



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

15-17 July 2022

DOCUMENT 9

| | |
|---|--|
| Title | 16th Assembly Report |
| Type of Paper (Information/Decision) | For information and discussion |
| Assembly or ASC Minute | Not applicable |
| Consultation | 16 th Assembly Business Committee, National Director Strategic Finance and Admin, EA to the General Secretary |
| Purpose | To provide an overview to the ASC of the running of the 16 th Assembly, including a report on emissions and finances. |
| Rationale & Findings Summary | See the report |
| Attachments | Attachment A: Finance Statement for the 16 th Assembly Attachment B: Emissions Report for the 16 th Assembly Reconvened Meeting |
| Proposal/s | That the Assembly Standing Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the information provided in the report regarding the 16th Assembly2. Provide advice to the General Secretary regarding issues to be considered for the 17th Assembly |
| Submitted by | Colleen Geyer Assembly General Secretary colleeng@nat.uca.org.au ; 0411 333 167 |

16TH ASSEMBLY REPORT

Introduction

The 16th Assembly took place over two meetings – an online meeting in July 2021 and an in person meeting in May 2022. This was unprecedented in the life of the Assembly, and occurred due to the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

Meeting over two events that were ten months apart, meant that the business of the Assembly had to be considered in a different way. The online Assembly attended to what was required to allow the Assembly to continue to operate from a governance perspective, while the reconvened meeting dealt with the broader business of the triennial Assembly through proposals from the ASC, other bodies and members.

In 2021, leaders, staff and members of the Assembly learnt to meet using an online portal built specifically for the meeting. Reports that would usually be explored at an in person meeting, occurred online prior to the online meeting. Initial meetings of the Community Working Groups to build community and get to know members also occurred online.

In 2022, the joy of meeting in person was one of the first major UCA council meetings for many who attended. Community Working Groups again met online prior to gathering together on the Sunshine Coast in Qld.

From the beginning of 2021, the ASC had to consider different scenarios with associated risks, and make decisions for this unique meeting. It was an important time of oversight and governance. It is also an opportunity to consider what has been learnt.

As the person who had the oversight of the meeting and all it took to make it happen, I am extremely grateful to many people, including ASC members. In particular I would like to thank the President Sharon Hollis, Andrew Johnson, Chair of the Business Committee, members of the Business Committee, Kellie Broderick, Assembly Coordinator and Vanessa van der Rhede from the Qld Synod, James Aaron, Convenor of the Facilitation Team, Janet Staines, Convenor of the Community Working Groups, Yvonne McRostie, Chaplains Convenor, Jenny Bertalan, Rob Floyd, Leo Iosifidis and Lara Regan.

While we faced many challenges and complexities, the two parts of the 16th Assembly enabled members to do the work of the triennial assembly with good outcomes from its collective discernment, and was therefore in my opinion, a success.

This report provides information about the 16th Assembly meeting, including reflections from the Business Committee, the financial statement for the meeting, and an indication of emissions for the reconvened meeting.

Venue and Arrangements for the 16th Assembly

The two meetings were held at the Qld Synod office and the Alex Park Conference Centre on the Qld Sunshine Coast. Both venues, and accommodation for the reconvened meeting were appropriate and well received. Alex Park Conference Centre provided a good atmosphere and amenities for members at the in person meeting.

The local arrangements for the 16th Assembly were very well supported by Kellie Broderick and Vanessa van der Rhede from the Qld Synod.

The Business of the 16th Assembly

The Business Committee that was appointed by the ASC, welcomed two additional members prior to the reconvened meeting – Charissa Suli as President-elect in order for her to experience the work of the Business Committee which was only possible because we met over two events; and Heather Watson as a possible Chair in the event that Andrew Johnson contracted COVID.

The key roles of President, General Secretary, Chair Business Committee, and Convenor Facilitation Committee all had identified replacements for the reconvened meeting in the event that any of these people contracted COVID.

The Business Committee met before the online meeting, and in the lead up to the reconvened meeting, to ensure that the flow of the business was smooth and carried out in the most effective way possible. A number of challenges were dealt with and the committee worked well together. Before the online meeting, it met online; during the online meeting, it met in a hybrid way; and at the reconvened meeting, it met in person.

Following the reconvened meeting, the committee met to consider its work and reflect on what worked well. The following were identified:

- Despite the challenges of meeting twice and in two different ways, the business of the Assembly was achieved
- Members having opportunities to hear the reports online prior to the online meeting worked well, with members able to ask questions and interact with those who provided the reports
- Members meeting prior to both meetings online in their Community Working Groups meant that when they met in their groups in person at the reconvened meeting, they had already built community and got to know each other, allowing them to move into considering proposals in their groups.
- Worship was an important part of the business. Although the installation of the President occurred online, it was still significant, as was worship at the reconvened meeting, in particular the renewal of the Covenant with the UAICC.
- Bible Studies provided by students from Nungalinya College and coordinated by Michelle Cook, provided a rich exploration of the texts for members
- Community Working Groups worked well, and the Facilitation Team offered the meeting invaluable support and resourcing
- There were a couple of issues in the online meeting, however these were attended to, and didn't hamper the business in a major way.
- The flow of business at the reconvened meeting worked well, and mostly didn't feel rushed.
- All business on the agenda was completed.

The ASC could consider for future triennial Assembly meetings:

- ***Keeping the numbers of Assembly members as they were for the 16th Assembly***
- ***That the length of future Assembly meetings be no longer than one evening and four days***
- ***That future Assembly meetings occur over a full weekend***
- ***Community Working Groups meet online prior to the meeting as a way of Assembly members coming to the meeting having already begun to form community and know other members***

16th Assembly Financial Statement

A financial statement for the 16th Assembly is provided at Attachment A. While we believe this statement includes all expenses, there may be a few that have not come in from the Qld Synod.

The allocation for the triennial assembly in the Assembly budget (allocated over the three years prior to a triennial assembly meeting) was sufficient for the 16th Assembly even though the meeting occurred over two events, and there was significant IT and AV costs, in particular for building the online portal and live streaming both events. Providing live streaming of the assembly meeting will likely be an expense for future meetings.

The shorter time of the reconvened meeting meant that accommodation and catering costs were lower than for previous meetings.

The ASC could consider for future triennial Assembly meetings:

- ***The positive implication for costs when the meeting is shorter than in previous years***
- ***The necessity of having a significant budget for IT and live streaming***

Emissions Report

For the first time, an emissions report for an Assembly meeting (reconvened meeting) has been developed. **See Attachment B**

The report covers only transport and accommodation. This is seen as a starting point for future meetings and activities of the Assembly as we move to our goal of net zero emissions by no later than 2040. There will be more that can be done to make triennial Assembly meetings greener, and should be attended to in future planning.

The ASC could consider for future triennial Assembly meetings:

- ***Including in the budget for the triennial Assembly meeting, an allocation to offset emissions incurred***
- ***Including planning for lower emission meetings as part of the work of the Local Arrangements Committee***