

B16 ASSEMBLY RESOURCING UNIT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Created in July 2017, the Assembly Resourcing Unit (ARU) is a multi-disciplinary, collaborative, project-based team that resources the work of the Assembly as set out in its Strategic Plan, the national work of the Uniting Church and specific projects as identified.
- 1.2 The ARU Staff team has been drawn together over the last year of the triennium and brings a diversity of backgrounds, skills and experience to the work of the Assembly. Working collaboratively across the Assembly and with other parts of the church is a key part of how the ARU works. A major focus is to engage the wider membership of the UCA in the work of the Assembly.

- 1.3 The ARU Staff team consists of:

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| • Mr Rob Floyd | Associate General Secretary |
| • Rev. Charissa Suli | National Consultant |
| • Rev. Dr Apwee Ting | National Consultant |
| • Rev. Lindsay Cullen | National Consultant |
| • Rev. Dr Ji Zhang | Assembly Theologian in Residence |
| • Ms Rebecca Beisler | Communications and Resources Officer |
| • Ms Anna Catliffe | Executive Administrative Assistant |

- 1.4 During the past triennium much of the work of the Assembly has been carried out by a number of working groups and committees. These include:

- Admission of Ministers Committee
- Christian Unity Working Group
- Doctrine Working Group
- Education for Ministry Working Group
- Formation, Education and Discipleship Working Group
- Multi Cross Cultural Ministry National Reference Committee
- Relations with Other Faiths Working Group
- UnitingJustice Reference Committee
- Worship Working Group

There will be separate reports to Assembly covering these areas of work. These groups were supported by Assembly Staff who each had discrete portfolios of work.

- 1.5 During this period the Assembly farewelled a number of staff as follows:

- Rev. Elenie Poulos
- Rev. Dr Chris Walker
- Mr Craig Mitchell
- Mr Tom Kerr

The Assembly will be asked to move Minutes of Appreciation for each of these former staff in recognition of the significant leadership they gave to the Assembly and the wider church over many years.

2. AREAS OF WORK

- 2.1 Assisting existing Assembly Working Groups and Committees:
Staff have attended the Working Group meetings that have taken place, assisting with organisational and administrative issues as well as participating in discussion to gain a better understanding of the work being carried out.

Broadly ARU staff have been assisting existing Groups to:

1. Conclude any current work and focus on reports and proposals for the Fifteenth Assembly.
 2. Identify and gather significant documents relating to the Groups' work over the last triennium and earlier to ensure continuity and no loss of institutional memory.
 3. Identify key areas of work that should carry forward into the new triennium, the focus of such work and how best it can be continued.
- 2.2 Develop a revised and refreshed Climate Change Statement for the Church.
A wide group of people from across the Church, Congress and Agencies have contributed to the document and its associated resources which is being presented at Assembly.
- 2.3 Maintain a presence and a voice on the issue of refugees and asylum seekers.
We have maintained memberships and participation in external groups and networks, providing updates and media releases to the Church and justice networks as appropriate.
- 2.4 Planning with the President-elect regarding a National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC) to be held in Adelaide in January 2018 (17-20 January 2018)
- 2.5 Continued conversation and planning towards a national online learning, training and discipleship platform. A number of software products have been identified and assessed. Conversations with Agencies also engaged in online learning have taken place. Aligning such a platform with any future national child safety work is an important aspect of this work. The considerable outlay involved in setting up and maintaining such an online portal means we are moving forward with a high level of consultation in this space to ensure as much as possible the platform will be widely used across Councils of the Church.
- 2.6 New Assembly Groups. Much work has been undertaken in reconsidering the ways in which Assembly Groups work to fulfil the responsibilities and strategic directions of the Assembly. This work is outlined later in this report.
- 2.7 Representing the Assembly and building relationships. Along with the key strategic items of work listed above, ARU staff are regularly engaged in meeting with Synods, Agencies, national networks, National Conferences and external bodies. In this role they explain and promote the work of the Assembly, identify areas for collaboration, speak at conferences and events, write for a variety of UCA publications, provide training and generally represent the national Church.

3. NEW ASSEMBLY GROUPS

- 3.1 The following steps were undertaken in developing this new process:
1. Small group consisting of staff and members of the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) met to consider possible ways forward for Assembly groups other than the governance committees of the Assembly.
 2. A draft document was produced and discussed with existing Assembly Groups during their regular meeting times to gain input and feedback.
 3. Presentation made to November 2017 ASC and approval to proceed was given.

4. Meeting were held with all existing Convenors to explain and fine tune the proposed model.
5. The ASC nominated a group of three to remain in contact with staff to monitor progress.
6. Convenors of existing groups took the model to all groups for further discussion. Staff attended those meetings to listen, answer questions and gather feedback.
7. Several teleconferences and email conversations have taken place with most groups and in particular Education for Ministry Working Group and Admission of Ministers Committee.
8. Staff have attended all existing group meetings to understand the nature of their work and future priorities as described above.

4. NEW GROUP STRUCTURE

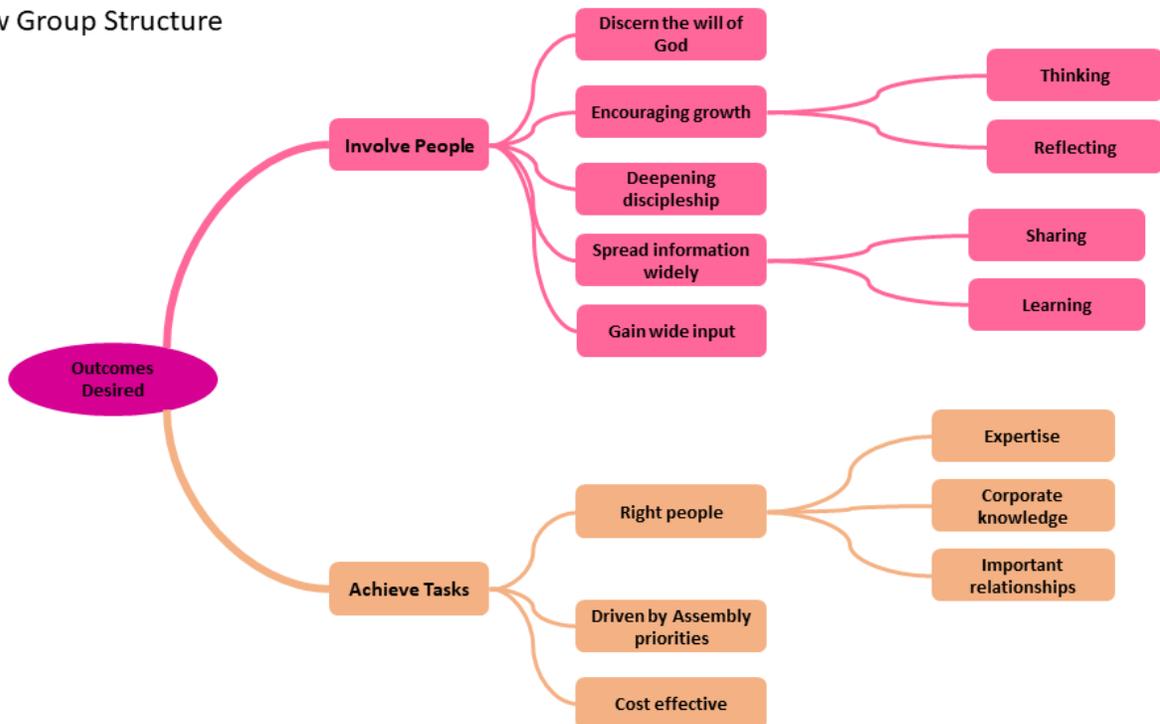
4.1 In developing the new model for Assembly Groups two key outcomes were identified.

Participation: involving people in the national life of the church, discerning together God’s will, seeking broad input, disseminating information widely, encouraging growth and deepening discipleship.

Achieving tasks: bringing together the right people with the requisite expertise, knowledge and relationships to achieve tasks that align with Assembly priorities in a timely and cost-effective manner.

The new model will achieve these two outcomes by increasing opportunity for participation and engagement, whilst streamlining and better resourcing expert groups to undertake the tasks required by the Assembly. This will allow a more targeted and efficient use of resources in achieving the work of the Assembly.

New Group Structure



5. CIRCLES OF INTEREST

- 5.1 Seven Circles of Interest will be formed to enable a broad range of people to register an interest in areas of the Assembly's work. The Circles envisaged correspond to key areas of the Assembly's work, from the Constitution and Regulations, and from the Assembly Strategic Plan, comprising:

Walking Together as First and Second Peoples

In 1994 the Uniting Church in Australia entered into a Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress so that together we may contribute to a more loving and just church and nation, journeying together as First and Second Peoples in the true spirit of Christ as we discover what it means to be bound to one another in a covenant. This Circle is a space for listening to the experiences of our Indigenous brothers and sisters and considering some of the important issues that impact our ability to live out our Covenant commitments.



Growing in Faith

Growing as disciples of Christ, equipped to participate in God's mission, is central to our journey of faith. The Uniting Church holds high regard for work of scholarship and enquiry of the Bible (Basis of Union, par 11), and we continue to be open to learning from contemporary thought and societies.



Encouraging and guiding such learning and how it shapes our understanding of the faith is an important aspect of the Assembly's work. This Circle will consider both our academic understandings of theology and how we as followers of Christ grow in our understanding and application of the faith.

Being a Multicultural Church

The Uniting Church rejoices in its diversity of races, cultures and languages as God's gracious gift and seeks to be a true multicultural church living its faith and life cross-culturally. Open to everyone, whether you are part of a small or big community, speak English or not, recently arrived or having lived in Australia for generations, this Circle seeks to create genuine ways for diverse voices and contributions to be respectfully heard across the wider membership of the church.



Seeking Common Ground

Being in relationship with others is instrumental to how the Uniting Church discerns God's calling to witness to Christ in the world.



This Circle invites people to learn more about and participate in the ways the Uniting Church is in relationship with other Churches, other faiths, and those of no institutional faith, as we contribute together to the common good.

Discipling the Next Generations

The Assembly is committed to encourage and resource deeper discipleship of UCA members, equipping them to participate in God's mission. A key part of discipling is the way the Church nurtures and encourages children, youth and young adults within its family. We seek to resource the next generations of Christian faith by inviting younger people to join in God's mission, equipping and releasing them to do so. This Circle invites us to be involved with how the Assembly supports our next generation of leaders and to connect with others who are passionate about this work.



DISCIPLING THE
NEXT GENERATION

Transforming Worship

When we gather in worship, we respond to God's invitation to be loved and we encounter God's own gracious self-revelation through word and sacrament. In communal worship all bring their gifts, varied and different. Being drawn into communion with God and others can be a transforming experience. This Circle invites people to engage with the ways the Assembly resources the wider Church and thinks creatively about our worship.



TRANSFORMING
WORSHIP

Working for Justice

Central to the identity of the Uniting Church is a commitment to pursue a just and peaceful world. As Christians we believe that all people are precious and that we are called to follow the example of Jesus to love one another. This Circle provides a space to live out this calling to be a prophetic voice for justice in our church, our communities and our world.



WORKING
FOR JUSTICE

Anyone can choose to join one (or more) circles. All members of Assembly will be invited to join at least one Circle for the triennium of their membership. Circles will also be advertised and open to any interested people connected with the Church.

- 5.2 Circles will continue for the life of a triennium and indeed will span numbers of Assembly meetings, being changed infrequently as they correspond to longstanding areas of the Assembly's work.

Members of Circles will receive regular updates on the area of work in which they are interested, with the encouragement to spread this information more widely in the Church. They will also receive details of opportunities to engage in action in a ministry area, or to provide feedback concerning work in that ministry area. Circles will be a primary way of discovering people with gifts, expertise or passion for areas of ministry who may be appropriate to carry out tasks in the life of the Assembly.

- 5.3 Each Circle will be supported by an Advocate who will be appointed to each circle to nurture and encourage activity, conversation and input from circle members. The Assembly will appoint Advocates.

Circles will also be supported by Panel Members identified and appointed by the ASC as people with particular gifts and expertise in that area of interest.

Expressions of Interest and a selection process will be used for both Advocates and Panel Members.

6. TASK GROUPS

- 6.1 The second key focus for Assembly Groups is achieving specific tasks that have come from triennial Assembly meetings, ASC or align with the Assembly Strategic Plan.

Achieving such tasks needs to be done in an appropriate, timely and cost-effective manner. This requires clear identification of what outcome is needed, the resources required and available, and bringing together the right people with the requisite expertise, knowledge and relationships to achieve the task.

- 6.2 ASC will appoint Task Groups. Each Task Group will be given a Terms of Reference that will outline:

- Tasks to be undertaken
- Outcomes including reporting expectations
- Timelines for completing the task

All Task Groups will be expected to do their work with due regard to the foundational values and commitments of the Uniting Church which will be reflected in the Terms of Reference of the group.

Membership of Task Groups will largely be drawn from Panel Members and come to the ASC as a recommendation from the Advocates and Assembly staff.

Membership of Task Groups will deliberately seek to ensure a breadth of skills and experience as well as representation from a number of Panels to capture the diverse interests and diverse membership of the Church.

- 6.3 Standards for Ministries Committee:

ARU has been in conversation with ASC and the current Education for Ministry Working Group and Assembly Admission of Ministers Committee. Given the overlap of their work and the external relationships involved in setting and maintaining standards, the establishment of this new committee was approved by the ASC.

Assembly will appoint the Chairperson and the ASC meeting in August will appoint the membership. An Expressions of Interest and a selection process will be followed.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The transition in the Assembly Staffing has been completed with the formation of the new ARU Team. The previous Assembly groups identified in the Background section of this report have now concluded and the new Circles of Interest will be launched at the Assembly.

Members of the Assembly will receive further information about the Circles of Interest at the Assembly. They will also have the opportunity to hear more and register their participation in one or more of the circles. I encourage you to join and participate in the work of the Assembly through this exciting new initiative.

Rob Floyd
Associate General Secretary