



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

10-12 March 2023

DOCUMENT 19

Title	Report from the Standards for Ministries Committee
Type of Paper	For information and decision.
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	Nil in this reporting period
Purpose	Report to ASC noting various Synod MEB developments.
Rationale & Findings Summary	This report includes: 1. General report of the SFM.
Attachments	Nil
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee: 1. Receive the report. 2. Note the formation of the NSW/ACT Synod MEB. 3. Note ongoing conversations with WA MEB and Faculty. 4. Note the resignation from the Standards for Ministry Committee of the Rev Dr Christine Sorenson and the Committee's withdrawal of membership of the Rev Helen Paine. 5. Note the intention of the SFM to bring a nomination for a new member to the next meeting of the Committee.
Submitted by	Rev Dr Rob McFarlane (Committee Chairperson)

Report from the Standards for Ministries Committee

Introduction:

Since last reporting to the ASC in November 2022, the Standards for Ministries Committee has not met. Our next meeting is Tuesday, 28 February, falling between the new earlier deadline for ASC papers and the ASC meeting itself. Our following 2023 series of meeting dates has been altered to bring the meetings earlier to meet the reporting deadline.

NSW/ACT MEB

SFM is very pleased to report that the Standing Committee (SSC) of the Synod of NSW and the ACT has appointed a Ministerial Education Board (MEB). This follows a number of years of uncertainty around structures. The MEB will report directly to the SSC with responsibility for all matters described in the Regulations, although with shared responsibility with the Synod Board for financial and property matters. The chairperson of the NSW/ACT MEB is the Rev Simon Hansford, not in his role as Moderator but personally, noting that his term as Moderator concludes in September 2023. During his time as Moderator, Simon initiated a review of formation across the Synod so has a particular interest in this area.

Consultations with Heads of Colleges and MEB Chairs:

Since SFM's last report to the ASC, the SFM chairperson co-convened with the Rev Dr Sean Winter (Pilgrim College, Vic/Tas) a gathering of the Heads of Colleges on 5 December, 2022, immediately preceding the annual National Theological Educators Gathering. Themes from the Heads of Colleges consultation included:

- A notable culture of collaboration and mutual support.
- Ongoing reflection on affiliations with universities and theological consortia, not, for instance, the dissolution of the Adelaide College of Divinity and the new association of the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology (SA) with the Melbourne-based University of Divinity, alongside Pilgrim Theological College (Vic/Tas Synod).

The recent HoC meeting was the first face-to-face meeting since 2019 and was deeply valued by all in attendance. The group expressed the desire to hold one mid-year Zoom meeting and one end-of-year face-to-face meeting each year. With Northern Synod identified as the next host, and the need to avoid the wet season, HoC meetings will be held on Zoom in July & December 2023, with the equivalent of an end-2023 face-to-face meeting to be held after the Wet during first semester 2024.

It is anticipated that MEB Chairs meetings will occur mid- and end-of-year on Zoom. Dates for 2023 are currently being set.

Consultations:

SFM is required to undertake consultations with each synod once every five years. With six synods, these means one consultation most years. Apart from the reflective opportunity that this provides for each synod, the SFM has the responsibility to bring a recommendation to the ASC to continue to recognise the particular synod's MEB as fulfilling requirements for lay and ordained ministry (all four phases), with such recommendation to include areas of improvement needed from time-to-time.

Follow-up matters from consultations with WA and SA MEBs during 2021 are now concluded satisfactorily, although ongoing conversations are occurring with WA following their restructure of roles.

The consultation with NSW/ACT scheduled for the second half of 2022 has been deferred to first half of 2023 due to both the lack of clarity around the MEB responsibilities in NSW/ACT (now resolved – see above) and the unexpected unavailability of one of the consultation team members. Team members are the Rev Dr Sean Winter and the Rev Jay Robinson.

The next consultation that is due is with the Northern Synod, which we plan to initiate for the second half of 2023.

Annual MEB reports:

Annual reports are being sought from MEBs covering the year 2022. Apart from standards areas, SFM is seeking particular comment on Deacon formation, following resolutions of the last face-to-face meeting of the Assembly.

Chaplaincy Working Group

Following the ASC's decision last year to request SFM to form a working group on chaplaincy, focussed on defining standards and pathways, this will be a major item on our agenda at our forthcoming meeting.

Membership:

Rev Dr Christie Sorenson has resigned from the SFM Committee due to concluding her placement in the WA Synod and returning to New Zealand. The Rev Helen Paine did not attend meetings during 2022. The Committee will consider a nomination at our forthcoming meeting and bring this to a future ASC meeting.

Rev Dr Rob McFarlane, Chairperson Standards for Ministries Committee

PROPOSALS:

That the Assembly Standing Committee:

- 1. Receive the report.**
- 2. Note the formation of the NSW/ACT Synod MEB.**
- 3. Note ongoing conversations with WA MEB and Faculty.**
- 4. Note the resignation from the Standards for Ministry Committee of the Rev Dr Christine Sorenson and the Committee's withdrawal of membership of the Rev Helen Paine.**
- 5. Note the intention of the SFM to bring a nomination for a new member to the next meeting of the Committee.**