

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS REPORT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the restrictions of Covid there has been a lot of things happening through Congress ministry across the country.

#### **CONGRESS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

Congress National Executive has not met since July 30<sup>th</sup> as we struggled to get a quorum for our Zoom meetings. Part of this is due to some people's difficulties in accessing technology in remote regions, and part because some Executive members have other work commitments. However we have been able to continue to meet with some of our smaller task groups. The Executive is also working on when and how to run our next National Conference. The timing of this naturally has been a challenge due to Covid.

#### **Work in the REGIONS**

I was blessed to be able to spend some time in WA in July, albeit the reason for travel was "sorry business". While I was in Perth I was able to catch up with the new & "old" WA Moderators and other staff such the Social Justice Officer, and fellowship with the congress church at Coolbellup (Maaman 'O' Miya) in Perth. Please pray for our Congress family in WA as the community mourns the loss of an 11 year old girl, whose story and that of her mother's was front page news in "The Australian".

National Office is also glad that some of our State borders opened up from SA and that we were able to travel to meet with some people of the NSW Region in Cobar to plan a way forward for reinstatement of the NSW Regional committee in 2021.

Of course the big news from NSW this quarter has been the death of Congress elder, Rev. Dorothy Harris – Gordon in August, the wife of Congress founder Rev. Charles Harris. Due to Covid restrictions no one from interstate could travel to the large funeral outside on a community near Lismore. However many people were able to view the funeral through Facebook. Aunty was laid to rest in Townsville, with the Qld Moderator David Baker bringing a message on "Love" at the service there. This was a fitting send off to a precious Congress leader and minister, who never really retired. We give thanks for her life, and are glad that Aunty was able to be present in November 2019 when the book on Charles Harris was launched in Sydney.

We are pleased that members of Congress in Queensland are planning to meet in Cairns in mid-November to work out what it means to be the Calvary Zone of Carpentaria Presbytery, and to

remind the younger members of Congress of the Congress story and reason for being. This has been an important project for our former national chair, and Calvary Zone chair, Rev. Dennis Corowa.

We are also delighted that at long last Roberta Stanley, former national deputy and acting chair of Congress, is being ordained on Saturday November 21<sup>st</sup> in Cairns at the Presbytery meeting. For those who remember the Congress training program at Yalga Binbi, Roberta was one of only two candidates that completed all the required training before Yalga Binbi closed down as a Congress training organization.

In the Northern Synod the NRCC commissioned Rev. Jo Mar, formerly minister at Mowanjum as their Presbytery Minister. We look forward to working with Jo as he works with the leaders and staff of NRCC. National Office is also keen to share with the NRCC in their Synod and Presbytery meeting in April.

Tasmania have also been dealing grief in this quarter, with the death of Alison Overeem's beloved father, Stan Smith. They have followed this with their first session on "Healing and Yarning" at Kingston Uniting, which was a session I participated in by Zoom on grief and loss. Alison has also participated on webinar's including the recent Assembly one on Domestic Violence.

In South Australia we are rejoicing that Rev. Denise Champion will receive an honorary doctorate on 2<sup>nd</sup> November from the Adelaide College of Divinity for her work in the areas of Indigenous theology and reconciliation between First & Second Peoples. We are also rejoicing that her niece Rhanee Tsetsakos had a kidney transplant last week. At the same time the Regional Committee faces challenges with finance for our Oodnadatta ministry, led by Pastor Julia Lennon. The bush chaplain's position is financed half time by Frontier Services (from October 2019) and half time by Uniting Foundation. The latter funding will cease at the end of this year.

## NATIONAL MEETINGS

As I mentioned in the last report as Interim National Chair I have continued to participate in a number of National meetings, including:

- Sovereignty Task Group
- Vic Tas Walking Together & Covenanting Action Plan meeting
- Disability Royal Commission National Task Group
- Frontier Services Board
- Uniting First Peoples Coalition.
- Uniting World partnership with Pacific Council of Churches, which has included conversations with DFAT Pacific Partnership with churches.

- Future of the Church meetings
- TEAR Australia First Nations Grants committee.

I have also continued to have the blessing of working with our President. Recent work has included filming for NAIDOC week and the anniversary of the Royal Commission into Sexual Abuse. A highlight was the webinar for the President's Conference in early October, "Called by God." I also recently led a session on Indigenous Leadership for the Executive Leaders course.

#### CONCLUSION

We continue to value your prayers for Congress ministry across the nation, and the support from and relationships with the Synods and Presbytery's at the local levels.

Mark Kickett

Congress National interim Chair

October 2020