



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

10-12 November 2023

**DOCUMENT 11**

<b>Title</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup> Assembly</b>
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For information and decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	
Purpose	To update the ASC on the arrangements for the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly. To inform the ASC on progress on all resolutions from the 16 <sup>th</sup> Assembly.
Rationale & Findings Summary	See report
Attachments	
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee: 1. Receive the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly Report. 2. Appoint the following people to the Business Committee for the 17 <sup>th</sup> Assembly: Heather den Houting (Chair) Assembly General Secretary (Interim) Charissa Suli Sharon Hollis Convenor, Facilitation Team Jane Fry
Submitted by	Colleen Geyer Assembly General Secretary <a href="mailto:colleeng@nat.uca.org.au">colleeng@nat.uca.org.au</a> ; 0411 333 167

## **Update**

Planning for the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly to date has included:

- The approval of the venue for the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly
- The development of the logo for the President-elect's theme, and associated collateral
- The timeline for communication and planning has been developed
- The identification of key people has begun. The Chair of the Business Committee and members of the Business Committee are included in this report for appointment by the ASC.
- The overview of work requested by the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly and associated ASC resolutions and actions are included in this report for consideration of the ASC
- Communications with Synods and Presbyteries is underway
- Work has begun with the NSW.ACT Synod to establish a Local Arrangements Committee

## **Assembly Business Committee**

The following have been approached and are willing to serve on the Business Committee for the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly:

Heather den Houting (Chair)  
Assembly General Secretary (Interim)  
Charissa Suli  
Sharon Hollis  
Convenor, Facilitation Team  
Jane Fry

It is envisaged that other people will be asked to provide advice to the Committee on relevant matters.

## 16<sup>th</sup> ASSEMBLY RECONVENED MEETING: RESOLUTIONS

Resolution	ASC Resolutions to Action 16 <sup>th</sup> Assembly Resolutions & Progress to date
<p><b>Act2: On the Way</b>            In consideration of the Act2 report and Para 17 of the Basis of Union  <i>The Uniting Church acknowledges that the demand of the Gospel, the response of the Church to the Gospel, and the discipline which it requires are partly expressed in the formulation by the Church of its law. The aim of such law is to confess God's will for the life of the Church; but since law is received by human beings and framed by them, it is always subject to revision in order that it may better serve the Gospel. The Uniting Church will keep its law under constant review so that its life may increasingly be directed to the service of God and humanity, and its worship to a true and faithful setting forth of, and response to, the Gospel of Christ. The law of the Church will speak of the free obedience of the children of God, and will look to the final reconciliation of humanity under God's sovereign grace.</i></p> <p>1. Further to the Act2 Report, to authorise the following work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Identify ways to strengthen and develop the forming of disciples in worship, witness and service within the UCA in the various forms of communities of faith;</li> <li>ii. Discern, clarify and strengthen our national identity as a church, informing our structure and culture;</li> <li>iii. Review governance structures and practices that reflect our contemporary context, in particular:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify ways to strengthen and develop the local expressions of worship, witness, service, and the making and forming of disciples, in the various forms of communities of faith</li> <li>b. In keeping our law under constant review address the need for an evolving interconcial process that is responsive and agile.</li> <li>c. Further develop theological culture of the UCA, and the framework and provision for theological education</li> <li>d. Being informed by our Covenant with UAICC</li> <li>e. Recognising we are a multicultural Church</li> <li>f. Continue to fulfill of our ethical, legal and social obligations.</li> </ol> </li> <li>iv. Develop a resourcing framework that takes into account whole of church resourcing arrangements</li> </ol> <p>2. As the Assembly progresses this work, to invite each of the Synods and the UAICC to join with the Assembly, recognising the importance of consultation to be undertaken across the whole of the Church.</p> <p>3. To delegate to the Assembly Standing Committee to progress the work on behalf of the Assembly and report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.</p> <p>4. To affirm the importance and urgency of this work and that it should be adequately resourced.</p>	<p><b>22.42</b>            It was resolved to:</p> <p><b>22.42.01</b> establish the Act2 Project Steering Committee;</p> <p><b>22.42.02</b> approve the Act2 Project Steering Committee Terms of Reference; (Attachment D)</p> <p><b>22.42.03</b> appoint the following to the Act2 Steering Committee:            i) Sharon Hollis (Chairperson) ii) Catherine Pepper (ASC Nominee)            iii) Richard La'Brooy (ASC Nominee) iv) Katalina Tahaafe-Williams (ASC Nominee) v) (still to be advised) vi) Kevin Griffiths (Qld Synod Nominee) vii) Jessica Hateley-Browne (Vic. Tas Synod Nominee)            viii) Paul Goh (SA Synod Nominee) ix) Mark Brisbane (WA Synod Nominee) x) (still to be advised) (NSW.ACT Synod Nominee) xi) (still to be advised) (Northern Synod Nominee)</p> <p><b>22.42.04</b> note the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress appointment to the Act2 Steering Committee: i) Mark Kickett; and ii) and that the second nominee will be advised; and</p> <p><b>22.42.05</b> request the Assembly Officers to appoint any outstanding nominees to the Act2 Steering Committee;</p> <p><b>22.42.06</b> approve an initial budget for the Act2 Project of \$424,295 until the end of December 2023 (by agreement);</p> <p><b>22.42.07</b> request the General Secretary arrange for the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee;</p> <p><b>22.42.08</b> request the General Secretary make available resources for the establishment of the Act2 Project Unit as agreed to by the Assembly Standing Committee, and work with the Act2 Steering Committee regarding any resourcing requests;</p> <p><b>22.42.09</b> request the Synods provide to the General Secretary any existing strategic and missional planning work they have undertaken to inform the work of the Act2 Project;</p> <p><i>All resolutions were actioned.            The Act2 Project is on track to deliver a report and recommendations to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly. These will come to the ASC in 2024 prior to them being made available to Assembly members.</i></p>

<p>5. To request each of the Synods in consultation with the UAICC to join with the Assembly to consider and contribute to resourcing the work.</p>	
<p><b>Continuing Witness</b></p> <p>1. To approve the following documents for consideration by the Uniting Church between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Assemblies, for reception as continuing witnesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Confession of Belhar,</li> <li>b. Laudato si', and</li> <li>c. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification.\</li> </ul> <p>2. That the process of consideration should involve an invitation for all Presbyteries within the Church, and such other Councils of the Church as desire to participate, to commit to discussing each document for a period of at least one hour, using resource materials provided by the Continuing Witness Task Group, and reporting the results of this discussion to the Task Group.</p> <p>3. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to oversee the Task Group in the work of providing ongoing support and resourcing of these conversations, and gathering responses from Presbyteries; and bring a report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly along with proposals for the official adoption of documents as 'Continuing Witnesses'.</p> <p>4. That the Assembly Standing Committee request the Task Group continue its work of identifying further continuing witnesses, with a special focus on the variety of forms of witness from Asia and the Pacific and report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.</p>	<p><b>22.43</b></p> <p>It was resolved to:</p> <p><b>22.43.01</b></p> <p>a)request members of the Continuing Witness Task Group to continue their work as agreed to in the resolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly, and</p> <p>b)bring a report and any related proposals to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly; and</p> <p><b>22.43.02</b>request the General Secretary to arrange appropriate communications support for the Continuing Witness Task Group in discharging its responsibilities.</p> <p><i>The Task Group has continued its work. Assembly staff worked with the Task Group to develop consultation resources, and promoted them in National Update and FaceBook. The General Secretary wrote to Synod General Secretaries requesting that they promote this work and consultation opportunities to their Presbyteries and throughout their Synods. A report with recommendations will come to the March 2024 ASC meeting prior to it being made available to Assembly members.</i></p>
<p><b>A call to action for climate justice: listening to First Peoples wisdom</b></p> <p>1. To acknowledge that since time immemorial the Creator gifted First Peoples to be the timeless caretakers of country and the natural environment.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>3. To commit anew to listen to First Peoples wisdom and knowledge, and to take practical climate action including changing our own behaviour.</p>	<p><b>22.44</b></p> <p><b>22.44.01</b>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;</p> <p><b>22.44.02</b>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;</p> <p><b>22.44.03</b>request the Standards for Ministries Committee to include in their report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly information on any work and outcomes of this of this resolution.</p> <p><b>22.44.04</b></p> <p>a)request the Assembly Circles, Advocates and Panels to include learning from the wisdom of First Peoples, care of creation, climate</p>

<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>6. To request the Assembly Circles, Advocates and Panels to include learning from the wisdom of 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.</p> <p>7. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to:</p> <p>a. establish a national zero emissions church working group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gather data on commitments to greenhouse gas emission reduction made across the life of the church, and progress towards those commitments</li> <li>• share stories, expertise and learnings on effective strategies and resources to reduce emissions, prioritising the wisdom of First Peoples</li> <li>• consider how the whole of the church can move together to net zero emissions by 2040; and</li> </ul> <p>b. to bring a report on findings and recommended next steps to the 17th Assembly.</p>	<p>justice and the spiritual and theological basis for a zero emissions church into their work for the remainder of this triennium; and b)report back to the March 2024 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.</p> <p><b>22.44.05</b> a)request the Associate General Secretary to work with interested Assembly Standing Committee members to develop Terms of Reference for a Net Zero Emissions Working Group; and b)that these Terms of Reference and nominations are brought to the November 2022 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.</p> <p><i>The General Secretary wrote to Synods as requested. The Terms of Reference for a Net Zero Emissions Working Group were approved and a Working Group was established. The work of the Working Group is continuing. The Standards for Ministries Committee report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly will include information as requested. Assembly Circles, Advocates and Panels will report to ASC in March 2024 as requested.</i></p>
<p><b>Aging and Aged Care</b></p> <p>1. to endorse the establishment of Uniting Friends of Ageing as a new national network within the life of the Uniting Church open to all members interested in and concerned about ageing and aged care.</p> <p>2. To endorse the celebration of Older Persons Sunday (for example on the first Sunday of October) each year, and note that UnitingCare Australia is providing worship resources to assist congregations in the celebration of Older Persons Sunday.</p> <p>3. To endorse the priority advocacy of UnitingCare Australia to:</p> <p>a. Urge the Australian Government to support the development of an international covenant, under the auspices of the United Nations, on the rights of older persons; and</p> <p>b. Urge the Australian Government to fully implement the recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission, including a human rights-based Aged Care Act and increases for the wages of aged care staff based on decisions of the Fair Work Commission.</p>	<p>Actions to be undertaken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To report on the resolution in communication channels of the Assembly</li> <li>2. To distribute resources for Older Persons Sunday when they are developed</li> </ol> <p><i>These actions were undertaken.</i></p>
<p><b>Deacons in the UCA Anniversary</b></p>	<p><b>22.45</b> <b>22.45.01</b>request the General Secretary to write to Uniting Church Theological Colleges, emphasising that the current 'Standards for</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To acknowledge with joy the 30-year anniversary of the renewal of the diaconate within the Uniting Church in Australia (1991 Assembly), and its respected place in the ecumenical, worldwide community of diaconal ministry.</li> <li>2. To give thanks for all those who have been ordained as Deacons in the last 30 years, and celebrate the many and varied ministries they have undertaken to fulfill their calling as bridge builders between the church and the community.</li> <li>3. To acknowledge the role that Deacons have to encourage and equip followers of Jesus to faithfully live out their baptismal call through acts of caring compassion, empowerment, service, and prophetic hope; through solidarity and accompaniment; through working for justice and liberation; and as advocates for creative transformation.</li> <li>4. To emphasise that the current 'Standards for Education and Formation of Candidates for Ordination - Phase 2' requires that "due attention be given to the different perspectives of Ministry of Deacon and Ministry of the Word" (Clause 15) and strongly remind the UCA theological colleges to the need to provide specific courses, formation and field placements for Deacon candidates to prepare them for diaconal ministry.</li> </ol>	<p>Education and Formation of Candidates for Ordination - Phase 2' requires that 'due attention be given to the different perspectives of Ministry of Deacon and Ministry of the Word' (Clause 15), and remind them of the need to provide specific courses, formation and field placements for Deacon candidates to prepare them for diaconal ministry; and</p> <p><b>22.45.02</b> request the Standards for Ministries Committee to include a question regarding courses, formation and field placements for Deacon in the consultations carried out with the Ministerial Education Boards, and</p> <p><b>22.45.03</b> request the Standards for Ministries Committee to include in their report to the 17th Assembly any work or outcomes as a result of this resolution.</p> <p><i>The General Secretary wrote to Theological Colleges as requested. Standards for Ministries Committee will include any work or outcomes in their report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly.</i></p>
<p><b>Preventing Harm from Sexual Orientation &amp; Gender Identity Change Efforts (SOGICE)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To affirm the Uniting Church Statement, Dignity in Humanity, which states that 'every person is precious and entitled to live with dignity because they are God's children'.</li> <li>2. To affirm that prayer and pastoral care are long-held Christian practices that will continue to be offered to support and uphold people, including LGBTIQ+ people, and agree that these Christian practices should not be used to harm or condemn any people including LGBTIQ+ people.</li> <li>3. To recognise that sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts (SOGICE), often referred to as 'conversion therapy' are harmful to people's mental health and wellbeing.</li> <li>4. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to provide a national resource for congregations, agencies, and individuals to learn how they can help prevent harm from SOGICE ideology and practice.</li> </ol>	<p><b>22.46</b></p> <p>It was resolved to request the Associate General Secretary to develop Terms of Reference for a Preventing Harm from Sexual Orientation &amp; Gender Identity Change Efforts Resource Development Task Group, including nominations for the Task Group, for approval at the November 2022 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.</p> <p><i>Terms of Reference were developed and a Task Group was established.</i></p> <p><i>The work of the Task Group is continuing.</i></p>
<p><b>Moving Forward in Being a Multicultural Church</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To adopt the 3rd Sunday in July (or another date best suited to the local setting) as 'Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday', to celebrate UCA being a Multicultural Church and to create an opportunity for congregations and faith communities to connect and build relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in their neighbourhoods. This Sunday is to replace One Great Sunday of Sharing*.</li> </ol>	<p><b>22.47</b></p> <p><b>22.47.01</b> request Being a Multicultural Church and Transforming Worship Advocates and Panels to work together to develop resources for Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday;</p> <p><b>22.47.02</b> request the General Secretary to consider an approach to move towards simpler, friendlier, and more equitable church structures, processes, and ways of working that foster CALD participation and intercultural partnership, and report to future ASC meetings; and for this work to be included in the Act2 Project;</p>

<p>2. To request the Assembly Standing Committee to develop a process to create liturgical, theological, and practical materials as resources for the wider church in its celebration of Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday and seeking to be an Intercultural Neighbourhood Church within the current triennium, in consultation with National Conferences and relevant Assembly Circles.</p> <p>3. To request the Assembly Standing Committee, liaising with other parts of the Church, to move towards simpler, friendlier, and more equitable church structures, processes, and ways of working that foster CALD participation and intercultural partnership by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewing the NATIONAL PROPERTY POLICY FOR THE UCA with regard to clause 1.2.: “Where a UCA congregation is sharing property with a non-UCA congregation, Faith Community or Fellowship Group”; and,</li> <li>Reviewing the Regulations relating to Faith Communities (3.9.2) and produce an Assembly Protocol/Guideline for receiving/recognising Faith Communities/Congregations from other CALD churches.</li> </ol> <p>4. To encourage Synod Placement Committees and Presbytery Pastoral Relation Committees to review and revise the Minister Leadership Profile Form and Congregation Placement Profile and other key reporting and review documents to reflect the ethos and characteristics expressed in Living with the Neighbour Who is Different (9th Assembly, 2000) and One Body Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally (13th Assembly, 2012).</p>	<p><b>22.47.03</b> request General Secretary to write to Synod General Secretaries encouraging Synod Placement Committees and Presbytery Pastoral Relations Committees to review and revise the Minister Leadership Profile Form and Congregation Placement Profile and other key reporting and review documents to reflect the ethos and characteristics expressed in Living with the Neighbour Who is Different (9th Assembly, 2000) and One Body Many Members: Living faith and life cross culturally (13th Assembly, 2012);</p> <p><b>22.47.04</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>request the General Secretary to undertake a review of the national property policy for the UCA following any relevant work by Act2; and</li> <li>note that a review of Regulations in relation to Faith Communities will be included in the ongoing Act2 project.</li> </ol> <p><i>Resources were developed for Intercultural Neighbouring Sunday. The General Secretary wrote to Synod General Secretaries as requested. Work connected to the Act2 Project has not specifically progressed at this stage.</i></p>
<p><b>Audit of Small Congregations Financial Statements</b></p> <p>To authorise the Assembly Standing Committee, on the advice from the Assembly Legal Reference to amend the following regulations:</p> <p>1. Regulation 3.8.7(c) – to amend through insertion after “The books of account” the words “when the gross receipts are above \$100,000”, the proposed wording of the revised Regulation being:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The books of account, <u>when the gross receipts are above \$100,000</u>, shall be audited and certified by the auditors at least once in every year and at such other times as may be required by the chairperson of the Church Council or other body responsible as the case may require.</li> </ol> <p>2. Regulation 3.8.7(e), Variations to Qualifications from 2.5 times the notional stipend to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) financial reporting revenue threshold for small charities, the proposed wording of the revised Regulation, subject to Assembly Legal Reference Committee advice, being:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where the gross receipts of a Congregation or body or fund in the year is below a figure that equates to <del>2.5 times the notional stipend</del> <u>the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) financial reporting revenue threshold for small charities</u>, the books of account may be audited and certified by two persons who are not qualified in terms of (d) above, but who are, in the opinion of the body responsible, fit and proper persons to undertake the responsibility.</li> </ol>	<p><b>22.48</b></p> <p>It was resolved to approve amendments to Regulations 3.8.7(c) and 3.8.7(e), on the advice of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee as at 16 July 2022.</p> <p><i>Completed and approved.</i></p>

**Review of the Regulations – Delegation of Authority to Amend Part 5 of the Regulations**

1. to defer any review of the Regulations that are associated with, or ancillary to, the broad strategic work done as part of the Act2 process, other than Part 5 – Church Discipline – in order to ensure that any proposals as part of the review are aligned to the strategic direction of the Assembly.
2. to delegate, pursuant to Regulation 3.10.2(a)(ii), to the Assembly Standing Committee the authority to make Regulations under Part 5 of the Regulations (Church Discipline), subject to:
  - a. those Regulations being generally in accordance with the amended Framework of Principles and subject to appropriate consultation on the draft regulations; and
  - b. the approval of those Regulations by the Assembly Standing Committee on the advice of the Assembly Legal Reference Committee.

**22.49**

It was resolved to request the Regulations Review Task Group to continue its work as per the resolution and bring reports to future Assembly Standing Committee meetings.

*A national consultation process was undertaken.  
Draft regulations were provided to the ALRC.  
The ALRC has completed initial work to review the draft regulations.  
These have been provided back to the review group, and following consideration they will be sent back to the ALRC for final review before coming to the March 2024 ASC meeting for approval.*