

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

13 – 15 March 2020

PRESENT Deidre Palmer (President), David Baker, Rob Brown, Hayden Charles, Garry Dronfield, Steve Francis, Colleen Geyer, Geoffrey Grinton, Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson, Mark Kickett, Jason Kioa, Elaine Ledgerwood, Clare Ligtermoet, Stuart McMillan, Kath Merrifield, Nicole Mugford, Helen Paine, Catherine Pepper, Geoff Thompson, Yuko Tonai-Moore, Stuart Woodward.

In attendance: Felicity Amery, Jenny Bertalan, David de Kock, Heather den Houting, Rob Floyd, Jane Fry, Haloti Kailahi, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford and Ji Zhang.

WORSHIP On the Friday evening the President and Kath Merrifield, as part of the formation of the community, led worship. During worship the President 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 Saturday Garry Dronfield conducted morning worship and Rob Brown led evening prayers. On the Sunday Geoff Thompson and Rachel Kronberger (via Zoom) led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Steve Francis.

WELCOMES The President welcomed all participants to the meeting. Also welcomed were Claerwen Little and Paul Linossier for matters related to UnitingCare Australia and Royal Commission Updates, Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Jason Bryan for matters related to the Assembly Investment Committee Charter Revision, Sureka Goringe for matters related to UnitingWorld, John Cox and Peter Andrews for matters related to National Safe Church Unit, John Cox for matters related to Resourcing Ministry Agents Project (Professional Standards), Anne Cross and Sarah Lim for matters related to UCA Redress Ltd., Rachel Kronberger (via Zoom) for matters related to the Continuing Witness Task Group report, Lindsay Cullen for matters related to the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020-2023 and the Continuing Witness Task Group report.

20.01 **It was resolved** to receive the apology from Fie Marino, Elaine Rae and Ian Tozer for the whole meeting, Jane Fry for Saturday afternoon, Hayden Charles for Saturday morning.

PASTORAL MATTERS

During worship the participants prayed for Elaine Rae and Simon Hansford and congratulated Jason Kioa on the awarding of his D.Min. They also celebrated the appointment of a new Bush Chaplain to Frontier Services. The President led the meeting in prayer.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1.

20.02 **It was resolved to:**

20.02.01 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; and

20.02.02 remove Document 7 – CA2 – UnitingCare Australia Board Nominations from the Consent Agenda.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

20.03 It was resolved to confirm the minutes of the meeting held 8-10 November 2019.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

20.04 It was resolved to:

- a) note:
 - (i) Stuart McMillan's conflict of interest in relation to Document 8, UnitingCare Board Nominations, since he is on the Nomination Committee; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not vote;
- b) note:
 - (i) Stuart McMillan's conflict of interest in relation to Document 15, General Secretary Goals, since his is an Assembly staff person; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be absent for this business;
- c) note:
 - (i) Stuart McMillan's conflict of interest in relation to Document 16, General Secretary Process, since he is an Assembly staff person; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be absent for this business;
- c) note:
 - (i) Stuart McMillan's conflict of interest in relation to Document 18, Assembly Resourcing Unit Report, since he is the Assembly Covenanting Consultant and is mentioned in the report; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak and vote;
- d) note:
 - (i) Mark Lawrence's conflict of interest in relation to Document 14, Presidential Ruling No. 34, since he was involved in this matter as the General Secretary of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be absent for this business;
- e) note:
 - (i) Sharon Hollis' conflict of interest in relation to Document 14, Presidential Ruling No. 34, since she was a member of the Synod that made the original decision is that is the subject of the Presidential ruling and is a member of the Standing Committee that approved the Synod's response to the President. In her time as Moderator she had correspondence from the person who requested the Moderator to request a Presidential ruling
 - (ii) resolve that she be in attendance for this business but not speak or vote;
- f) note:
 - (i) Colleen Geyer' conflict of interest in relation to Document 15, General Secretary Goals, since she is the Assembly General Secretary for whom the goals are set; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be in attendance for this business and speak if needed;
- g) note:

- (i) Colleen Geyer' conflict of interest in relation to Document 16, General Secretary Process, since she is the Assembly General Secretary whose placement process is reviewed; and
 - (ii) resolve that she be absent for this business;
- h) note:
- (i) Andrew Johnson' conflict of interest in relation to Document 14, Presidential Ruling No.34, since he is a member of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee which assisted the President with making the ruling; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not vote; and
- i) note:
- (i) Andrew Johnson' conflict of interest in relation to Document 20, National Safe Church Unit Report, since he was involved in the NSW Strategic Plan; and
 - (ii) resolve that he be in attendance for this business but not speak.

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 Friday evening, the President reported to the Standing Committee.

20.05 It was resolved to receive the report (Attachment A).

UAICC REPORT

On the Saturday evening Garry Dronfield and Mark Kickett delivered a verbal report to the Standing Committee on the meeting of the UAICC National Executive.

20.06 It was resolved to receive the report.

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Assembly Standing Committee Confidentiality Statement and Communications Strategy (ASC Minute 19.72.04)

The General Secretary and Matt Pulford presented Document 22, consisting of a draft communications strategy for the work of the Assembly Standing Committee and a discussion paper regarding the confidentiality of Assembly Standing Committee minutes and papers.

20.07. It was resolved to:

20.07.01 approve the Assembly Standing Community Communications Strategy; and

20.07.02 a) approve that the documents associated with the Assembly Standing Committee meetings are kept confidential to the Assembly Standing Committee members, while the minutes of Assembly Standing Committee meeting are provided on the Assembly website following their confirmation by the following meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee. This is set

out in the Assembly Standing Committee Confidentiality of Assembly Standing Committee Documents Statement. (Attachment B); and

- b) this is not to prevent the Assembly Standing Committee members from communicating and explaining the decisions of the Assembly Standing Committee consistent with the official communications channels and any communications strategy agreed by the Assembly Standing Committee.

2. Continuing Witness Task Group Report (ASC Minutes 18.35 and 18.53)

Within the framework of the Sunday morning worship, Rachel Kronberger (via Zoom) and Geoff Thompson spoke to Document 17, consisting of an update report on the work the Task Group has done so far, the rationale and status within the UCA of any confessions that have been adopted, the vision of the use of such documents, the Belhar Confession and the revised process and schedule.

20.08 It was resolved to:

20.08.01 receive the report; and

20.08.02 approve the altered timeline proposed by the Task Group in comparison to the approved Terms of Reference.

3. General Secretary Goals (ASC Minute 19.61.03)

The President-elect chaired the meeting while the President spoke to Document 15, consisting of the proposed goals for the General Secretary identified for the following two years. Table group discussion followed.

20.09 It was resolved to confirm the goals for the General Secretary for 2020-2021 as follows:

- Negotiation of next three-year funding agreement with the Synods
- Develop a plan for the financial sustainability for the Assembly with the Assembly Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
- Finalise deliverables from current Strategic Plan and embed the new Strategic Plan
- Strengthen the new Assembly structure to continue to deliver outcomes for the whole church
- Evaluate the Assembly structure and Circles of Interest by March 2021
- Deliver outcomes from communications strategies identified
- Continue to contribute to opportunities for national collaboration and cooperation to provide foundations for a sustainable future for the UCA
- Plan for and deliver a successful 16th Assembly
- Maintain an ongoing relationship with Congress National Executive

4. General Secretary Process (ASC Minute 19.61.03)

The President-elect chaired the meeting while the President spoke to Document 16, consisting of a proposed process to determine the continuation or conclusion of Ms. Colleen Geyer's ministry placement as the Assembly General Secretary.

20.10 It was resolved to:

20.10.01 approve the following process for considering the extension of the Assembly General Secretary beyond the conclusion of her current placement:

- a) the Task Group appointed by the ASC, is authorised to secure a HR professional to conduct the process that enables the Assembly and the Assembly General Secretary to discern whether Ms. Colleen Geyer will

continue in her placement as Assembly General Secretary beyond the concluding date of her current placement (January 2022);

- b) the Task Group will bring a report and recommendation for extension or conclusion of the placement to the July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee; and
- c) If agreed, the Assembly Standing Committee will bring a recommendation for extension of the placement to the 16th Assembly;

20.10.02 approve the nomination of the President (Convenor), Geoffrey Grinton, Jason Kioa, Alistair Macrae and Elaine Rae as the members of the Task Group; and

20.10.03 request the Task Group bring recommendations regarding any changes to the current Ministry Description and remuneration for the position of Assembly General Secretary to the July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

5. Resourcing Ministry Agents Project (Professional Standards (ASC Minute 16.69))

John Cox presented Document 21, consisting of a status report on the Resourcing Ministry Agents Project, the evolution of an original project proposal which sought to develop Professional Standards for Ministry Agents.

20.11 It was resolved to receive the report.

6. Risk Appetite Statement (ASC Minute 19.63.02)

Rob Floyd and Leo Iosifidis introduced Documents 6 and 6A, consisting of a proposed Risk Appetite Statement which had, following feedback from the Assembly Standing Committee workshop in November 2019, been amended. Discussion in table groups ensued, each table focussing on difference risk categories.

20.12 It was resolved to endorse the updated Risk Appetite Statement.

7. Standards for Ministries Working Group – Trinity College Report (ASC Minutes 19.46.02)

Rob Floyd spoke to Document 19, consisting of a report on the outcomes of discussion on responses to a questionnaire from Ministerial Education Boards and the issues and questions under discussion at the Standards for Ministries Working Group.

20.13 It was resolved to:

20.13.01 receive the report;

20.13.02 note ASC minute 19.46;

20.13.03 note that the report has not been provided to the Assembly Standing Committee by the Standards for Ministries Committee; and

20.13.04 extend the conditional approval for accreditation for Trinity College Queensland until no later than July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.

8. UnitingWorld Report and Revised Mandate (ASC Minutes 19.64.02)

Sureka Goringe presented Documents 11, 11A and 11B, consisting of a report on the reason why the UnitingWorld Mandate needed to be updated to maintain

consistency with the new Constitution and expected PBI status, the revised Mandate and the recently approved Constitution.

- 20.14** **It was resolved to** approve the revised Mandate for UnitingWorld. (Attachment C)

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee Report and Risk Registers

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis spoke to Documents 3 and 3A, consisting of a report on the management of finance, audit and risk issues across the Assembly and an update on the Assembly Risk Registers.

- 20.15** **It was resolved to:**

- 20.15.01 a) receive the report; and
- c) formally thank the people involved in the project to wind up the former Home Endowment Fund (HEF); and
- 20.15.02 a) endorse the updated residual risk assessments for the risks identified;
- d) endorse the significant and high residual risks as listed; and
- e) note the spread of residual risks as presented.

2. Assembly Investment Committee Charter Revision

Jason Bryan and Stuart Woodward presented Document 5, 5A and 5B, consisting of a report on the review of the current Assembly Investment Committee Charter, a mark up copy of the proposed Charter and a clean copy of the draft one.

- 20.16** **It was resolved to** approve the revised Assembly Investment Committee (now renamed as the Assembly Investment Advisory Committee) Charter as amended at the meeting. (Attachment D)

3. Assembly Resourcing Unit

Lindsay Cullen, Rob Floyd and Matt Pulford presented Document 18, consisting of a report on the work of the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU), including attachments regarding the Circles of Interest and the work of the Assembly Consultant Covenanting and the Assembly Theologian in Residence. The members were also given a preview of the new Assembly website; the national learning management platform; UnitingLearning; and the document search portal, Illuminate.

- 20.17** **It was resolved to:**

- 20.17.01 receive the report; and
- 20.17.02 request the General Secretary to provide the original decisions to establish the Circles of Interest, Panels and Advocates to the Assembly Standing Committee on the portal for their information; and
- 20.17.03 request the Assembly Resourcing Unit to facilitate the Advocates of the Circles of Interest to report on the work of the Circles and Panels to the Assembly Standing Committee on an annual basis.

4. General Secretary's Report

The General Secretary introduced Document 2, consisting of a report on the Assembly's progress against the Strategic Plan, the operations and issues relevant to its work. Table groups discussed any further issues that need to be considered, particularly with respect to the Business Plan.

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

5. National Safe Church Unit Child Safe Policy Framework

John Cox and Peter Andrews spoke to Documents 20, 20, 20B and 21, consisting of a report on the work of the National Safe Church Unit to the Stakeholder councils of the Church, the updated National Safe Church Policy Framework and an update on the work of the Professional Standards Project.

20.19 **It was resolved to:**

20.19.01 receive the Stakeholder report of the National Safe Church Unit;

20.19.02 approve the National Safe Church Policy Framework 2019; and

20.19.03 receive the Professional Standards – Resourcing Ministry Project Report.

6. UnitingCare Australia

6.1 UnitingCare Australia Board Remuneration

Claerwen Little and Paul Linossier introduced Document 8, consisting of a paper seeking agreement for UnitingCare Australia to be approved as a remunerated entity under the Assembly Board Remuneration Policy.

20.20 **It was resolved to:**

20.20.01 receive the report;

20.20.02 approve UnitingCare Australia as a remunerated entity under the Assembly Board Remuneration Policy; and

20.20.03 approve the remuneration of the UnitingCare Australia Board Chair of \$15,000 per annum and any Board Member not employed or remunerated by the Church or its agencies of \$7,000 per annum, as per the advice from Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

6.2 UnitingCare Australia Nominations

Claerwen Little presented Document 7 – CA3, consisting of the completed Expressions of Interest from Bronwyn Pike and Andrew Kinnersley to be nominated to the UnitingCare Australia Board.

20.21 **It was resolved to** appoint Brownyn Pike to the Synod nominated position until March 2022 and Andrew Kinnersley to the Board nominated position until December 2020.

6.3 Aged Care Royal Commission Update

Claerwen Little presented Document 9, consisting of a report on the activity of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety.

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

6.4 Disability Royal Commission Update

Claerwen Little presented Document 10, consisting of report on the work of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability National Task Group.

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

7. UCA Redress Ltd. Annual Report

Anne Cross and Sarah Lim spoke to Document 12, consisting of a report on the work of UCA Redress Ltd and the UCA's participation in the National Redress Scheme for survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.

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

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Additional Assembly Standing Committee Meeting

The General Secretary introduced Document 24, consisting of a paper on the possibility of holding an additional Assembly Standing Committee meeting by videoconferencing in the second half of 2020.

20.25 **It was resolved to:**

20.25.01 approve a shorter additional meeting of the Standing Committee in the second half of 2020 by videoconferencing;

20.25.02 request the General Secretary to circulate possible dates to members in order to identify when the meeting will be held; and

20.25.03 request the General Secretary to bring draft agenda items for the videoconference to the July 2020 of the Assembly Standing Committee.

2. Assembly Funding and Budget

The General Secretary introduced Document 4, consisting of a report on suggested measures for a balanced budget in 2020-21 following a reduction in funding. Table group discussion followed on the measures presented in the report.

20.26 **It was resolved to:**

20.26.01 receive the report;

20.26.02 approve the measures outlined for the construction of the 2020-21 budget;

20.26.03 request the General Secretary and the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee to bring the 2020-21 budget to the July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee for approval.

3. Assembly Strategic Plan and Budget Alignment

Lindsay Cullen introduced Documents 13 and 13A, consisting of a brief report on the development stages of the Strategic Plan for the work of the Assembly 2020 – 2023 and the draft Strategic Plan 2020-2023. The discussion in table groups focused on exploring what needs to be added to or changed within the proposed Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023.

- 20.27** **It was resolved to**, noting the challenges and risks identified by the Assembly Standing Committee and their potential impact, approve the Assembly Strategic Plan 2020 – 2023, with the amendments suggested at the meeting;

4. Consent Agenda

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 7, Consent Agenda. Document 7 – CA2 – UnitingCare Australia Board nominations had come off the Agenda and was discussed separately.

- 20.28** **It was resolved to:**

20.28.01 receive the Governance Reference Committee report;

20.28.02 appoint Cathy Williamson to the Assembly Legal Reference Committee;

- 20.28.03 a) approve the Disability Access Guidelines for use by the Assembly and Assembly Agencies; and
- b) request the General Secretary to distribute the guidelines, once approved, to the Synods for their information. Where a Synod is yet to develop their own guidelines, these guidelines may assist them with that process; and

20.28.04 amend Regulations 2.10.1(k)(ii) and 2.10.4(d) as follows:

- a) Regulation 2.10.1(k)(ii)

A Minister, Youth Worker or Lay Pastor whose placement has been terminated shall have a right of appeal which shall be dealt with in accordance with Part 6 of these Regulations. ~~The appeal shall be directed to:~~

- ~~(i) the Synod Secretary when the termination decision is made by a Presbytery;~~
- ~~(ii) the Synod Secretary of the Synod in which the appeal arises, who on the advice of the Convener of the Standing Appeal Panel shall refer the appeal to another Synod for action, when the termination decision is made by a Synod, Placements Committee or Assembly; and~~

- b) Regulation 2.10.4(d)

Any Lay Preacher whose recognition has been withdrawn by the Presbytery ~~has the right of appeal which shall be dealt with in accordance with Part 6 of these Regulations. may appeal to the Synod which shall appoint a committee to review the matter and the determination of this committee shall be final. The Presbytery shall give written notice of a determination to a Lay Preacher within 14 days of the decision being made.~~

5. Planning for the 16th Assembly

Andrew Johnson addressed the meeting and emphasised the importance of planning for the future, particularly for the 16th Assembly.

- 20.29** **It was resolved to:**

20.29.01 appoint Catherine Pepper, Mark Kickett, Andrew Johnson and the President to work with the General Secretary and the President-Elect to design a process in the lead up to and at the 16th Assembly in order to resource the Assembly to address the significant challenges and opportunities facing the Uniting Church into the future including identity, sustainability and structure;

20.29.02 request the General Secretary to arrange for time to be set aside at the July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee for the Assembly Standing Committee to consider the framing of the issues to be addressed at

the 16th Assembly and any proposed process for engagement with the Church prior to the 16th Assembly; and

20.29.03 request the Task Group to arrange to resource the conversation at the July 2020 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee and bring any proposed process for engagement with the Church prior to the 16th Assembly.

6. Presidential Ruling No.34

The ex-President chaired the meeting while the President introduced Document 14, consisting of Presidential Ruling No.34

20.30 It was resolved to confirm Presidential Ruling No.34.

7. Theme for the 16th Assembly

The President-elect spoke to Document 23, consisting of a paper on the proposed theme for the 16th Assembly 'Dwelling in Love', aimed at providing a lens to view several key callings on our life as a church.

20.31 It was resolved to:

20.31.01 receive the report; and

20.31.02 approve 'Dwelling in Love' as the theme for the 16th Assembly.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 3.30 with prayer led by Steve Francis.

**DATES FOR 2020: 17 – 19 July 2020
6 - 8 November 2020**