

Assembly Standing Committee Meeting Brief - July 2002

The second ASC meeting for 2002 was held over the weekend of 19-21st July. The following gives a brief overview of decisions made by the committee. For further information on any of these decisions please contact the Assembly office.

The revised policy paper 'Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Humanitarian Entrants' has been approved by ASC. National Social Responsibility and Justice originally published the paper last year, but a number of changes have been made to keep pace with the rapidly shifting issue. The policy paper, contained inside a larger, more descriptive position paper, is available on the web or through your synod/assembly social justice contact.

<<http://nat.uca.org.au/nsrj/issues/asylum/>>

ASC has been presented with an update on the Detention Centre Ministry Appeal. In March, the expectation was that the funds would provide money for a part time chaplain for Curtin Detention Centre. However ASC heard that as Curtin is now closing, priority has shifted to Port Hedland. It is hoped to be able to provide a 50% placement for two years. So far \$9000 has been raised through the appeal. The Assembly has also agreed to contribute \$5000.

A small debate on sexuality, ethics, doctrine and theology arose over the weekend as a result of some correspondence received in 2001 from a Victorian Minister. One of our ministers had been concerned about being charged under state anti-discrimination legislation for refusing to bless same sex couple relationships. Several legal opinions have been gathered. The working group on Doctrine and the Polity committee have also met over the issue. After receiving the report including revisiting legal advice and responses from Polity and Doctrine, ASC has decided that this minister is allowed to refuse the blessing without fear of legal repercussion.

ASC has adopted the principles of the new Education Charter presented by Uniting Education National Director, John Emmett. The charter is meant to 'offer broad principles and guidelines to members of the Uniting Church in

Australia, regarding education in Australian society'. A few changes still need to be made. However, as they are only minor the paper will not be coming back to ASC in November. The document, set out in an attractive 4-page format, should shortly be made available to church councils, institutions and agencies of the Uniting Church. Contact Uniting Education for more information.

The 10th Assembly planning continues, with less than a year before the big event. The design team is working on a number of initiatives in the hope of providing a less 'administrative' approach to the 2003 triennial Assembly. The name of the Archbishop of Wales, Rowan Williams, was originally to be put forward as the Cato visitor however he is unavailable. ASC members have suggested alternatives and the design team will come back in November with a new name. ASC also heard that the logo is in the late stages of development and should be available shortly.

The new 'National Co-ordinating group on Ministry with children, young people and their families' is almost finalised. The group was supposed to have eight members - four from the ChYNC (Children and Youth Network) and four elected by ASC. However, ASC has requested the addition of up to three more people on the group to allow for an increase in the representation of migrant-ethnic youth.