

Uniting Church in Australia

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

MARY MACKILLOP PLACE, NORTH SYDNEY, NSW

21 - 23 July 2023

PRESENT Sharon Hollis (President), James Aaron, Sandy Boyce, David Busch, Michael Dobson, David Fotheringham, Philip Gardner, Colleen Geyer, Mark Kickett, Richard La'Brooy, Nicole Mugford, Alison Overeem, Deidre Palmer, Catherine Pepper, Roberta Stanley, Charissa Suli, Raul Sugunananthan, Geoff Thompson, Yuko Tonai-Moore, Anna Wilson, Kerry Wilson, Stuart Woodward.

In attendance: Jenny Bertalan, Lindsay Cullen, Heather den Houting, Mark Lawrence, and Andrew Williams.

AGENDA DISCUSSION

The elected members of the Assembly Standing Committee gathered on Friday afternoon to discuss the Agenda of the meeting. The President led this conversation.

WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The President acknowledged the First Peoples. The President welcomed Leo Iosifidis for matters related to the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee report, Risk Management and Investment Policy, Steve Bevis and Sureka Goringe for matters related to the UnitingWorld report, Andrew Johnson for matters related to the Act2 report.

WORSHIP On the Friday night the President led worship and the closing prayer on Friday and Saturday night were offered through The Examen video, Anna Wilson led the Saturday morning worship, the Sunday morning worship was delivered by Nicole Mugford and James Aaron and the closing prayers were offered by Stuart Woodward.

APOLOGIES

23.23 **It was resolved** to receive the apology of Linda Driver, Lilliani Tahaafe-Williams, Ayla Williams and Jane Fry for the whole meeting, Charissa Suli for Friday and Raul Sugunananthan for Friday night.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The General Secretary spoke to the agenda and timetable as listed in Document 1.

23.24 **It was resolved to** approve the timetable and agenda of the meeting as outlined in Document 1, with the removal of CA1, the Historical Society Report from the Consent Agenda, noting that the committee is free to vary the agenda at any time.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 23.25** **It was resolved to:**
23.25.01 confirm the minutes of the meetings held 10 - 12 March 2023; and
- 23.25.02 approve that ASC minute 23.19 be deemed 'confidential' for a period of 10 years, and not be included in the March 2023 ASC minutes that are published on the Assembly website once they are confirmed.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 23.26** **It was resolved to:**
- a) note:
(i) David Fotheringham's conflict of interest in relation to Document 12 - President's Report on Response to LGBTIQA+ Apology since he is the Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and Document 12 includes consideration about actions being requested of Moderators; and
(ii) resolve that he be present for this business and vote as well.

NOTE CONSTITUTION CLAUSE 39

The Standing Committee members were reminded of the Constitution clause 39, as per ASC minute 00.71:

"On matters which, by a two thirds majority vote, the Assembly deems to be vital to the life of the Church, the Assembly shall seek the concurrence of the Synods and/or Presbyteries and/or Congregations as the Assembly may determine."

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The ex-President took the chair while the President spoke to Document 3, consisting of a report on her activities since the March 2023 meeting of the Standing Committee.

- 23.27** **It was resolved** to receive the report (Attachment A).

UAICC REPORT

Mark Kickett presented Document 4, consisting of a report on the conversations UAICC had and the actions they took.

- 23.28** **It was resolved** to receive the report. (Attachment B)

BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE

1. Act2 Report (ASC Minutes 22.36.05 and 06)

Andrew Johnson spoke to Document 16, consisting of an update regarding the work and process of the Act2 project.

- 23.29** **It was resolved to:**
- 23.29.01 receive the report; and
- 23.29.02 approve a stand-alone conversation with the Assembly Standing Committee between its July and November meetings to gain the perspective of the

Assembly Standing Committee of the Directions and Options offered; and to request the General Secretary to identify a time for this to take place (via Zoom).

2. Agency Governance Documents Report (ASC Minute 22.67.03)

The General Secretary presented Document 17, consisting of a report on the initial review of the governance documents of all Assembly agencies.

23.30 It was resolved to receive the report.

3. LGBTIQA+ Apology Task Group Report (ASC Minutes 21.61.02 and 22.36.05-06)

The ex-President took the chair while the President introduced Document 12, consisting of a report on the consultation she conducted about how to respond to the need for a trauma informed approach to an Apology and provide the Assembly Standing Committee with possible next steps. Table group discussion followed.

23.31 It was resolved to:

23.31.01 receive the report;

23.31.02 request the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group to develop the words of an apology, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church; and to bring a draft to the November 2023 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee;

23.31.03 request the Transforming Worship Panel, in consultation with the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group, to develop a liturgy that includes lament, confession and a statement of welcome of LGBTIQA+ people in the Uniting Church, and the apology, that would be offered at the 17th Assembly, and could be adapted for use in other parts of the Church; for approval by the Assembly Standing Committee no later than March 2024;

23.31.04 request the President to work with the Moderators to offer an apology to the LGBTIQA+ Australians and their families within the bounds of each Synod following the 17th Assembly;

23.31.05 request the Transforming Worship Panel, in consultation with LGBTIQA+ members of the Uniting Church and the Apology to LGBTIQA+ Australians Task Group, to develop a resource for offering a personal apology to individuals and families for the silence, rejection, discrimination and stereotyping of LGBTIQA+ people; for approval by the Assembly Standing Committee no later than March 2024;

23.31.06 request the General Secretary to:

- 23.31.07
- a) commission the development of resources for trauma informed pastoral care, including trauma informed pastoral care of LGBTIQA+ people,
 - b) further develop resources about inclusive language as it relates to gender identity and promote these resources across the Uniting Church, and
 - c) explore the option of publishing all reports, papers and decisions made by the Uniting Church on human sexuality;

23.31.08 request the General Secretary to develop a communications plan for the whole church regarding this work; and

23.31.09 approve the Assembly Officers to appoint additional members to the Apology to LGBTIQ+ Australians Task Group, if required

4. Project Possum Report (ASC Minute 23.21.05)

The Stuart Woodward, Nicole Mugford, and Charissa Suli spoke to Document 10, consisting of a report on the meeting held in Sydney in April, including decisions that were reached at that meeting.

23.32 It was resolved to receive the report.

FROM ASSEMBLY BODIES

1. Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee

Stuart Woodward and Leo Iosifidis spoke to Documents 7 and 7A, consisting of a report on the management of finance, audit and risk issues across the Assembly and nominations to the Assembly Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

23.33 It was resolved to:

- 23.33.01 a) receive the report; and
- 23.33.02 b) approve the 2023/24 Budgets for the Assembly and its Agencies and Entities as submitted; and
- 23.33.03 a) appoint:
Brendan Flynn;
Barry Honey; and
Alice McCleary
as members of the Assembly Finance Audit and Risk Committee;
- 23.33.04 b) note that Sonia Milner has been co-opted as a member of the Assembly Finance Audit and Risk Committee; and
- 23.33.05 c) request the Assembly General Secretary to express its appreciation for the services rendered by the outgoing members of the Assembly Finance Audit and Risk Committee.

2. Assembly Risk Management

Leo Iosifidis and Lindsay Cullen presented Document 8, consisting of an update to the Risk Management System and Framework of the Assembly. Documents 8A, 8B and 8C contained the risk appetite statement, dashboard/heatmap reporting of risks, risk register from the March 2023 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee and the Assembly Standing Committee's risk governance principles. Table group discussion followed.

23.34 It was resolved to receive the report.

3. Defense Force Chaplaincy Report

The General Secretary spoke to Document C-CA3, consisting of a report on matters pertaining to work of Uniting Church Chaplains in the Defence Force.

23.35 It was resolved to:

- 23.35.01 receive the report; and

23.35.02 request the General Secretary to work with Kaye Ronalds to identify opportunities for Safe Ministry and Code of Ethics awareness training courses for Defence Force Chaplains.

4. General Secretary Report

The General Secretary presented Documents 5, 5A and 5B, consisting of a report on the Assembly's progress against Strategic Plan, operations and issues relevant to its work, the UnitingWorld Board decision re Croker Island and the Assembly's Strategic Plan and Business Plan, respectively.

23.36 It was resolved to receive the report.

5. UnitingWorld Report

Sureka Goringe and Steve Bevis presented Documents 9 and 9A, consisting of a report on UnitingWorld's work and UnitingWorld's Approach Document from the Governance Framework.

23.37 It was resolved to receive the report.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. Assembly General Secretary Recruitment

The ex-President took the Chair. The President introduced Document 15, consisting of a paper on the proposed Ministry Description for the Assembly General Secretary and the selection process. Discussion followed.

23.38 It was resolved to:

23.38.01 receive the report;

23.38.02 approve the ministry description for the Assembly General Secretary as amended at the meeting; (Attachment C)

23.38.03 approve the process for nominating the next Assembly General Secretary:

1. Advertise the position in November 2023
2. Applications close mid-February 2024
3. Applications short listed by end of February 2024
4. Interviews are held March and April
5. Nominating Committee to facilitate a conversation between the President-elect and the preferred nominee as per the placement guidelines for team ministry
5. The name of the preferred nominee brought to a special ASC meeting in late April.
6. Report of the General Secretary, Nominating Committee will be provided to Assembly members on the first day of the Assembly meeting – changes approved by agreement

23.38.04 approve the Nominating Committee composition for recruitment of the next General Secretary

- President as Chair
- A current General Secretary from a Synod
- 2 or 3 of the elected members of the Assembly Standing Committee
- 2 members from the wider Church community
- Congress chair or their nominee

2. Historical Society Report

- 23.39 It was resolved to:**
- 23.39.01 receive the report;
- 23.39.02 note the resignation of Rev Prof Glen O'Brien, Chairperson of Uniting Church History National Society, and request the President to convey the thanks of the Standing Committee for his service at the forthcoming Historical Society Conference in Darwin Conference 24 – 27 August 2023,
- 23.39.03 extend the terms of Dr Alison Longworth, Dr Judith Raftery, and Rev Robert Renton as Uniting Church National History Society Board members for a further term of two years, in accordance with the provision made in 14.6 of the Uniting Church National History Society Constitution.

3. Consent Agenda

The General Secretary presented the various documents which constituted Document 2, Consent Agenda.

- 23.40 It was resolved to:**
- 23.40.01 receive the Assembly Archivist Report;
- 23.40.02 receive the Christian Conference of Asia Executive Membership report; and
- 23.40.03 a) appoint Rev Dr Cathie Lambert as member of the Standards for Ministries Committee for the remainder of the current term; and
- b) appoint Rev Scott Litchfield (Deacon) as a member of the Standards for Ministries Committee for the remainder of the current term.

4. Issues and Challenges for the UCA for Nominees of President-elect

The General Secretary introduced Document 18, asking the participants to the Assembly Standing Committee meeting to consider the issues and challenges that will be provided to the Church and to the President-elect nominees as they consider this important role. Much discussion ensued.

- 23.41 It was resolved to** receive the report.

5. President-elect Nomination Committee

The General Secretary spoke to Document 14, consisting of a report on the establishment of a committee to identify UCA leaders with appropriate gifts and skills to undertake the role of President of the Assembly and to ensure all nominees for President (both identified by the committee or nominated by UCA Councils or Assembly members) are in good standing with the UCA. Much discussion followed.

- 23.42 It was resolved to:**
- 23.42.01 approve the President-Elect Nomination Committee Terms of Reference as amended at the meeting (Attachment D)
- 23.42.02 authorise the Assembly Officers to approve the membership of the President-elect Nomination Committee; and
- 23.42.03 review the nomination process following the 17th Assembly.

6. 17th Assembly Report and Theme for the 17th Assembly Meeting and the 2024-2027 Triennium

The General Secretary introduced Document 13, consisting of an update on the preparations for the 17th Assembly in 2024. The President-elect spoke to Document 13A, consisting of a paper on the proposed theme for the 17th Assembly and the 2024-2027 triennium.

23.43 It was resolved to:

- 23.43.01 receive the report;
- 23.43.02 note the dates for the 17th Assembly meeting, 11-16 July 2024; and
- 23.43.03 determine that the youthful age as per Regulation 3.3.8(a)(iii)(3) is 30 years at the time of the Assembly.
- 23.43.04 receive the report on the proposed theme for the the 17th Assembly and the 2024-2027 Triennium; and
- 23.43.05 approve the theme for the 17th Assembly and the 2024-2027 Triennium – “Threads of Love: Weaving Christ’s Love across Cultures and Boundaries”.

CLOSURE

The meeting closed at 4:00pm with prayer led by Stuart Woodward.

DATES FOR 2023: 10 – 12 November 2023