



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



UnitingCare Australia

37 Ageing and Aged Care

That the Assembly resolve to:

1. **Endorse the establishment of *Uniting Friends of Ageing* as a new national network within the life of the Uniting Church open to all members interested in and concerned about ageing and aged care.**
2. **Endorse the celebration of *Older Persons Sunday* on the first Sunday of October each year, and note that UnitingCare Australia is providing worship resources to assist congregations in the celebration of *Older Persons Sunday*.**
3. **Endorse the priority advocacy of UnitingCare Australia to:**
 - (a) **Urge the Australian Government to support the development of an international covenant, under the auspices of the United Nations, on the rights of older persons; and**
 - (b) **Urge the Australian Government to fully implement the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission, including a human rights-based Aged Care Act and increases for the wages of aged care staff based on decisions of the Fair Work Commission.**

Proposer: Heather Watson

Seconder: Alison Overeem

Rationale

The Uniting Church in Australia, and our three predecessor churches, have a long and proud record of providing residential and home care for older Australians. This continues today with over 100,000 people receiving care and support from members of the Uniting Care network. The recommendation is important for the Church now as the Australian aged care system is facing a crisis. The report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety provides a once in a generation opportunity for the Australian Government - working co-operatively with service providers – to transform aged care in Australia. “Neglect” was the single word title for the Commission’s interim report, with the Final Report containing 148 detailed recommendations to address this negligence. Over the past two years in particular, the aged care crisis has escalated significantly and threatens the continued operations of the sector.

The efforts of UnitingCare Australia and the member organisations of the UnitingCare network are driven by a vision where older people are valued and included in community life, enabled to maintain health and independence, pursue their interests, nurture relationships,



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maintain their culture and spirituality, and be in control of their future. This vision is grounded in the dignity of all women and men created in the image of a loving God, and Jesus' promise of abundant life for all.

In working with members to transform approaches to ageing and aged care in Australia, UnitingCare Australia (UA) has sought new ways to engage the wider Uniting Church in these efforts. Uniting Friends of Ageing was established as a new national network for UCA members in June 2021. This is a significant development and it would be assisted with the endorsement of the Assembly meeting.

To further develop engagement with local congregations, UA has established Older Persons Sunday to provide a particular day in the wider Church's calendar to recognise and affirm the dignity and hope which belongs to older people (and people of all ages). The first Sunday in October was chosen as the preferred date as this follows the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, which is held on 1 October each year.

The International Day of Older Persons celebrates older people but also serves to highlight the continuation of ageism in many sectors of society. In Australia the need to address ageism as a serious problem is recognised in anti-discrimination and human rights legislation, and (nationally) through the work of the Age Discrimination Commissioner. There is also a community-based campaign to raise awareness of ageism through the work of Every Age Counts. Due to the continuation of ageism in Australia and other countries, there is a need for an international convention to be developed on the human rights of older people. This approach is consistent with Australia's support for several international conventions, for example on refugees, women, and children. Endorsement by the Assembly will assist UnitingCare Australia in making representations to the Australian Government on this matter.

The need for a human rights approach to ageing and aged care legislation is the subject of the first three recommendations of the Royal Commission, and provides the foundation for the remaining 145 recommendations. The approach is summarised by the Commission as a "universal right to high quality, safe and timely support and care" (Vol.1, p.205). Although some initial work has commenced on new legislation there is a need for pressure to be maintained on all members of the Australian Parliament to progress such legislation as a matter of urgency.

Recommendations of the Royal Commission are comprehensive but a second area which requires urgent attention is payment for the aged care workforce. A key component of the growing crisis in aged care is the capacity to attract and retain enough workers. Aged care workers are the lowest paid caring workforce and yet are doing some of the most important work in the nation, supporting our ageing and aged citizens. Australia's national Fair Work Commission is currently hearing a case for an increase in award wages for people working in aged care. Assembly support will contribute to the effectiveness of representations being made by UnitingCare Australia, and other major service providers in the Australian Aged Care Collaboration.



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References

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