and Hall.

<sup>85</sup> Photo taken by Senetenari Toailoa during first church service at 391 Cabramatta Rd in 1987.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Image taken from Leulu Felise Vaa, *Saili Matagi: Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 146.

<sup>88</sup> Photo supplied by Senetenari Toailoa. Photographer unknown.

<sup>89</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Colebee, Sydney Australia, 22 January, 2018.

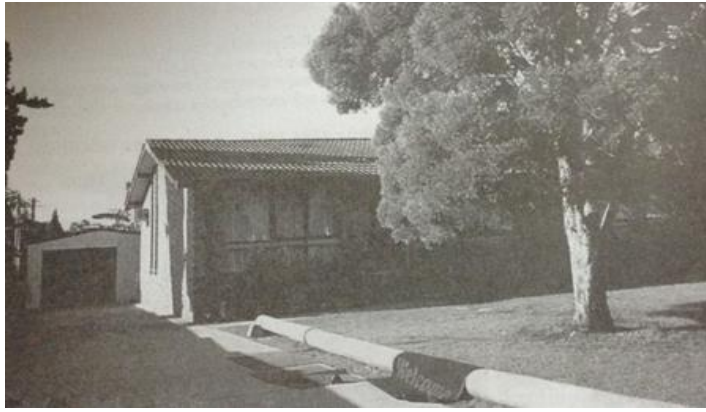


Figure 8: Photo of first faifeau residence at 391 Cabramatta Road.<sup>90</sup>

### 3.3 Construction of the New Church and Hall

With the completion of the new *faifeau* residence, the church again set out to raise funds through *tausala* and *talen* with the intention of building a new church and hall facility. In 2005 the church had saved \$700,000AUD and work began for the construction of the new church and hall as it is today. According to Toailoa, it was a big project for both the church and hall were built at once, including the car park. The old church building was demolished to make way for the new church and hall as it is today. It was difficult at the start getting a permit from the local council due to the size of the project; consent had to be obtained from the neighbouring families, and it was two years before the council was satisfied that all requirements had been met and a permit was issued for construction to begin.

The work took just over twelve months to complete, and in 2006 the new church building “Peteli Fou” and adjoining hall “Maluapapa” were completed. Upon completion of the work the church had a loan of \$1.1 million AUD, taking the total cost of the work to \$1.8 million AUD. Current valuation of the land at 391 Cabramatta Road where the church is located according to Levale Peseta<sup>91</sup> stands at \$1.7 million AUD this does not include the church building, hall and the *faifeau* residence.

<sup>90</sup> Image taken from Felise Va’a, *Saili Matagi, Samoan Migrants in Australia*, 2001, 146.

<sup>91</sup> Personal Interview, Levale Peseta, Fairfield Heights, Sydney Australia, 22 January 2018.





*Figure 9: Toailoa and wife Senetenari with Rev Gafoa Faitua at the laying of foundation before construction began on the new church and hall.<sup>92</sup> Figure 10: Toailoa and Senetenari with Rev Gafoa Faitua at the laying of the foundation before construction began on the new church and hall.<sup>93</sup>*

Upon completion of the new church and hall the work was blessed with a *fa'aulufalega* ceremony which was a two day affair where delegates from around Australia, New Zealand and Samoa attended. Those in attendance included the Chairman of the Elders Committee Rev Elder Risatisone Ete, as well as Rev Atapana Alama who was Chairman of the General Assembly of the CCCS at the time. In total there were forty two *ta'alolo* which included six from Samoa, the villages of Sapapalii, Vaipua, Laulii, Siufaga Falelatai, Sa'anapu and Fasitootai. From New Zealand, CCCS Panmure, and CCCS Greenlane also attended as well as the many CCCS in and around Australia.<sup>94</sup>



*Figure 11: The new church building “Peteli Fou” and adjoining hall “Maluapapa”.<sup>95</sup> Figure 12: Inside the church “Peteli Fou”.<sup>96</sup>*

<sup>92</sup> Photo supplied by Senetenari Toailoa, photographer unknown.

<sup>93</sup> Photo supplied by Senetenari Toailoa, photographer unknown.

<sup>94</sup> Personal Interview, Loli F.Leilua, Fairfield Heights, Sydney Australia, 22 January 2018.

<sup>95</sup> Photo taken from EFKS Fairfield Facebook Page.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.





Figure 13: the pulpit and sacrament table inside the “Peteli Fou”.<sup>97</sup> Figure 14. Inside the hall “Maluapapa”.<sup>98</sup>

### 3.4 Issues and challenges

One of the biggest challenges that Samoan churches face in foreign countries like Australia is the freedom of people to move from one church to another causing instability within a church. For example if they don’t like the *faifeau*, then they would leave. This was experienced by the Church in Fairfield in its early stage. Toailoa stated that it wasn’t easy at the start. He recalled how six months after the establishment of the church there was a difference’s of opinion between him and Tago Samuelu one of the founding members of the church. This was over the allocation of roles in the church which as Toailoa stated Tago had disapproved of. Tago believed that as the senior and founding member of the church, he should choose the board and not the *faifeau*. This eventually led to Tago and his family walking out of the church.<sup>99</sup> Maintaining members of the church was thus not an easy task for the *faifeau*.

The instability of the people is one of the biggest problem with the church abroad, if one is unhappy with the *faifeau*, they will pack up everything and leave, you go to their home and knock at the door to find that they no longer live at that address.<sup>100</sup>

Hence despite the steady growth of the church since the beginning, the membership of the Church had always changed from time to time. As mentioned, people came and went, and Toailoa acknowledges that “the majority of churches outside of Samoa, people often move from one Church to another.”<sup>101</sup> There are other contributing factors for this constant change in membership. Some families relocate to another State for work or to be with other

<sup>97</sup> Photo taken from EFKS Fairfield Facebook Page.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Personal Interview, Peleti Toese Toailoa, Fa’atoia, Samoa, 29 May, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

family members. Some people move back to where they originally came from, whether New Zealand or Samoa, and others who passed away due to old age or illness. Another reason is financial burdens, for example with the completion of the new Church and Hall in 2006 some members left as they did not want to commit to servicing the loan.<sup>102</sup> In most cases, many leave the church if one has taken a dislike towards the *faifeau* for one reason or another. Hence they would take their families and attend another church. There are also instances of differences between church members resulting in people leaving the church. This as Toailoa highlights in his forty plus years of being a *faifeau* is a major hurdle faced by many if not all of the churches in Australia and New Zealand.

That's the problem with the church overseas, it's the instability of the people, if one is unhappy with the *faifeau* he/she will up and leave, you go and knock at their door and find that they no longer live at that address.<sup>103</sup>

He further stated that, "whereas the Churches in Samoa are governed by the village council restricting people from changing churches at will, this is not the case with the Samoan Churches overseas".<sup>104</sup>

According to Toailoa, one way to overcome this is for the *faifeau* to prepare his sermons well and to provide for the spiritual wellbeing of the members of the church. He said that people will travel great distance to attend church where they know their spiritual needs are looked after and the *faifeau*'s sermons are well prepared.<sup>105</sup>

One important aspect of your calling is your sermon, there are many churches, so it is important you prepare your sermons well. Don't neglect your preparations, your preparation is different in a village church in Samoa to a church overseas where there is no stability. You base your sermon on the context, you want the people to leave and you have touched them through your sermon. You want to capture the person's

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> He further stated that, "The church overseas and here in Samoa is very different. When you go into a church in Samoa, there is a system already in place in particular the village council, the church is already established, the village knows their relationship with the *faifeau*. Whereas overseas, it is very different, you have the founder and the *faifeau*. It is not like the village councils in Samoa where each matai knows their role in accordance to rankings and village protocols. Overseas it is people from in and around Samoa "si Asau ma si Aopo" even untitled men are appointed as deacons, giving them a voice in the church council. As a *faifeau* you must know how to approach such situations, how to deal with people. It is not easy being a *faifeau* overseas, you don't have the authority of the village council which is of great help." Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

attention with your sermon. In Samoa regardless how bad your sermon is people will still come to church the next Sunday because of the authority of the village council.<sup>106</sup>

Another issue in the early stages of the church was getting more people to attend, and often Toailoa would attend Samoan community functions and celebrations in and around Sydney talking and conversing with people. This as Toailoa states was one way of getting people to come to church. Sometimes its just a matter of letting people know, and the *faiifeau* needs to be proactive in going out to the community and letting people know of the existence of a Samoan church in the area.

The *faiifeau* needs to put his calling first, don't sit around waiting for people to come, but go out and let people know about his ministry. The *faiifeau* needs to go to places where there are Samoan people, in public places, meet and greet, ask them what village they come from, it all starts from there.<sup>107</sup>

Another challenge faced early on in the establishment of CCCS Fairfield Church was getting finance to purchase the property at 391 Cabramatta Road. As Levale Peseta church secretary from 1985 to 1990 stated, when they first approached the bank, their request was turned down, but it was their perseverance and the help of Holy Spirit that enabled them to obtain finance.<sup>108</sup> James Dupri QC as mentioned above was instrumental as it was his trust-fund account that was used as guarantor for the loan. He also helped in Toailoa and family's application for residency.

In hindsight the development of the CCCS Church at Fairfield has been challenging but as we have seen, despite these challenges the Church had been able to accomplish many remarkable milestones that is testimony to their hard work and in particular their faith in God. Hence as in the eyes of Toailoa, God is no longer dragged in the wayside but is housed in a beautiful Church dedicated to his glory.

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<sup>106</sup> Personal Interview with pensioned Reverend Elder Peleti Toese Toailoa, Faatoia, Upolu Samoa, 29 May 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Toailoa also stressed that "...the *faiifeau* must put his calling first before everything else, don't sit around waiting for things to happen, go out and meet and greet people. Go to where there is a gathering of Samoan people, introduce yourself, ask them which village do they come from, that's a starting point." Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Personal Interview, Levale Peseta, Fairfield, Sydney NSW, 28th January 2018.

## Conclusion

This research has set out to document an inaugural history of CCCS Fairfield Church from its formation in 1984 to 2016.

In chapter one, we looked at the establishment of the CCCS in Australia, starting with Samoan migration to Australia. We have learned that before the 1980s, Samoan migration to Australia was far and few in between. The earliest known Samoans to have set foot in Australia were in the 1830s, most likely Samoans on board trading and whaling ships. Later on with the arrival of Christianity, more Samoans began to make frequent contact with Australia through the LMS, Wesleyans and Catholics sending students to Australia to be trained as ministers. It was not until the mid-1980s that mass migration eventuated with many Samoans having lived in New Zealand hopping across the Tasman to escape the economic recession in the search of a new start in Australia. The Tran Tasman Agreement (TTA) between Australia and New Zealand gave freedom for citizens of either country to travel between the two nations was instrumental, as most Samoans entered Australia as New Zealand citizens. As a result Samoans migrating to Australia finally led to the establishment of the CCCS Church in Australia. Hence as we have learned, it was the Samoans' *sailiga malo* – their search for a better way of life, that played a crucial role in the founding of the first CCCS Churches in Australia beginning in the state of NSW.

In chapter two, we focussed on the origin and establishment of the CCCS Fairfield Church. We learnt that the Church in Fairfield was founded by those who established the first CCCS Church in Australia at Balmain. The reason they founded this new church was because they had shifted to the outer suburbs like Fairfield where there was more affordable housing and employment opportunities. Hence Balmain had become too expensive and too far for them to travel. We learnt of the important roles of Church Ministers such as Tapa Faletose in the establishment of not only the CCCS Church in Australia but also in the establishment of the CCCS Fairfield Church. We also learnt that those Samoan migrants took with them their culture and their religion, their "*maota tauave*" - their identity which connects them back to the motherland. Hence they set about establishing a Samoan church, one of many, a trend which is still continuing today.

In chapter three we observed the growth of the CCCS Fairfield Church, from its humble beginning of three *matafales* in 1984 and growing to become one of the most

established CCCS churches in Australia with over 40 *matafales* in the mid-1990s. However we also saw a slow decline in membership from 2006 onwards and more noticeably in 2015. The slow decline from 2006 onwards is attributed to various reasons as mentioned in the chapter, such as interstate movement due to family reasons, disagreements not only with the Minister but amongst members, as well as financial reasons when some members did not want to commit to servicing loans for the Church's building projects. Despite these challenges we also learned of the great accomplishments in the development of the Church at Fairfield. Firstly with the purchase of the land and properties at 391 Cabramatta Road in 1987 where we learnt of the important roles of not only Toailoa but people like James Dupri QC and Levale Peseta in the lead up to the acquisition of the property. Such an accomplishment according to Toailoa greatly helped encouraged the members and was one way to stop people from leaving the church. Secondly was the construction of the New Church and Hall in 2005, a project that cost \$1.8 million. Although the project incurred a loan of \$1.1 million, it showed the determination of Toailoa and the members of the Church to develop the Church. For Toailoa, he drew inspiration from the Bible and from the Samoans' high regard for their God. A God that should not be dragged by the wayside but housed in the best building that they could muster. Finally in this chapter, we learned of the challenges faced by the Church, mainly the instability in terms of the members of the church. As shown this was due largely to the context of a Samoan community in a foreign land. Hence outside of the stability of a Samoan village, the Samoans in Fairfield and in Australia had the freedom to leave and to do as they please, thus making it harder to maintain members. However as Toailoa had testified, this gives the Minister other avenues and strategies to attract the people, like improving on his preaching, and being more proactive in the ministry.

From these findings, I conclude that the history of the CCCS Fairfield Church is an inspirational story of faith and determination. Those who established the Church did so because of their faith and belief in God. Moreover, they did so because the Church was part of their culture and their identity. Hence as they moved to a foreign land they took this with them and in their determination, they not only established a Samoan Church, but were able to develop it to where it is now, one of the most successful and thriving Samoan churches in Australia.

## GLOSSARY

Āiavā	the process of giving gifts in appreciation of service, normally performed by the mothers group where they dance and sing with each member carrying whatever gift they have presenting to the person concerned.
Auaiga	family
A'oa'o	theological student
Api o le Galuega	parish log book
Fa'aaloaloga	Samoan custom of gift giving, mainly fine mats or monetary sometimes food
Fa'aulufalega	blessing ceremony at the completion of a new house, hall or church building
Fa'asamoa	Samoan way
Fa'asinomaga	cultural identity
Faifeau	Reverend
Faletua	Reverends wife
Gagana	language
Loto fuatia ifo	freewill offering
Matafale	members of the congregation that contributes financially and partakes in church activities
Palagi	Europeans
Tausala	Samoan siva, where the young maiden dances centre stage with people giving money in appreciation of her dancing
Taleni	talent

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