



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

15-17 March 2024

DOCUMENT 14

Title	Report on Preparations for the 17th Assembly
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Information and Decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	
Purpose	To inform the ASC of preparations for the 17 th Assembly and to address two matters raised by the VicTas Synod Standing Committee.
Rationale & Findings Summary	
Attachments	Communications from the General Secretary, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania: 24.8.7A Assembly Standing Committee re Assembly President Nominations, and 24.8.7B Assembly Standing Committee re Assembly Youthful Members
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Receives the report;2. In accordance with Regulation 3.10.1(a), provides a blanket exemption from Regulation 3.6.4.1(d) to the extent required to enable an extension of time for any valid Nominations for the President-Elect up until no later than 26th April 2024;3. In accordance with Regulation 3.10.1(a), provides an exemption from Regulation 3.3.8(a)(iii)(3) to the extent required to allow for:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. fewer than one in ten 17th Assembly members appointed from within the bounds of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania to be of a youthful age;b. the 52 17th Assembly members beyond youthful age currently appointed, or their replacements should a current appointee become unavailable, from within the bounds of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania to remain eligible to be 17th Assembly members.4. Approve the appointment of members to the 17th Assembly by Frontier Services, UnitingCare Australia and

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	UnitingWorld (2 members each), and by AFARC, the ALRC and SFM (1 member each). 5. Appoint the following people as members of the 17 th Assembly: <names to be collated during the ASC meeting>.
Submitted by	Rev Lindsay Cullen, Assembly General Secretary (Interim)

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Introduction

While I have described the current context as being one in which I have to “keep in the air balls thrown up by someone else!”, preparations for the 17th Assembly continue to move forward. The Local Arrangements Committee is now meeting fortnightly, the Business Committee is negotiating a time for a first meeting, and the first mailout to members should happen within a week of the time of this report. There have been helpful meetings with both the President and the President-Elect to discuss aspects of the Assembly. The President-Elect has appointed members of the Worship Committee, has designated a Cato Lecturer and is planning for Bible Study leaders. Comms have developed stationary and ‘shareables’ based on the President-Elect’s theme and have recorded a welcome video with the President-Elect and myself, which will soon be used as part of setting up a ‘landing page’ for the 17th Assembly on our Assembly website.

Finances

Being both the first fully face to face Assembly in six years and also happening in Sydney at a time of rising costs has meant that the initial costings for the Assembly are somewhat over budget. The National Director of Strategic Finance and Admin has stayed in close contact with this issue and we will be considering some changes to the settings for Assembly (including a small increase to the ‘co-payment’ and close consideration of things such as Childcare, airport transfers, provision of all evening meals etc. Additionally, we will increase the yearly provisioning for the Assembly in order to adequately provide for Assembly meetings in the future. AAFARC has been made aware of this issue and will continue to monitor the situation.

Requests from VicTas Synod Standing Committee

Two requests (attached) regarding issues related to the 17th Assembly have been received from the VicTas General Secretary, and these form the basis for the second and third proposals being brought to the ASC at this time. The first concerns a request for an exemption to the regulation concerning the deadline for nominations for President-Elect being 90 days before the Assembly. In consultation with the President, I am bringing a proposal that a general exemption should be made, allowing for any valid nominations to be received for up to two weeks after the nominal deadline. This would allow nominations up until the 26th April rather than the 12th April. The Chairperson of the President-Elect Nominations Committee has been consulted and does not believe such an extension would unduly hinder the work of that Committee.

The second request from VicTas Standing Committee concerns the proportion of youthful members required by the regulations, and in view of the Synod’s inability to meet that number despite good faith attempts to do so, asks that an exemption be made, to allow members beyond youthful age appointed by the Synod or any replacements should a current appointee be unavailable, to remain eligible for membership of the Assembly.

Co-options to the 17th Assembly

Under the regulations, there are two categories of co-options which are available to the ASC with regard to an Assembly meeting. Firstly, Regulation 3.3.8 (a)(iv) allows for the appointment of a number of members (being Ministers or confirmed members) by bodies directly responsible to the Assembly, with the ASC determining which bodies and how many members, up to a maximum of 5% of the total of Ex-officio, UAICC and members appointed

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by Presbyteries and Synods. Should all Presbyteries, Synods and the UAICC appoint their maximum number of members this totals 234, so 5% would be 11. I have included a proposal regarding the bodies and numbers of members which the ASC may wish to approve or amend.

Similarly, Regulation 3.3.8 (a)(v) allows for the appointment of a number of members directly by the ASC having regard to gifts, skills and experience, up to a maximum of 8% of the total 234 referenced above, thus giving a maximum of 18. I have included a proposal regarding these appointments.

Lindsay Cullen

General Secretary (Interim)