

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

22 – 25 March 2018

PRESENT Stuart McMillan (President), Felicity Amery, Peter Andrews, Alison Atkinson-Phillips, Bethany Broadstock, Hayden Charles, Dennis Corowa, Garry Dronfield, Andrew Dutney, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Zac Hatfield Dodds, Haloti Kailahi, Denise Liersch, Amelia Koh-Butler, Deidre Palmer, Catherine Pepper, Ian Price, Akesa Racava, Elaine Rae, Isabel Thomas-Dobson, Ian Tozer, Warwick van Ede, Jacki Watts, Wendie Wilkie.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Rob Brown, Heather den Houting, David de Kock, Jane Fry, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford.

WORSHIP On the Thursday evening Colleen Geyer, as part of the formation of the community, led worship. During worship she acknowledged Cadigal Clan Nation of the Eora people by paying respects for the wisdom of their elders past and present, their care of country and to all descendants of this nation. On the Friday morning the worship was conducted by Wendie Wilkie and in the evening the worship and Service of Holy Communion were celebrated by the President, Garry Dronfield, Dennis Corowa as well as Maggie Dieter and Lorna Standingready from the United Church of Canada. On the Saturday Bethany Broadstock conducted morning worship and Mark Lawrence led evening prayers. On the Sunday Andrew Dutney led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by the President.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all participants to the meeting. Also welcomed were Megan O'Connell, UAICC, as observer, delegates from the United Church of Canada, including the Moderator Jordon Cantwell for Friday after afternoon tea and evening session, Al Macrae and Ji Zhang for matters related to marriage discussion, Heather Watson for matters related to Royal Commission for the conversation on Redress and for matters related to UnitingCare Australia, John Cox for matters related to Royal Commission, Lindsay Cullen for matters related to Reimagining Assembly Groups, Jannine Jackson and Jim Mein for matters related to Frontier Services, Claerwen Little and Bronwyn Pike for matters related to UnitingCare Australia.

APOLOGIES

18.01 **It was resolved** to receive the apology from Steve Francis and Peter Jones for the whole meeting, Bethany Broadstock for Thursday night, Catherine Pepper for Thursday night, Friday morning and afternoon, Jane Fry for Thursday night and Warwick van Ede for Thursday night and Friday morning and afternoon.

PASTORAL MATTERS

The participants were informed that Steve Francis underwent a heart operation, Ronang Garrawurra had multiple strokes and was in hospital. It was also shared that Dennis Corowa is now the National Elder of UAICC after finishing up as National Chairperson.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1.
- 18.02** **It was resolved** to approve the timetable and agenda of the meeting as outlined in Document 1, noting that the committee is free to vary the agenda at any time.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 18.03** **It was resolved to** confirm the minutes of the meeting held 10 - 12 November 2017.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was reported.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

Standing Committee members were reminded of the Constitution clause 39, as per ASC minute 00.71:

“On matters which, by a two thirds majority vote, the Assembly deems to be vital to the life of the Church, the Assembly shall seek the concurrence of the Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine.”

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

On the Thursday evening the President reported to the Standing Committee on his various activities since the November 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee.

- 18.04** **It was resolved** to receive the report (Attachment A).

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Assembly Resourcing Unit (ASC Minute 17.47.03)

Rob Floyd and Lindsay Cullen introduced Document 5 with its attachments. Document A being a report from Christian Unity Working Group re Dialogues, Document B being the draft Terms of Reference for the Lutheran Church of Australia and the Uniting Church in Australia Dialogue, Document C being a report from Multi Cross-Cultural Ministry National Reference Committee, Document D being the newly developed Circles of Interest, Document E being the proposed Process for Recruiting Advocates and Panel Members, Document F being the draft mandate for the Standards for Ministries Committee, Document G being the draft Mandate for the Polity Reference Committee, Document H being the draft Terms of Reference for Task Groups Template, Document I being ‘For the Whole Creation – A Statement’, Document J being ‘For the Whole Creation’ and Document K being correspondence from the Education for Ministry Working Group.

- 18.05** **It was resolved to:**

18.05.01 receive the report;

18.05.02 adopt the Mandate for Standards for Ministries Committee as amended at the meeting (Attachment B);

18.05.03 adopt the Mandate for Polity Reference Committee as amended at the meeting (Attachment C);

18.05.04 affirm the direction of the For the Whole Creation statement to be presented to the 15th Assembly; and

18.05.05 note the correspondence from the Education for Ministry Working Group.

2. Church Polity Reference Committee (ASC Minute 17.38.02)

Andrew Dutney spoke to Document 15, consisting of a report on the discussions held by the Polity Reference Committee concerning the issues of legal incorporation, the place of UAICC within the Constitution and structure of the Uniting Church and the clarification of Regulation 3.6.3.4 with respect to the roles of CEO/General Secretary and the Moderator in the Presbytery and Synod of South Australia.

18.06 **It was resolved to** receive the report.

3. Marriage Discussion (ASC Minute 17.54.02)

3.1 Report from the Working Group on Doctrine

Alistair Macrea introduced Documents 2, 2A and 2B, consisting of a report from the Doctrine Working Group on the Marriage Discussion, an executive summary and the draft proposals. Ji Zhang spoke to the theological aspects of the matter. Table group discussion ensued.

18.07 **It was resolved to:**

18.07.01 receive the report;

18.07.02 bring the following proposals to the Fifteenth Assembly as part of the Assembly Standing Committee Report on Marriage and Same-gender Relationships;

18.07.03 note that the Working Group on Doctrine Report documents a continuing and faithful struggle on matters relating to sexuality and marriage spanning several decades in the Uniting Church; and that the issue of same-gender marriage is one about which many Uniting Church people faithfully hold strong and at times mutually exclusive convictions;

18.07.04 adopt the following policy statement on marriage:

Marriage is a gift God has given to humankind for the well-being of the whole human family. For Christians, marriage is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life. It is intended to be the mutually faithful life-long union of two people expressed in every part of their life together. In marriage two people seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship;

18.07.05 affirm that Ministers and celebrants authorised by the Uniting Church in Australia may exercise freedom of conscience with regards to accepting requests to celebrate marriages, including same-gender marriages, according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia;

18.07.06 request the Assembly Officers to direct the appropriate Assembly body to prepare an authorised Marriage Liturgy suitable for opposite-gender and same-gender couples for approval by the Standing Committee at its August 2018 meeting; and

18.07.07 note that Church Councils have the authority under Regulation 4.4.1 to permit or refuse the use of any property held for the use of the

Congregation for same-gender weddings, but do not have the authority to require or prevent a Minister in placement in their Congregation from celebrating same-gender marriages.

3.2 Marriage Conversation – Other Considerations

Colleen Geyer spoke to Documents 3, consisting of a report on the discussions held by the Assembly Officers with respect to Synod responses to conversations held on marriage at Synod meetings, Documents 3A-3E being feedback from the Synods and 3F being a letter from the Moderator, NSW.ACT Synod. Table group discussion followed.

18.08 It was resolved to:

- 18.08.01 receive the report;
- 18.08.02 request Working Group on Doctrine to expand and rework the Executive Summary to the Resource Paper;
- 18.08.03 request the Working Group on Doctrine to have the reworked Executive Summary written in plain English by 13th April;
- 18.08.04 request the General Secretary to work with the Assembly Theologian in Residence and the Chair of Multicultural and Cross-cultural National Reference Committee to identify up to five languages that the reworked Executive Summary may be distributed by the 30th April,
- 18.08.05 approve that the Assembly Standing Committee report on Marriage and Same-gender Relationships, including overview of process, proposals with rationale, the Working Group on Doctrine executive summary and introduction and the Working Group on Doctrine paper will be distributed in the first tranche of papers by 30th April.
- 18.08.06 that Past President (Stuart McMillan) and Andrew Dutney present the report to the Assembly; and
- 18.08.07 agree to meet by teleconference to approve the Assembly Standing Committee report on Marriage and Same-gender Relationships to the Fifteenth Assembly on 19 April (with documentation to Assembly Standing Committee members no later than 16 April).

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Peter Andrews spoke to Documents 13, 13A and 13B, consisting of a report on the work of the Committee, the statement of net available funds as at 31 January 2018 and a report on the sale of the Burwood Manse.

18.09 It was resolved to

- 18.09.01 receive the report; and
- 18.09.02 endorse the sale of the Burwood Manse

2. Assembly Legal Reference Committee

Warwick van Ede presented Document 10, consisting of a report on the amendments to the Regulations 2.5.1-2.5.3 and 2.5.3.1-2.5.3.4 following review by the Assembly Legal Reference Committee for their approval.

18.10 It was resolved to

18.10.01 receive the report; and

18.10.02 approve the changes to the Regulations regarding the Admission of Ministers (Regulations 2.5.1-2.5.3) from another Denomination and the Admission of Former Ministers of the Church (Regulations 2.5.3.1-2.5.3.4) (Attachment D); and

18.10.03 determine that they take effect 25 March 2018.

3. Frontier Services

Jannine Jackson and Jim Mein presented Document 12, consisting of an update report on Frontier Services transition from Community Service model to a Fundraising organisation, Document 12A being the Strategic Plan for Frontier Services 2018-2022, 12B being the Brand Refresh Guidelines, 12C being the 5-year rolling budget and Document 12D being the John Flynn Foundation Trust Deed.

18.11 It was resolved to

18.11.01 receive the report;

18.11.02 acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Grahame Ryan, Glenn Price who served Frontier Services for a number of years as well as Keith Fagg & Rosemary Young (John Flynn Trustees.)

4. General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary spoke to Document 17, consisting of a report on Assembly operations and issues relevant to its work.

18.12 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. National Royal Commission Task Group

John Cox and Heather Watson spoke to Documents 4, consisting of a report from the National Task Group on the work being done with respect to engaging with and responding to the Royal Commission, Document 4A being the Joint Submission to Senate Inquiry re Redress, Document 4B being a Redress background paper, Document 4B-1 being the Structuring for the National Redress Scheme, Document 4B-2 being the Mechanism for Redress, Document 4C being a paper on the establishment of a Safe Church Unit, Document 4D being a report on the Professional Standards Project, Document 4D-1 containing the UCA's National Professional Standards and Document 4D-2 being the Timeframe Outline for Review on National Professional Standards for Ministry Agents.

18.13 It was resolved to:

18.13.01 receive the report of the National Task Group;

18.13.02 endorse the renewed delivery timetable for the Safe Church Unit with respect to the Uniting Church response to providing redress to survivors;

18.13.03 a) note the prior consultation with UCA Assembly Ltd and other Councils of the Church which have occurred in support of the establishment of this legal entity;

18.13.04 b) direct UCA Assembly Ltd to create a legal entity (public company limited by guarantee) in accordance with the principals outlined in the Document 4B –

Redress Background Paper, Document 4B-1 Structuring for the National Redress Scheme, Document 4B-2 being the Mechanism for Redress with both Assembly and Synod members , noting that UCA Assembly Ltd is to act on behalf of the Assembly member and be the initiating member for the purpose of incorporation;

- c) appoint the initial transition board with appropriate delegations to progress these recommendations between Assembly Standing Committee meetings and report progress to the next Assembly Standing Committee meeting. The transition board members are:
 - (i) Colleen Geyer
 - (ii) John Cox
 - (iii) Dion Gooderham
- d) note the intended next stage consultation and 'opt in' process is to be outlined to Synods for decisions from their respective Standing Committees (or other delegated bodies);
- e) note the intention of the Royal Commission National Task Group to:
 - (i) hold a 'workshop' on 13 April to progress engagement and to determine the recommended nature and extent of reserve powers and decision making processes for recommendation to Assembly and Synod members. It will also consider the operational and governance arrangements for the Safe Church Unit; and
 - (ii) take the recommended model that emerges from the 'Workshop' to Synods during May and June for engagement and to seek their support to 'opt in' to the model of governance and legal structure proposed.

6. UnitingCare Australia

Brownyn Pike, Claerwen Little and Heather Watson presented Document 16, consisting of a summary of the proposed changes to the governance of UnitingCare Australia, Document 16A being the draft updated UnitingCare Australia Mandate, Document 16B being the draft Unitingcare Australia Board Charter March 2018 and Document 16C being the Summary of Key provisions in the New Charter.

18.14 It was resolved to:

- 18.14.01 receive the revised UnitingCare Australia Mandate and the UnitingCare Australia Board Charter as drafts;
- 18.14.02 direct UnitingCare Australia to engage with and respond to the issues raised by the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee; and
- 18.14.03 bring a revised UnitingCare Australia Mandate and UnitingCare Australia Board Charter to a meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee by teleconference to be held in May 2018.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Assembly Standing Committee Report to the 15th Assembly

The General Secretary introduced Document 7, consisting of a draft report from the Standing Committee regarding its work over the current triennium to the 15th Assembly. The participants discussed the report and offered feedback.

18.15 It was resolved to:

- 18.15.01 receive the report; and

18.15.02 approve the final form of the report as amended at the meeting to be included in the reports to the Fifteenth Assembly

2. Consent Agenda

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 9, Consent Agenda.

18.16 It was resolved to:

18.16.01 receive the Governance Reference Committee report;

18.16.02 approve the ASC Governance Reference Committee be instituted again for the coming triennium;

18.16.03 request the General Secretary, the President-Elect, Geoffrey Grinton and one other ASC member undertake a review of the Terms of Reference for the Committee, and bring any amendments to the August 2018 ASC meeting;

18.16.04 a) receive the report re the Uniting Church in Australia Beneficiary Fund;

b) in accordance with the Procedures for the Appointment of Policy Committee Members and agreement with the Mercer Super Trust:

- (i) appoint Rev Robert Elkhuisen to fill the vacant position of Assembly Representative for the balance of the term of office of Rev Michelle Cook to expire on 30 June 2021;
- (ii) appoint Mr Bruce Binnie as Member Representative for a term of four years from 1 July 2018;
- (iii) extends the appointment of Dr Alice McCleary as Member Representative to 30 June 2020; and
- (iv) appoints Rev Sharon Hollis as Assembly Representative for the period from 1 March 2018 to 30 June 2020

18.16.05 receive the report of the Remote Area Ministry Working Group;

18.16.06 note the following as the UCAF National Committee 2018 – 2021:

- Chairperson, Janet Woodward
- Secretary, Max Howland
- Treasurer, Lindsay Parker
- Chaplains, Revs Marty & Naomi Rosenberg
- Ecumenical & International Liaison Officer, Mrs Lesley Williams,
- Member, Bev Freeman.

3. General Report to the 15th Assembly

The General Secretary introduced Document 6, consisting of an update on planning for the 15th Assembly.

18.17 It was resolved to:

18.17.01 receive the report;

18.17.02 note the Assembly Standing Committee appointments to the Fifteenth Assembly;

18.17.03 appoint the following people as the Business Committee of the Fifteenth Assembly:
Geoffrey Grinton (Chair)
Colleen Geyer
Deidre Palmer
Stuart McMillan
Heather Watson

Mark Lawrence
Jenny Tymms;
One other member with a view to succession

- 18.17.04 request the Assembly Officers to determine up to five additional appointments to membership of the Fifteenth Assembly, taking into account the issues to be discussed and members who are already appointed, if they deem it to be necessary, subject to the Regulations.

4. Incorporation Update

The General Secretary spoke to Document 14, consisting of an update report on the related work regarding incorporation and the structure and legal identity of the Uniting Church.

- 18.18** **It was resolved to** receive the report.

5. Other Proposals to the 15th Assembly

The General Secretary presented Document 8, consisting of an overview of other proposals, other than those discussed in other documents and Rob Floyd spoke to Document 8A, containing a draft Domestic and Family Violence Statement. The other documents included Document 8B – Review of the Regulations, Document C – Affirmed Member and Document 8D – Voluntary Assisted Dying.

- 18.19** **It was resolved to:**

- 18.19.01 a) receive the report; and
- 18.19.02 b) affirm the direction of the Domestic and Family Violence Statement to be presented to the 15th Assembly;
- 18.19.03 a) receive the report; and
- b) establish a Task Group consisting of the General Secretary, Heather den Houting and Catherine Pepper to bring to the new Assembly Standing Committee issues regarding the Regulations which may need addressing by the Uniting Church for the future;
- 18.19.04 endorse the proposals regarding 'Affirmed Member' to be taken to the Fifteenth Assembly;
- 18.19.05 note the proposal regarding Voluntary Assisted Dying that will be brought to the Fifteenth Assembly by UnitingCare Australia for information;
- 18.19.06 identify which Assembly Standing Committee members will bring proposals 8A, 8B and 8C to the Fifteenth Assembly.

6. Risk Management

The General Secretary spoke to Document 11, consisting of a reviewed Risk Register and an update on the move to implementing Protecht Risk Management Tool across the Assembly.

- 18.20** **It was resolved to:**

- 18.20.01 receive the report;
- 18.20.02 note the Protecht Risk management tool implantation for the Assembly and its Agencies;

- 18.20.03 note that the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee has reviewed the revised Risk Register;
- 18.20.04 request the participants of the Assembly Standing Committee to provide comments regarding the revised Risk Register to the General Secretary by 30 April 2018; and
- 18.20.05 request the General Secretary to incorporate the comments received from the participants into the Risk Register to come to the incoming Assembly Standing Committee

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4.00pm with prayer led by the President.

DATES FOR 2018: 24 – 26 August 2018
9 – 11 November 2018