UnitingCare Australia

18 Appreciation: Peter Bicknell

That the Assembly resolve:

To place on record its deep appreciation for the contribution Peter Bicknell has made to the life of the Uniting Church in his role as Chair of UnitingCare Australia.

Peter was appointed to the role of Chair of UnitingCare Australia in 2006 and retired in July 2017. Over the almost eleven years of his leadership the network actually developed into a network in more than a name with UnitingCare Australia becoming a significant contributor and advocate in the national policy and political scene.

In the early days of Peter's leadership, concurrently he chaired the Uniting Missions Network (UMN) prior to its merger with UnitingCare Australia. In 2008 after much consultation and engagement across the UCA’s social services, and wider church, the UMN formally becoming part of the national UnitingCare network through the work known as Resourcing the Future. Peter’s leadership was instrumental in this foundational moment in the life of UnitingCare Australia and the wider Church.

He was – and is – trusted across the diversity of the Uniting Church and its caring services.

Peter’s political expertise and deep understanding of the internal and external environments, and his integrity and empathy across groups of people and organisations which deliver for the common good has been profound in assisting UnitingCare Australia in achieving its goals.

He always promoted an approach to advocacy that focussed on building long term relationships with policy advisors and decision-makers and using those relationships to advocate long run focussed positions. UnitingCare with Peter’s counsel rarely advocated for itself or in its own interests; rather focussing on the common good, bringing the values and vision of the Uniting Church together with the expertise of UnitingCare service providers and the lived experience of those we exist to serve into a potent policy advice mix.

Peter helped ensure that UnitingCare Australia and the network it serves developed a clear and operationalised identity as an integral part of the Uniting Church, a foundational expression of the Uniting Church’s mission and a contemporary, professional, hope-full and strengths-based network of community services thinking and operating beyond service delivery to activity that empowers individuals, families and communities to thrive, and shifts the public policy dial.

Peter also during this time forged some fruitful relationships with the chairs or equivalents of the major church providers with whom we have worked very well over the years on many hard issues.

And in recent years, he also has contributed his wisdom to our developing relationship with the Protestant church in China – again, a testament to his commitment and dedication to our church and its broader mission in the world.

Beyond what he has achieved, we will miss Peter’s persona, his sense of humour, and his passion for those most in need. We look back with thanks on his many achievements and
his strong and solid leadership in serving in this role for such a long time, and wish him and his family every blessing as he enjoys retirement.

Proposer: Bronwyn Pike
Seconder: Colleen Geyer