



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

27-29 August 2021

DOCUMENT 2 – CA4

Title	Learnings from the Marriage Conversation Report
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For information
Assembly or ASC Minute	ASC Minute 21.30.02 request the General Secretary to make the summary of the discussion available to the next Assembly Standing Committee.
Consultation	Not applicable
Purpose	See ASC Minute
Rationale & Findings Summary	See summary
Attachments	
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee: 1. Receive the Learnings from the Marriage Conversation Report
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Learnings from the Marriage Conversation

Process

Education

- At times it seemed processes seemed unclear (whose processes?) - Assembly material produced didn't hit the mark
- Generally an understanding of 'unity in diversity' that is not always shared in the UCA
- There was poor conversation in some parts of UCA, or the conversation didn't get down past Assembly and Synods
- There is a question about who were the gatekeepers for this conversation? Where was information provided?
- People could have been better equipped to deal with the topic – more time for education so people felt prepared for the conversation
- There is a need to be careful in what is published, being mindful about what could happen with the information
- In some cases, there was a misunderstanding of what consultation means

Engagement

- Leadership is crucial in national conversations
- Disappointment that work after 13th Assembly (2012) didn't move as far as was anticipated to 14th Assembly (2015), so work lost some momentum
- Some distrust was evident, as well as differing expectations from people about how they would be able to deal with the issue
- At the 15th Assembly meeting, some members didn't feel well prepared; while it was also a place of courageous conversation and attempts to create safe spaces
- Consider preamble conversation, and how engagement happened for that conversation
- Process was flawed at times - good will and grace to acknowledge our diversity was important
- At times it felt that there was a disconnect between membership and leadership for the church
- Engagement process – we didn't do that well (timing, design, resourcing)

Timeline

- In the lead up to 15th Assembly - timeline was sufficient but milestones weren't set up in right way to allow church to prepare

Communication

- Communication was/is absolutely key, and continuing communication into all groups and in all forms
- We need to represent decisions etc in plain English - so they are understood by all
- For some it was difficult to separate process from decision

Pastoral Issues

- This conversation come at a cost to some people, congregations etc
- We have to be mindful of anxiety and nervousness about important conversations
- Members of UCA were lost
- The pastoral journey needs to be more front and centre, and attended to throughout a national conversation
- When a topic we are dealing with is about trauma, that needs to be a key part of the conversation
- Have we properly equipped people for this conversation - could EAP be provided to ASC members

Accessibility of Consultation

- Multicultural work wasn't always integrated, it happened late so discussions were already at a yes/no time
- There was a need to understand what the *Space for Grace* process was and how it worked
- It can be difficult to resolve decisions into one statement for whole church, particularly for CALD communities
- Pace, range and depth of changes being dealt with at this time in history are immense – this can impact on the complexity of what we are dealing with
- People will still look for a church that represents their own views
- In some cases, we haven't been able to work with diversity, even in congregations

Resourcing

- We don't always use the resources we have available to us
- Issue of resourcing - we need to come together as the church and resource these important conversations very well
- Role of ministers in resourcing conversations; role of councils; the way the church understands the role of Assembly in which diversity collides as a reflection of the life of UCA