



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

15 – 17 March 2024

DOCUMENT 21

Title	UCAF National Committee future
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	Decision
Assembly or ASC Minute	
Consultation	Rev Sharon Hollis, Assembly President; Mrs Margaret Pedler, Chairperson UCAF National Committee UCAF National Committee Executive Rev Lindsay Cullen, Assembly General Secretary (Interim)
Purpose	To inform the Assembly Standing Committee of decisions taken at the UCAF National Gathering held in Adelaide, January 2024 and request some actions arising from this.
Rationale & Findings Summary	I have taken the liberty of changing the proposals from asking the ASC to “offer suggestions” about the two matters relating to an ecumenical relationship and to the administration of a bursary, to instead ask the ASC to instruct the General Secretary to address these two issues. I have further added a proposal which arises from the report (25), to address appropriate recognition of the work of the National Committee. -- <i>Lindsay Cullen, General Secretary (Interim)</i>
Attachments	UCAF NC Mandate. Joan Stott UCAF Bursary information booklet. (Please note this will be reviewed after decisions are made about the future of this bursary.)
Proposal/s	That the Standing Committee 1. receive the report; 2. instruct the General Secretary to address the two issues highlighted by the UCAF report: a) how the relationship with the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women might be continued through one of the areas of the Assembly; b) how the Joan Stott UCAF Bursary might be administered in the future; 3. request the Business Committee of the 17 th Assembly to enable an appropriate acknowledgement and celebration of the work of the National UCAF Committee within the program of the Assembly.
Submitted by	Pam Grant, Secretary, UCAF National Committee secretary@ucafnc.org.au 0408 990 345

UNITING CHURCH ADULT FELLOWSHIP NATIONAL COMMITTEE (UCAF NC)

Executive Summary

1. This report is being presented to the Assembly Standing Committee, as the UCAF National Committee is a committee of the Assembly (our Mandate is from the Standing Committee).
2. The UCAF National Gathering, held in Adelaide during late January 2024 brought together members of the UCAF National Committee and members from some UCAF Groups from across Australia. This was the first of these events, held under the new committee structure, which combined aspects of our previously held Celebrations and Consultations.
3. While there were a number of business matters that required attention, the main item dealt with the future of the UCAF National Committee that was established in 1982. This was brought about as a result of not receiving nominations for the positions of the elected Executive, i.e. Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.
4. The decision of the National Gathering was that we would inform the Assembly Standing Committee that we have begun the process to conclude the ministry of the UCAF National Committee effective from 30 June 2024, being the end of the current committee's triennium. This decision in no way affects the UCAF Synod Committees (where they exist), or the various UCAF groups across Australia that will continue.
5. We are asking the Standing Committee to consider the proposals presented and engage in conversation with the UCAF NC Executive in the winding up of said committee.
6. We were pleased to have UCA President, Rev Sharon Hollis with us for the duration of this time, her wisdom and care were greatly appreciated by all present.

Order and Content of a report

7. This report sets out some of the history of the UCAF National Committee, what brought us to make the decision we did and identifies the ministries that we are keen to see be continued. In this regard we are seeking some guidance from the Standing Committee as to how these might be managed in the future.
8. In 1977, at the time of the Inauguration of the Uniting Church, no formal provision had been made for networking the many and varied Adult Fellowship Groups in the Congregations and Parishes. Each Synod acted as it saw fit to establish a committee to co-ordinate and encourage these Adult Fellowship Groups. The Synod Committees were established independently of each other, so there were, and still are, a variety of structures and relationships to the various Synods.
9. In May 1982, at Adelaide, prior to The Assembly held that year, the first Consultation of Synod Adult Fellowship representatives at a national level took place. A National Committee for Adult Fellowship Groups (NCAFG) was formed with simple guidelines drawn up. The document of this first Consultation was known as the Mandate. The Mandate requested the Assembly's Council of Christian Education (The Joint Board of Christian Education) to establish a NCAFG.
10. This was done and overtime the name of the body was changed to UCAF National Committee. The main role of the Committee was to provide umbrella support and connection with the various Synod UCAF Committees, and other groups they became affiliated with.

11. Prior to 2021, the National Committee rotated through the Synod Committees. The Synod Committees would establish a separate group to be the National Committee, who would serve for three years as Committee-elect and three years as the national committee.
12. In the mid-2010's, it became apparent that it was getting harder for the Synod Committees to establish a 'national committee'. At this time, a Working Group was established to explore a new structure for the National Committee, taking into account the relationship with the Assembly and the Synod Committees. Ultimately a representative committee structure was agreed on, with an elected executive, plus two representatives from each Synod Committee, where they existed. There was provision for UCAF groups where there was no Synod Committee to nominate a member from their groups to the National Committee. This latter position was not initially filled. However, when the QLD Synod Committee was wound up, one of their members picked up this category.
13. Nominations were called in late 2020, with the elections taking place in May 2021. The new office-bearers were commissioned at this time for three years.
14. It took some time for this new structure to settle into place. While it was a sound decision at the time, there were a few difficulties, especially when Queensland Synod Committee was wound up in 2022. Some of the other synod committees are also having difficulty getting sufficient numbers for their own committees, let alone finding people happy to be a representative on the National Committee.
15. COVID has had an impact on the life of the UCAF across Australia. Like many other organisations people haven't come back, members have died or aged and not able to get to the meetings. Many of the groups remaining are changing how they meet and what their purpose is. Further, the Synod Committees as well as presbytery UCAF committees are struggling in some places.
16. For some time, it became apparent to the Executive that we would need to consider the future of the UCAF National Committee. This was brought to a head when no nominations were received for the executive to be voted on at the National Gathering held in Adelaide earlier this year.
17. Making the decision to conclude the ministry of the National Committee was not an easy one, considering there are international relationships and a bursary that the national committee administers to be considered. However, it is important that the ministry concludes in a positive way and not left to 'wither and die on the vine'
18. UCAF National Committee is keen for some aspects of its ministry to continue. These being the relationship with the World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women; membership of this body is by country. In the case of Australia, the relationship is managed by the UCAF National Committee. As part of this membership, Australia is a Unit of the South Pacific Area. For many reasons, this relationship needs to continue for sharing of ministry and support of our South Pacific sisters. In this regard it is worth noting that prior to the establishment of the UCAF National Committee the relationship with the World Federation was managed at the Assembly level.
19. Both the relationships mentioned in point 18 involve financial support. The UCAF National Committee has entered into discussion with these two bodies to determine how we can pay ahead our obligations for the next 8 years, being the balance of the current quinquennium and the next quinquennium.
20. Some funds will be available to continue with this relationship after the payments referred to above have been made.
21. The Joan Stott (UCAF) Bursary has been a significant aspect of our life, which we are keen to see continue. This bursary honours the commitment of Joan Stott to the UCAF over a number of years, including periods as National President and World Federation Secretary. It is managed by the National

Committee, with information distributed to the UCA Theological Colleges where applications are sought.

22. The selection process currently involves screening of applications by the various Synod Committees, with recommendations being taken to a sub-committee of the National Committee. The National Committee considers the applications and recommends if any or no bursaries will be awarded. Up to two bursaries may be offered each year. The current value of this bursary is \$2000.
23. The current information pamphlet and application form is attached. However, this document and the application/screening process will require review, as a result of decisions made at the National Gathering.
24. Funds will be made available for this bursary to continue, for how long is still to be decided. It may be for a set number of years, or until the allocated funds run out.
25. With the winding up of the National Committee, it is the hope of the current committee that it will be possible for the ministry of the UCAF National Committee to be recognised at the upcoming Assembly meeting in July 2024.

26. Report prepared by Pam Grant
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