



mylathina takila-ti Le:wun tunk-ungai tuldangk tunk-ungai
Ola ma tumau i le alofa' 사랑 안에서 살기 Tinggal di dalam Kasih
Nofoma'u i he Ofa 愛中合居



Assembly Standing Committee

36 A call to action for climate justice: listening to First Peoples wisdom

That the Assembly resolve to:

- 1. Acknowledge that since time immemorial the Creator gifted First Peoples to be the timeless caretakers of country and the natural environment.**
- 2. Confess that as Second Peoples we have heard the wisdom of First Peoples, the call of our Partner Churches, and stories of communities already affected by climate change, but we have not listened. We have failed to act as a whole Church with the level of urgency needed, and have not made the fundamental behavioural changes needed to care for creation. We confess that while effort has been made to change from ways that destroy the Creator's good creation, carbon pollution continues as a direct result of our activities individually and as a Church, and global carbon pollution is now causing irreversible harm.**
- 3. Commit anew to listen to First Peoples wisdom and knowledge, and to take practical climate action including changing our own behaviour.**
- 4. Call on all Councils of the church, agencies and schools who have not already done so to join with the Assembly in committing to net zero emissions by 2040 at the latest, so that together we can become a zero emissions Church. We further urge all Councils to make use of the resources, stories and carbon accounting tools made available online.**
- 5. Request the Standards for Ministry Committee to identify the most appropriate way to embed learning from the wisdom of First Peoples, care of creation, climate justice and the spiritual and theological basis for a zero emissions church into formation, education and training for the specified ministries of the Uniting Church and report back to the November 2022 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.**
- 6. Request the Assembly Circles, Advocates and Panels to include learning from the wisdom of First Peoples, care of creation, climate justice and the spiritual and theological basis for a zero emissions church into their work for the remainder of this triennium.**
- 7. Request the Assembly Standing Committee to:**
 - a) establish a national zero emissions church working group to:**
 - gather data on commitments to greenhouse gas emission reduction made across the life of the church, and progress towards those commitments**
 - share stories, expertise and learnings on effective strategies and resources to reduce emissions, prioritising the wisdom of First Peoples**
 - consider how the whole of the church can move together to net zero emissions by 2040; and**



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b) bring a report on findings and recommended next steps to the 17th Assembly.

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Rationale

The Uniting Church has a long history of speaking out on environmental matters, including climate change (e.g. 91.14.18 The Rights of Nature and Future Generations, 03.18.01 Tuvalu and the Impact of Global Warming, 06.101 For the Sake of the Planet and all its People, 14.42 Investment in Fossil Fuels, 18.12.01 For the Whole of Creation). Speaking out has tended to be external facing, while change in our behaviour to reduce the impact of our own activities as a church on the natural environment has often been fragmented and slow and at times, inadequate.

Meanwhile greenhouse gas emissions globally have continued to the point where climate change impacts are increasing, with irreversible harm to the natural environment in these lands now called Australia, including the Great Barrier Reef and alpine environments, now predicted with a high degree of confidence by the IPCC (IPCC Working Group II contribution to Sixth Assessment Report Page 11-3 & 11-4).

Climate change impacts are also predicted to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities within and between human communities. "Inequalities include those between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples and between generations, rural and urban areas, incomes and health status" (IPCC Working Group II contribution to Sixth Assessment Report Page 11-3). Climate change is already affecting extreme events in Australasia and the impacts of these events are being felt disproportionately by vulnerable communities, including Australia's First Peoples.

The ASC has heard about the impact of recent extreme events on vulnerable communities including Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (Congress) members and their communities through reports from the UAICC chair.

In conversation with National Congress, the ASC has been challenged to listen to the wisdom of First People who have been gifted with the care of creation since time immemorial. This listening needs to occur in ways that lead to urgent, genuine, measurable action and change of our behaviour.

Over time our conversations with the leaders of the Pacific Conference of Churches, Church Partners in the Pacific, Congress and UnitingWorld have continued to highlight climate change impacts in the Pacific and the importance of standing in solidarity with Pacific Island communities.

The ASC has also heard the urgent call from COP26 for specific and measurable action within this crucial decade to reduce emissions and limit warming to 1.5oC



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The 15th Assembly resolved: to request the Standing Committee to consider specific actions, resourcing and ways of connecting practically with other councils to address issues related to climate change. (18.12.01.06)

Since the 15th assembly, and arising out of resolution 18.12.01 the following actions have been completed:

- President's Conference For the Whole Creation in Fiji in collaboration with Partner Churches and Congress.
- Prepared and adopted a climate action plan for Assembly operations and committed to a 5% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from Assembly operations per year from 2020 to reach net zero emissions by 2040.
- Reported on the first year of implementation of the plan in November 2021.
- Released resources online including stories and tools to equip the wider Uniting Church.
- Encouraged other Councils of the Church to commit to practical action
- Lobbied Commonwealth Government and participated in climate action such as climate marches.

As the ASC we acknowledge that while we can commit Assembly operations to take specific climate action through the Climate Action Plan, we cannot commit the whole church to net zero emissions. Each Council of the church needs to make that commitment.

A call to the whole church to listen to the wisdom of First Peoples, commit to net zero emissions by no later than 2040 and take action to reduce our collective impact on the environment is an important next step as a whole church in covenantal relationship with the Congress. This strengthens previous resolutions to "encourage" practical action.

Establishment of a national working group to understand commitments made and explore how the Uniting Church within its polity can become a zero emissions church is considered to be a further important and specific step to enable success.

Living in a covenant relationship with Congress and in partnership with churches in Asia, Africa and the Pacific requires us to do more than repeatedly ask our Partners and Congress to share their stories. To live in covenant requires that those who have ears listen, and be changed.