

## Uniting Church in Australia

### ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

3 - 5 MARCH 2017

**PRESENT** Stuart McMillan (President), Felicity Amery, Peter Andrews, Alison Atkinson-Phillips, Bethany Broadstock, Hayden Charles, Dennis Corowa, Lindsay Cullen, Garry Dronfield, Andrew Dutney, Steve Francis, 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, Wendie Wilkie.

**In attendance:** Jenny Bertalan, Chris Budden, Heather den Houting, David de Kock, Jane Fry, David de Kock, Mark Lawrence, Matt Pulford, Nigel Rogers.

**WORSHIP** On the Friday evening, as part of the formation of the community, Deidre Palmer preached and Radhika Sukumar-White presided at the opening Service of Holy Communion. Deidre Palmer acknowledged Cadigal Clan Nation of the Eora people by paying respects for the wisdom of their elders past and their care of country and to all descendants of this nation. On the Saturday Ian Tozer led morning worship and Peter Andrews led evening prayers. On the Sunday Steve Francis led morning worship and the closing prayer in the afternoon was led by Isabel Thomas Dobson.

**WELCOMES** The President welcomed all participants to the meeting. Also welcomed as visitors were Bruce Binnie for matters related to Mercer, John Cox for matters related to the Royal Commission, Apwee Ting and Kisoo Jang for matters related to Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry.

#### APOLOGIES

**17.01** **It was resolved** to receive the apology from Chris Walker, Jacki Watts, Peter Jones and Warwick van Ede for the whole meeting, Bethany Broadstock for Sunday afternoon, Catherine Pepper for Saturday afternoon and Felicity Amery for Sunday afternoon.

#### PASTORAL MATTERS

The pastoral matters also formed part of the worship led by Deidre Palmer and Radhika Sukumar-White on Friday night. The participants were informed that Margaret Goodwin, Rev Martin Goodwin's wife, passed away after she had been struck by lightning, Jacki Watts was taken to hospital with suspected heart problems. It was also shared that Wendie Wilkie had retired.

#### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

**17.02** **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

**17.03** **It was resolved to** confirm the minutes of the meeting held 17 - 20 November 2016 with the following corrections:

- President's Report: change 'November 2015' to 'July 2016';

- Replace Resolution 16.56.02-04 with:
  - 16.56.02 approve the use of the term Affirmed Members;
  - 16.56.03. request the Membership Task Group to amend the liturgy as appropriate in the light of the work of the Legal Reference Committee; and
  - 16.56.04. request the Membership TG to bring a process for establishing the Affirmed Membership of a local congregation to the March 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee;
- *National Royal Commission Task Group: include 'the 2016 Audit Report of the Implementation of the ChildSafe Framework'*
- *Change 'Marriage Update' to 'Marriage Conversation Update'*

## 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 Saturday evening the President reported to the Standing Committee on his various activities since the November 2016 meeting of the Standing Committee.

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

## BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

### 1. Assembly Legal Reference Committee (ASC Minutes 16.08.02 and 16.31.03)

The General Secretary spoke to Document 17, consisting of a report on the Constitution and Regulation implications for a new category of membership, 'Affirmed Member' and the proposed amendment to Regulation 2.4.6 regarding the Ministry of Pastor

**17.05** It was resolved to:

17.05.01 receive the report;

17.05.02 approve the change of Regulation 2.4.6 as at 5 March 2017 to read:

2.4.6 An applicant under Regulation 2.3.3 (a) ~~A person~~ shall be recognised as a Pastor when ~~after having applied:~~

- (a) the applicant person is ~~has been~~ a confirmed member or member in association of the Church ~~for a period of twelve months prior to being recognised as a Pastor;~~ and
- (b) the Presbytery, (or the Synod in the case of a Synod appointment, or the Assembly in the case of an Assembly

- appointment) is satisfied that the applicant can demonstrate the core competencies (See Reg.2.4.3); and
- (c) the applicant person is appointed to a ministry location designated as appropriate for the Ministry of Pastor (See Reg 2.6.9).

## **2. Feedback from the Incorporation Meeting, 1 March 2017 (ASC Minutes 16.70.02-03)**

The General Secretary provided a verbal report on the meeting held 1 March 2017 with the representatives of each Synod and the UAICC to explore the possibilities and implications of maintaining a uniform legal personality for the Church across each Australian jurisdiction and how that uniformity may be achieved. She highlighted the valuable contribution the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania offered to the other parts of the Church grappling with the issue.

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

## **3. Marriage Conversation Update (ASC Minutes 16.66.02-03)**

The General Secretary and Chris Budden spoke to Document 14, consisting of an update regarding matters included in the resolutions, with special regard to the National Marriage Conversations to be held in May and June. The Standing Committee members were invited to provide feedback to the General Secretary and Chris Budden regarding the national conversations.

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

## **4. Membership in the Uniting Church (ASC Minutes 15.69.02 and 04)**

Ian Price introduced Document 18, consisting of a report from the Task Group on Membership in the Uniting Church, a summary of the responses of Working Groups at the 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly and Document 31, the report to the August 2015 Standing Committee meeting.

**17.08**            **It was resolved to:**

17.08.01        receive the final report of the Membership Task Group;

17.08.02        request the Assembly Legal Reference Committee to advise the Standing Committee of any amendment to the Constitution, Regulations necessary to implement the category of Affirmed Member of a Congregation;

17.08.03        approve the amended liturgy and notes on Affirmed Membership for use in Uniting Churches following commencement of new Regulations; and

17.08.04        thank and dismiss the Membership Task Group.

## **5. New Ways of Working for the Assembly - Update (ASC Minutes 16.32.02-05 and 16.55)**

The General Secretary presented Document 15, consisting of an update on the progress made towards implementing the agreed model for the Assembly, to be effective from 1 July 2017. Much discussion followed.

**17.09**            **It was resolved to:**

17.09.01        note the progress on implementing the agreed model;

17.09.02        approve the nomination of the Assembly General Secretary, Jane Fry, in the capacity of Acting General Secretary of the Synod of NSW / ACT, Felicity Amery, Denise Liersch and Steve Francis to the membership of the Interview Panel for

the recruitment of the Associate General Secretary and National Consultant roles;

- 17.09.03 authorise the General Secretary to approve the appointment of the three National Consultant positions on the recommendation of the Interview Panel; and
- 17.09.04 agree to approve the appointment of the Associate General Secretary, Assembly Resourcing via teleconference on the recommendation of the Interview Panel.

## **FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES**

### **1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee**

Peter Andrews spoke to Documents 8 and 8A, consisting of a report on the work of the Committee, including a current financial result update and a statement of net available funds as at 31 December 2016.

#### **17.10 It was resolved to**

- 17.10.01 receive the report; and
- 17.10.02 appoint KPMG as the Assembly's External Auditor.

### **2. Assembly Strategic Plan 2017-2020**

The General Secretary introduced Document 13, consisting of a draft Strategic Plan for the Assembly that was developed as part of a consolidated program of work to move to a new model for the Assembly's operations that is collaborative and project based, while also undertaking its specific responsibilities.

#### **17.10 It was resolved to:**

- 17.10.01 receive the report;
- 17.10.02 approve the Assembly Strategic Plan 2017-2020 as amended at the meeting; and
- 17.10.03 request the General Secretary to report on Communications and Engagement Strategy relating to the Strategic Plan at the July 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee.

### **3. General Secretary's Report**

The General Secretary spoke to Documents 2 and 2A, consisting of various matters and the resignation letter from the Chair of UnitingCare Australia National Committee.

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

### **4. Mercer Fund Report**

Bruce Binnie introduced Documents 9 and 9A, consisting of a report on the on the status of the Beneficiary Fund, the outcomes of the 30 June 2016 Actuarial Review and associated matters and a supplementary report on the proposed changes to membership arrangements for the Policy Committee.

#### **17.13 It was resolved to:**

- 17.13.01 receive the report;
- 17.13.02 note the resignation of Rev Michelle Cook from the Policy Committee;

- 17.13.03 approve amendment of the “Procedures for the Appointment of Members of the Policy Committee (‘Procedures’) so that the opening statement reads: “The Policy Committee comprises an equal number of Member Representatives and Assembly Representatives. However, during the initial transition phase membership will be as follows:
- six Committee Members from 1 July 2015
  - five Committee Members from 16 February 2017 (three member Representatives and two Assembly Representatives)
  - four Committee Representatives from 1 July 2018; and
- 17.13.04 request the Policy Committee to bring a submission to the November 2017 meeting of the Standing Committee for membership structure from 1 July 2018.

## **5. Multicultural and Cross Cultural Ministry**

Apwee Ting and Kisoo Jang presented Document 7, consisting of a report as part of a regular schedule of reporting from Assembly Agencies and areas of work which report to the Standing Committee as the oversight body.

### **17.14 It was resolved to:**

- 17.14.01 receive the report;
- 17.14.02 request the General Secretary to communicate to the Assembly Resourcing Unit, when it is formed, the possibility of developing self-sufficiencies in all National Conferences as a project;
- 17.14.03 request the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU), when it is formed, to consider oversight of National Conferences, and have one person from the ARU as a contact person for CALD’s communities; and
- 17.14.04 distribute copies of *One Body Many Members* to all reporting bodies to the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly so that their reports might reflect the benchmarks or standards adopted by the Assembly in 2012.

## **6. National Royal Commission Task Group**

John Cox spoke to Documents 3, 3A, 3B, 3C, 3D, 3E, 3F and 3G, consisting of a report from the National Task Group, a letter to Mr Stuart McMillan re CS56, an email from the Royal Commission re the approval of extensions of time to produce information, the CS56 work planning table, the case study info requested from Synods, Royal Commission Task Group – withdrawal of recognition (proposal with rationale), the draft full revision National Child Safe Policy Framework and the National Task Group’s risk framework.

### **17.15 It was resolved to:**

- 17.15.01 receive the report of the National Task Group;
- 17.15.02 act in keeping with Assembly resolution 15.13;
- 17.15.03 approve the revised “National Child Safe Policy Framework – March 2017” as replacing the version approved in August 2015 (Attachment B);
- 17.15.04 determine that in the event of a conviction of a Minister for child sexual abuse
- a) the recognition of the Minister is automatically withdrawn; and
  - b) a review of the Church’s involvement in the situation that led to the conviction is initiated; and

- 17.15.05 request the Assembly Legal Reference Committee to bring to the July 2017 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee the required changes to the Regulations.

## **7. UCA Assembly Ltd**

The General Secretary presented Documents 19 and 19A, consisting of a paper on the whether the Annual General Meeting required annually for UCA Assembly Limited should be held at the November meeting of the Standing Committee and the draft minutes of meeting from 2016 Annual General Meeting.

### **17.16 It was resolved to:**

- 17.16.01 receive the paper; and
- 17.16.02 agree that the Annual General Meeting for UCA Assembly Limited is held annually at the November meeting of the Standing Committee.

## **GENERAL BUSINESS**

### **1. Consent Agenda**

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 4, Consent Agenda.

### **17.17 It was resolved to:**

- 17.17.01 receive the progress report from the Remote Area Ministry Working Group;
- 17.17.02 receive the report regarding responses from theological colleges re syllabus reflecting the Covenant;
- 17.17.03 receive the report regarding advocacy re Indigenous Education by the UAICC and the President;
- 17.17.04 receive the report regarding an update on the funding of the Assembly;
- 17.17.05 receive the report regarding an update on the Professional Standards Project; and
- 17.17.06 receive the Governance Reference Committee report.

### **2. Minute of Appreciation for Rev Elenie Poulos**

The General Secretary spoke to Document 6, consisting of a minute of appreciation for Rev Elenie Poulos, National Director, National Social Responsibility and Justice 2002-3, National Director, UnitingJustice Australia, 2003-2017.

- 17.18 With acclamation, it was resolved** to note the Minute of Appreciation for Rev. Elenie Poulos with thanks.

### **3. National Cooperation Report – Uniting Leaders**

Nigel Rogers introduced Documents 11, 11A, 11B and 11C, consisting of a report on one of the areas currently under consideration and development as part of the national cooperation agenda – leadership development. The report on  
Included the proposed new ministry of the Uniting Church and Uniting Communities in Franklin Street Adelaide, a unit guide from the Adelaide College

of Divinity 'Beyond Sunday', information about a new unit 'Faith at Work' Level 2 Final. Table discussion followed and the feedback was provided to the General Secretaries regarding this initiative.

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

**4. Report from the Conversation between the Standing Committee and the UAICC National Committee**

The General Secretary and Chris Budden introduced Document 12, consisting of an overview of the issues discussed in the conversation held at the November 2016 meeting of the Standing Committee which should be considered as an introduction. Three projects were identified and discussed – supporting treaty, developing indigenous theology and giving priority to history telling but it did not address more challenging options, eg issue of reparation, structures of the church, the distortion of the gospel in Australia. The Standing Committee participants provided feedback of their own experiences of the conversation; agreeing to consider ways the conversation could be progresses throughout the Church.

**5. Theme for the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly**

Deidre Palmer spoke to Document 10, consisting of a report on the proposed theme for the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly meeting and the Triennium 2018-2021.

**17.20**            **It was resolved to:**

17.20.01        receive the report; and

17.20.02        approve the theme for the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly and the 2018 -2021 Triennium – “Abundant Grace, Liberating Hope”.

**6. World Communion of Reformed Churches Constitution Amendments**

The General Secretary presented Documents 5, 5A and 5B, consisting of a report on proposed amendments to the World Communion of Reformed Churches Constitution, of which the Uniting Church is a member; and for the decision to inform the voting of Uniting Church delegates attending the General Council in Germany in July 2017.

**17.21**            **It was resolved to:**

17.21.01        request the General Secretary to seek clarification from the World Communion of Reformed Churches regarding the issues raised at the meeting; and

17.21.02        subject to clarification of these issues, authorise the General Secretary to inform the World Communion of Reformed Churches Constitution, and UCA delegates to the WCRC General Council of this decision.

**CLOSURE**

The meeting closed at 3.00pm with prayer led by Isabel Thomas Dobson.

**DATES FOR 2017:     7 – 9 July 2017**  
**10 – 12 November 2017**