



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

21-23 July 2023

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Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For Information
Title	Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) Report for ASC
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) Executive
Purpose	Report to ASC by Terence Corkin who has been a member of the CCA Executive for the past 8 years.
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	
Recommendations	That the ASC receive the report.
Submitted by	Rev Terence Corkin

## **REPORT ON THE CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA**

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) held its first Assembly in 1957. Membership is open to denominations and National Councils of Churches. Some countries have 30 or more member churches. Australian member churches are the Armenian Apostolic Church, The Churches of Christ, The Coptic Church, and the Uniting Church. The National Council of Churches in Australia is also a member. Member churches come from as far west as Iran, north to Myanmar and Nepal, northeast to Japan, east to the Philippines and Indonesia and south to New Zealand.

The CCA undertakes a variety of development, educational and empowerment programs that are primarily funded through European aid agencies and local support where programs are run. In addition to these programs there is a significant role in accompanying churches that are experiencing challenges. Any advocacy and visits on behalf of local churches need to be conducted with great sensitivity to the challenges being faced by the local churches.

Christian communities are a minority in most countries in Asia. Often, they are very fragile. These micro churches highly value their membership in, and support from, the CCA. The contribution of churches like the UCA in solidarity with the churches of Asia is an important witness to our commitment to being part of the continent of Asia.

Many partner churches of the UCA are members of the CCA. Our presence in this forum, and support for its activities, indicates to them that our commitment to Asia is wholistic and broad and not limited to bilateral relationships.

At the 14<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the CCA, held in Jakarta Indonesia in 2015, I was elected to the Executive Committee of the CCA. This governance body only meets once a year. I have expressed to the General Secretary, Rev Dr Matthews George Chunakara, that I think that this is an inadequate frequency for a governance body. The CCA Assembly is normally held every five years. However, due to COVID the 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly will not be held until September 2023 in Kottayam India. The Executive continued to meet annually by Zoom during the COVID restrictions on travel.

The current General Secretary has exercised very strong and clear leadership in the life of the CCA. He has improved the transparency and quality of the documentation used in the CCA. In the HR area he has rewritten the staff handbook and regulations, in finance there is now an investment policy, in governance there is now a conflict of interest policy and financial reporting is clear. While further improvements can be made in the area of governance, the commitment is clear and the fact that the CCA convened an international meeting on governance in May 2023 shows its commitment to advancing this issue in its own life and among the churches in Asia.

Like any entity that depends on grant funding, finances have become more restricted. The downward slope of funding from the European bodies has not reached its conclusion. The medium term future of the CCA remains unclear. The capacity and willingness of Asian churches to fund programs through the CCA is limited. Creative ways to provide support will need to be found. Options might include wealthier churches offering to second a staff person to CCA for the purpose of running a program in which that person has expertise. This could be done from the person's home base and the cost would be clear and time limited.

A major challenge facing the CCA is the location of its head office. This has been in Chiang Mai, Thailand for about 12 years. There are significant problems with this location. They include increasingly difficult arrangements for staff visas, cost of occupancy, legal and financial restrictions due to operating as a foundation in Thailand and also having bank accounts in Hong Kong (the previous base of operations). It seems inevitable that the CCA will need to relocate to another country.

Notwithstanding its challenges it is clear that the CCA is valued by many member churches in Asia. The churches in Indonesia and India are strong and supportive. Structural challenges persist and the place of

conciliar ecumenism remains uncertain. Nevertheless, important contributions are being made to the quality of life of churches in Asia through the CCA and it is to be hoped that the UCA will continue to make its modest yet important contribution to the life of the CCA.

**Terence Corkin**  
**CCA Executive Committee Member**