



## **UCA ACKNOWLEDGEMENT and APOLOGY to the ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY REGARDING FAMILY SEPARATION**

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE, UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA  
Resolution 96.73

- 96.73 It was resolved:
- 96.73.01 that Standing Committee, on behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia, acknowledge to the Aboriginal community:
- the trauma and ongoing harm caused to individuals, families, the Aboriginal community as a whole and the entire Australian community the practice of separating Aboriginal children from their parents and raising them in institutions, foster homes or adoptive homes;
  - that the church thought it was acting in a loving way by providing them with homes, but was blind to the racist assumptions that underlay the policy and practice;
  - the fact that these assumptions, spoken and unspoken conveyed destructive, negative messages to the children about Aboriginal culture and their aboriginality;
  - the fact that although it was the intention and policy of the church to provide children who had been separated from their parents with a loving, secure environment in which they were encouraged to develop their gifts and graces, and although faithful women and men who worked in the institutions often provided such an atmosphere, there were also times when the reality contradicted the intention and goal, and where children even met violence and abuse at the hands of some of the very staff whom they should have been able to trust;
  - that there were many good, faithful and self-sacrificing house parents, foster parents and adoptive parents who provided loving homes for the children in their care, and encouraged their self-esteem, their growth, their pride in Aboriginal culture and their achievement; many of the people who grew up in the institutions have continued a close relationship with former house parents until the present time;
- 96.73.02 that Standing Committee invite other councils and groups within the Uniting Church to consider issuing similar statements of acknowledgement relevant to their local history;
- 96.73.03 that Standing Committee requests synods to invite organisations such as Burnside in New South Wales, Copelen Family Services in Victoria and Adelaide Central Mission in South Australia to seek discussions with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress with a view to entering into arrangements under which facilities, resources and expertise of the Uniting Church's family counselling services may be made available to the Aboriginal community for child care or adult counselling in an arrangement in which responsibility and authority would be negotiated;

- 96.73.04 that Standing Committee support and encourage the Norther Synod and the Northern Regional Committee of Congress to continue discussions with the former Croker Island residents and if appropriate to bring recommendations as to how the Uniting Church within the limits of its resources may best express its support for the Croker Islands and their descendants;
- 96.73.05 that Standing Committee urges synods and other church agencies to ensure that all assistance is given freely to people who were taken from their families and, subject to privacy considerations, to other family members, who wish to study the records of the Uniting Church relating to the taking of the children and their institutional care; the Standing Committee acknowledges that the records it has of individual children are in many cases quite minimal;
- 96.73.06 that Standing Committee, on behalf of the Uniting Church, apologise to the people of Minjilang, traditional owners of Croker Island, that the church took over a large part of their ancestral lands without their permission, and used it for forty years to provide child care for children separated from their parents;
- 96.73.07 that Standing Committee, on behalf of the Uniting Church, apologise to the Croker Islanders who were led to believe that they would be able to live on Croker Island permanently, but were then required to leave the island to obtain employment; the church acknowledges that in many cases they were deprived of their traditional land rights when they were separated from their parents, and then lost the rights to a new life and land where they had hoped to settle;
- 96.73.08 that Standing Committee informs other churches of these actions;
- 96.73.09 that Standing Committee request the Covenant Steering Committee to arrange for an appropriate event at the Eighth Assembly to mark these actions.