



muylothina 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



## Act2: On The Way

### A summary of the report to the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly in plain language

In March 2020, the Assembly Standing Committee started a project which has been named 'Act2'. The name 'Act2' refers to the second Act of a play, meaning that the Uniting Church is thinking about the next stage of its life after about 40 years. Act2 also reminds us of the story in Acts chapter 2 where the young church listened and responded to the Holy Spirit. Through this project, the Uniting Church wants to listen to the Spirit and be guided in the next stage of our life together. The Assembly Standing Committee formed a special Task Group to organise this project.

When the Task Group began its work, it wrote an introduction explaining the project. You can read this introduction at [this link](#). The Task Group used two online surveys and many online meetings to hear what people thought about the Church. Some of these meetings were advertised on the Assembly website, in the Assembly newsletter and in Assembly Facebook groups. Anyone from anywhere in the country could join these meetings. Other meetings were held with particular groups including Presbytery Ministers, Synod Standing Committees, General Secretaries and Moderators, Chairs of National Conferences, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and all of the Assembly Circle of Interest groups. The Task Group also spoke to leaders in some other Christian churches who have recently made large changes to their churches.

Each time the Task Group did a survey or spoke to a group of people, it took the things it heard and used them to ask better questions in the next part of the process. After the first survey and the first series of meetings, the Task Group wrote a large report called '*Considering Afresh Our Life Together*'. You can read this report at [this link](#). The Task Group asked Uniting Church theologian Rev Dr Geoff Thompson to write some studies to help the Uniting Church read and think about the Basis of Union and listen to what the Spirit could be telling the Church. You can read these studies at [this link](#). After the second survey and the second series of meetings, the Task Group wrote a final report called 'Act2: On the Way', which is the full report for the Reconvened Assembly. You can read this report, proposals and rationale at [this link](#).

The Task Group heard from people in the surveys and meetings that the Uniting Church has many strengths. These include:

- The Uniting Church is welcoming to everyone.
- The Uniting Church is strongly committed to the equality of women and allows all people to be in ministry and hold leadership roles.
- The Basis of Union is a good foundation.
- The Uniting Church believes that all people in the Church have gifts from God and God wants to use everyone.
- The Uniting Church is willing to discuss difficult topics.
- The Uniting Church is committed to being a multicultural/intercultural church.

The Task Group also heard from people that the Uniting Church is facing some challenges. Most of the challenges people talked about to the Task Group were about three issues:



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- Problems with the way the Church works and how different parts of the Church relate to each other.
- Challenges in being clear about what God wants us to do, and in explaining our Church to people inside and outside the Church, especially younger people.
- Problems related to the number of people in some Uniting Church congregations, and the finances available to help congregations look after property, pay for Ministers and start new activities.

The Task Group tried to see the pattern in the many responses we heard from people in surveys and meetings. Three themes were listed in the 'Considering Afresh' report which the Task Group believes would help the Church in the future:

1. The Uniting Church needs to change in order to make sure that all parts of the Church have the money and people they need to keep doing what they feel God is calling them to do.
2. The Uniting Church needs to consider how the organisation and processes of the Church could be made simpler and more flexible.
3. The Uniting Church needs to improve the way in which all people in the Church and all parts of the Church work together and help everyone to understand what it means to be the Uniting Church.

The Act2 Project aims to bring change to the Uniting Church so the Church can better live out its commitment to following Christ and working towards reconciliation. However, there are many things about our Church that will not change. These include the Uniting Church's loyalty to Jesus, its commitment to making new disciples of Jesus, and its connection with the worldwide church. The Uniting Church will continue to be a welcoming Church for all. The Church will continue to live out our covenant with the UAICC and our commitment to being a multi-cultural Church. The purpose of the Act2 project is to help the Uniting Church be more faithful to these unique tasks and relationships as God calls us.

Based on everything that people said in surveys and many meetings, the Task Group believes that the Uniting Church needs to change now. Change is always difficult, but it is going to get even more difficult if the Church delays. The pandemic has taught the Church a lot about change and new ways of doing things. The Church needs to build on that and be creatively preparing for the future. Acting now to make the Church better is also a responsibility we have to the next generations.

The Task Group believes that the Assembly is the right part of the Church to begin this change process and to invite other parts of the Church to be part of the process. The Assembly is the part of the Church with a view of the whole national Uniting Church. The Assembly reminds the whole Church of the key statements which describe who we are as a Church. The Assembly makes decisions about central parts of the Church's life. The Assembly is the part of the Church with responsibility for making decisions about how all the parts of the Church work together, and for making changes to the Church's Regulations.

This document has tried to summarise the main points of the Act2 report but there is much more detail in the full report as well as fifteen detailed proposals. You can find all the documents on this page. Reading them will be helpful in preparation for the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly meeting (Reconvened).