

## Refugee Review Tribunal

### AUSTRALIA

#### RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

**Research Response Number:** CHN30352  
**Country:** China  
**Date:** 2 August 2006

Keywords: CHN30352 – China – Australia – Christians – Shouters – Church in Sydney

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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#### Questions

1. Is the “Church in Sydney” the official church of the Christian denomination founded by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee?
2. What branches does the “Church in Sydney” have, and what are their addresses?
3. Are Mr Tony Chea and Mr Rick Gartside elders of the church?
4. Are there any other church groups in Sydney which claim (legitimately or otherwise) a membership or affiliation of the Christian denomination founded by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee?

#### RESPONSE

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4. Are there any other church groups in Sydney which claim (legitimately or otherwise) a membership or affiliation of the Christian denomination founded by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee?

The Church in Sydney was contacted in regard to this matter on 11 July 2006 (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to the Local Church in Sydney ‘Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: CHN30352)’, 11 July – Attachment 1).

The Elders of the Local Church in Sydney replied on 1 August 2006. The information is as follows:

We are one of some 3,500 congregations outside of China who follow the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee. We follow the biblical practice of meeting as one church in each city (referred to as a locality) and thus have been referred to as the local churches. While we do not by our belief have any official organization, we are ‘affiliated’ by fellowship with the other churches following this ministry. We certainly believe that we are those practising according to the ministry of Nee and Lee. We would, however, point out that the term

'Shouters' has been applied to various diverse Christian groups in China. Some of these groups have similar beliefs and practices to us. We cannot without checking on the particular congregation that your applicant attended, say whether this applies to them.

1. We have some 300 members, apart from children, in Sydney and meet in seven districts around the metropolitan area for the Sunday Lord's Table meeting and speaking on the Sunday as well as prayer meetings, home meetings, young people's meetings etc. Our postal address is PO Box 3133, Telopea, NSW 2117. We are registered as an Incorporated Association and as an income tax exempt charity.

2. Our main meeting places on Sundays are:

A. The Baukham Hills Council Function Centre, Corner Carrington and Showground Roads;

B. The Alpha Park Community Centre, Alpha Street, Blacktown;

C. The Randwick Public School, Cowper Street, Randwick;

D. Labour Council Building, Level 1 Unit 8/377-383 Sussex Street, Sydney

E. Our smaller districts meet in homes as follows:

- 237 Crooked Lane, North Richmond;
- 47 Claremont Circle, Glen Alpine;
- 108 Carlton Parade, Carlton.

4. Mr Tony Cheah is one of the six Elders, the others being, Dr David Foley, Richard Salmon, Terrance Tay, Testimony Kim and Professor Ron Topsom. Rick Gartside is a district responsible brother for the Blacktown District.

5. We are aware of one small group in Sydney who to some extent follow the ministry of Watchman Nee and Witness Lee but they are not in fellowship with us or the local churches worldwide (Elders of the Local Church in Sydney 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: CHN30352)', 1 August – Attachment 2).

### **List of Attachments**

1. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to the Local Church in Sydney 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: CHN30352)', 11 July.
2. Elders of the Local Church in Sydney 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: CHN30352)', 1 August.