



**Uniting Church in Australia**  
**ASSEMBLY**  
Assembly Standing Committee

11-13 November 2022

**DOCUMENT 13**

Title	Net Zero Emissions Working Group
Type of Paper	For information and decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	ASC 22.44.05
Consultation	ASC Members
Purpose	To adopt a Terms of Reference and appoint a working group to undertake work to address the Assembly resolution A call to action for climate justice: listening to First Peoples wisdom
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	
Recommendations	That the Assembly Standing Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Receive the Report</li><li>2. Adopt the Terms of Reference for the Net Zero Emissions Working Group</li><li>3. Note that recruitment for the Working Group continues and will be reported to the March 2023 ASC</li></ol>
Submitted by	Colleen Geyer General Secretary

## Net Zero Emissions Working Group

### Background

The Reconvened Assembly resolved:

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

1. To acknowledge that since time immemorial the Creator gifted First Peoples to be the timeless caretakers of country and the natural environment.
2. To 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. To commit anew to listen to First Peoples wisdom and knowledge, and to take practical climate action including changing our own behaviour.
4. To 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. To 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. To 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. To 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
  - b. to bring a report on findings and recommended next steps to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

The Assembly Standing Committee, at its July 2022 meeting resolved:

That the Assembly Standing Committee

1. Request the General Secretary to write to Synods informing them of the A Call to action on climate justice: listening to First Peoples Wisdom resolution
2. Request the Standards for Ministries 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.
3. 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.
4. Request the Associate General Secretary to work with interested ASC members to develop Terms of Reference for a Net Zero Emissions Working Group and to bring these and nominations to the November 2022 ASC Meeting.

This document specifically addresses the fourth resolution.

The draft Terms of Reference have been developed and are attached to this report.

Recruitment for the Working Group has proved challenging. A wide range of people have been approached, but with no positive responses to date. The ARU will continue to approach relevant people with the aim of bringing a list of nominations to the Mach 2023 ASC. The ASC is invited to suggest any appropriate potential Working Group members.

# Net Zero Emissions Working Group

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

[Date of approval]

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<b>Purpose:</b>	To undertake work to address the Assembly resolution <b><i>A call to action for climate justice: listening to First Peoples wisdom</i></b> , bringing a report on findings, activities and next steps to the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly.
<b>Reporting Arrangements:</b>	Assembly Standing Committee (ASC) and 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly
<b>Period:</b>	This Terms of Reference is from November 2022 until July 2024 (the convening of the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly)
<b>Membership:</b>	As determined by the ASC on the recommendation of a group consisting of the Associate General Secretary and interested ASC members

### Background:

The 16th Assembly Reconvened resolved:

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

1. To acknowledge that since time immemorial the Creator gifted First Peoples to be the timeless caretakers of country and the natural environment.
2. To 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. To commit anew to listen to First Peoples wisdom and knowledge, and to take practical climate action including changing our own behaviour.
4. To 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. To 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. To 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. To 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:
  - b. to bring a report on findings and recommended next steps to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.

**Task Required:**

- 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

**Expected Outcomes:**

Through communication by the GS to all Synods, the Assembly will 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. The call will further urge all Councils to make use of the resources, stories and carbon accounting tools made available online.

**The Working Group will:**

1. Follow up this call, gathering data on commitments and progress towards these commitments.
2. Seek out stories, expertise and learnings on effective strategies and resources to reduce emissions, prioritising the wisdom of First Peoples and work with Assembly communication to disseminate this material widely.
3. Based on the data gathered, develop concrete next steps for how the whole of the church can move together to net zero emissions by 2040

At the conclusion of its work the Working Group will present a Report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly via the Assembly Standing Committee outlining activities undertaken, the findings and proposed next steps.

**How the Working Group will work:**

1. Be grounded in the gospel and build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia.
2. Live out our covenant as First and Second Peoples.

3. Live out our commitment to being a multicultural church, oriented towards justice.
4. Embody an inclusive church where those of differing ability, age, race, sexual orientation and gender identity are welcomed.
5. Ensure that the activities of the Working Group are consistent with the Basis of Union of the UCA, the Constitution and Regulations, and align with the current strategic priorities of the Assembly.
6. Consider how the work of the Working Group relates to other councils, agencies and groups within the UCA, and work collaboratively wherever possible.
7. Consider how the work of the Working Group relates to other bodies ecumenically and with other civil society organisation and work collaboratively wherever possible.
8. Where appropriate, conduct its work on the basis of rigorous, contemporary research and analysis

**Membership:**

The Convenor will be appointed by the ASC guided by input from a group consisting of the Associate General Secretary and interested ASC members.

The appropriate number of members and the composition of the membership of the Working Group will be determined by the Assembly Standing Committee guided by input from the same group.

Casual vacancies will be filled as required by the Assembly General Secretary and communicated to ASC.

The selection process will consider the skills and expertise required to undertake the work of the Working Group.

The Working Group will be dismissed at the conclusion of the work it has been given. In the event that the period given to a Working Group has elapsed and the work of the group is not yet completed the Assembly General Secretary may choose to:

1. Extend the period of the Working Group and communicate this to ASC
2. Dismiss the Working Group and request that ASC appoint a new Working Group.