

ASSEMBLY FINANCES - REPORT FROM ASSEMBLY FINANCE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

1. INTRODUCTION

Assembly Finance Audit and Risk Committee (AFARC) is pleased to provide its report to the 17th Assembly. AFARC's role is set out in paragraph 3.7.5.2 of the Regulations of the Church and includes responsibilities to "make to the Assembly such reports and recommendations on financial matters and policies as the Assembly may require or the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee considers appropriate".

AFARC is also governed by a Charter which was most recently reviewed, and re-affirmed, to the March 2023 meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee (ASC). During the term of the 16th Triennium, the Chair of AFARC was, as previously, co-opted to ASC and continued to report on AFARC activities to all regular meetings of the ASC.

AFARC has worked closely with the National Assembly and its Agencies and Entities over the Triennium as part of its scope of works, as it worked to discharge its responsibilities and duties. AFARC also interacted significantly with the external Auditors, KPMG, and is pleased to note that clean audits have been achieved for all Agencies / Entities throughout the Triennium period, allowing for an orderly process of approving, signing, and lodging of the annual financial statements with regulatory (Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission - ACNC) and other bodies.

During the Triennium, several key activities were undertaken with AFARC's assistance, or leadership, and in line with AFARC's remit. The most significant of these included:

- **Matters of Redress and Civil Claims (in relation to Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse)**
 - With the incorporation of UCA Redress Limited at the beginning of the previous Triennium, the Assembly and its Agencies and Entities continued to work with UCA Redress Limited to address matters of Redress as they were received.
 - During the Triennium, the Assembly (adopting a survivor focused, model litigant approach) along with its legal advisors, also worked with the Federal Department of Social Services to settle a group historical Civil claims (15 cases) arising from the former Croker Island Mission (as administered by the former Methodist Overseas Mission). Direct personal responses were also offered.
 - To assist in meeting the financial commitments arising from Redress and Civil matters, mainly in relation to the former Mogumber and Croker Island Missions, three residential properties were sold during the Triennium - by UnitingWorld (two properties) and the National Assembly (one property). All three manses were sold by public auction, maximising sales proceeds whilst ensuring the Church's interests were protected.
 - The Triennium also saw a growing appreciation that claims were being received disproportionately to where resources are held within the overall, wider, Church, and with this there was increasing need to include a capacity to pay measure as part of funding Redress and Civil matters. This led to several national meetings being held with a "National Redress Recovery Scheme" resulting, under which there is a (re)allocation of Redress related financial liabilities across the Church. At the time of writing this report, an in-principle agreement for the National Assembly to receive a recovery of \$2.8M for Redress Claims paid up to 30 June 2023, is in place. As noted below, this Recovery payment is expected to have a significant positive impact on the Assembly's Balance Sheet. Further details are currently being worked through – including potential further discussion with respect to not only Civil claims, but also Redress claims received post 30 June 2023. AFARC

greatly appreciates this initiative and the generosity of other Councils of the Church in making such a (re)allocation possible.

- **External and Internal Auditor appointments**
 - An External Audit Tender was undertaken in conjunction with the NSW.ACT Synod, Uniting Financial Services, and Uniting NSW.ACT, resulting in the reappointment, at a commercially competitive rate, of KPMG as External Auditors for a further three-year period.
 - In addition to the statutory requirement for External Auditors, the Assembly also worked with the tender group to appoint an Internal Audit provider, leading to the appointment of Grant Thornton to this role. This appointment, underpinned by a three-year Internal Audit plan to cover key operational and risk areas, has provided an added level of assurance to the governance of the Assembly and its Agencies / Entities.
 - One of the initial Internal Audit areas of work carried out by Grant Thornton was in relation to Cyber Security. This is discussed further below.
- **Post Covid-19 and the changing work environment.**
 - Whilst the impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic continued to dissipate, mainly in the later part of the 16th Triennium, we can see that the changes brought on by the impact of Covid-19 to the way we work, will continue for much longer - especially the hybrid working model.
 - Assembly's Covid response also led to Innovation and other productivity improvements, including the use of further technology and communication tools (i.e. Microsoft Teams, Zoom). Innovation is one of the National Assembly's Secretariat Organisational Values; it will be interesting to see the future evolve as Artificial Intelligence and other factors bring further Innovation possibilities.
- **Occupancy**
 - The Triennium has also seen the relocation of Frontier Services, joining the Assembly and UnitingWorld at 262 Pitt St (Pilgrim House). We are grateful to the NSW.ACT Synod for the opportunity to work together to allow Frontier Services to again be co-located.
- **Service Level Agreement – NSW.ACT Synod and the National Assembly**
 - During the Triennium, the Service Level Agreement between the NSW.ACT Synod and the National Assembly and its Agencies and Entities with respect to the provision of Shared Services (Human Resources, Payroll, Financial Processing, Information Technology, and other items) was renegotiated with a new Agreement being signed for the 2023/2024 Financial Year. The National Assembly is appreciative of the scale, expertise and support provided by the NSW.ACT Synod in these areas.
 - This included a large project to migrate financial systems as part of a holistic strategy to move towards Microsoft's cloud hosted technology environment.
- **UnitingWorld – Re-accreditation - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)**
 - During the Triennium, UnitingWorld, as the Church's international aid and partnerships Agency, was reaccredited with DFAT as part of DFAT's five-year reaccreditation program – an excellent outcome reflecting excellent work!
- **ACT 2 – AFARC Submission and the Work of ACT 2**
 - During the Triennium, AFARC watched with interest as the ACT 2 team carried out its work in preparation for bringing a report to the 17th Assembly. AFARC provided a written submission to the ACT 2 team as part of the data gathering process of the project. AFARC is supportive of the work of the ACT 2 team in focusing on how the Church evolves into the future. Helping to inform the road ahead for the Church, and developing sustainable models for the future, is critical and AFARC stands ready to assist in any way as a path becomes clearer.
 - In noting the above, AFARC is well aware of the difficulty of putting effective national initiatives in place, bearing in mind the various responsibilities of each council of the Church.
- **Assembly Investment Advisory Committee (AIAC)**

- The AIAC has been active over the Triennium, fulfilling its responsibilities expertly and willingly, including in areas such as -
 - Changes to Committee membership which included the appointment of a new Committee Chair, Graeme Rough, as well the introduction of an investment advisor member (non-voting) category for both Uniting Financial Services and U Ethical.
 - Updates to both key governing documents as approved by the ASC, viz-
 - the AIAC Charter - approved by ASC in March 2023; and
 - the Assembly Investment Advisory Policy – approved by ASC in July 2022. (This included ESG - Environment, Social, Governance - principles as a critical component of the Investment Policy.)
 - Worked with the Assembly and each Agency / Entity to reaffirm their respective investment profiles in light of an enhanced understanding of investment risks and the risk / return trade-off - providing guidance on investment needs.
 - AFARC greatly appreciates the professional expertise of the AIAC, noting that Investment Income, as well as the capital protection of Investment and other Funds held, is a key stewardship consideration as well as being a key element of income to the Assembly and its Agencies / Entities. Work of the AIAC is discussed further below.
- **Cyber Security**
 - During the Triennium, AFARC established a “Cyber Sub Committee” to oversee the Assembly’s activities in this key risk area.
 - As noted above, one of the initial Internal Audit areas of work carried out by Grant Thornton was conducting a Cyber Security Audit. The outcome of this review led to the development of a suite of Cyber Related policies and frameworks including a ransomware policy, as well as the uplifting of the previous Critical Incident and Business Interruption Recovery Plans to meet not only today’s Cyber Security challenges, but also with a view to those likely to emerge in the future. A key component of this work is embedding an ongoing focus on increasingly complex “Cyber” matters into Business as Usual activities.
- **Risk Management**
 - AFARC continues, as part of our normal work plan, to consider matters of Risk to the Assembly and its Agencies and Entities. Updates to the Assembly’s Risk Register are reviewed by AFARC at each meeting. Each ASC meeting also includes a dedicated Risk session – considering the Assembly’s Statement of Risk Appetite, movements in the Risk Register, emerging risks and other relevant matters. This is a vitally important topic that will continue to receive considerable attention and ongoing refinement.

Of course, the above matters were in addition to the more “traditional” matters such as financial reporting, management reporting, Auditor engagement, risk management etc that continue to warrant AFARC’s attention. More detail on specific financial matters follows.

2. FINANCIAL REPORTING

The following information provides a summary of the Assembly’s financial position and performance over three completed financial years since the 16th Assembly meeting, being 12 months to June 2021, June 2022, and June 2023, as well as a forecast for the 12 months to June 2024 (at the date of writing this report).

Key Financial Comments

A high level summary of the key financial outcomes (further discussed below) for the Assembly since the 16th Assembly meeting include:

- **Overall Net Assets** – We expect the collective Net Assets of the Assembly and its agencies to stay fairly consistent over the Triennium for the Assembly and its Agencies (with a slight increase from \$35.8M in 2021 to \$36.3M in 2024);

- **National Assembly Net Assets** - Reduction in the National Assembly's ("Secretariat") representation of the net assets from \$3.8M to \$2.4M over the three year period, being a reduction from 10% of the net asset base to just over 6% of the net asset base (an important consideration when we discuss reserves and the Assembly's ongoing financial sustainability);
- **Frontier Services** – Financial results have stabilised with continued strong operations from the Agency on the back of previous good work in repairing the Frontier Services' Balance Sheet following the 2015 exit from aged and community services;
- **UnitingWorld** – continued strong operations, noting the Net Asset position has remained consistent appreciating that UnitingWorld has made available \$3.25M in property sale proceeds for Civil and Redress matters (both manses – mentioned above - were sold at significant profit to the historical carrying book value);
- **UnitingCare Australia** – continued excellent work in advocacy for the disadvantaged in the community, including the delivery of the Remote Accord Program, along with continued work reflecting strong alliances with other national peak bodies;
- **UAICC** – continued strong balance sheet, enabling Congress to progress its important work whilst appreciating that these works require significant patience, energy, and time to allow them to flourish;
- **Beneficiary Fund** – in this Triennium, AFARC continued to meet with the Chair of the Benefund Committee, and with that interaction is mindful not only of the BeneFund Committee's work, but also the work of Mercers (as Trustee, Investment Advisors and Fund Administrator) as well as the independent work of the BeneFund's Actuary in ensuring the Fund remained fully funded and holding sufficient reserves to not only meet future liabilities as and when they fall due, but also to allow for the appropriate indexing of pension payments for the Fund's members. The most recent Actuarial Report was pleasing, revealing a satisfactory level of coverage for the review period. The almost unique nature of the Fund, being "defined benefits" (now closed to new members), along with the Fund's Pension Increase Policy, brings with it a range of long-term considerations that the BeneFund Committee is well aware of. During the Triennium, AFARC continued to engage with the Fund Committee on such aspects, including in relation to the changing demographic profile of Fund members, the impact on Fund balances, anticipated Fund life-cycle, and any associated investment risks. This remains an active discussion; and
- **National Disaster Relief Fund (NDRF)** – during the Triennium, the NDRF, which sits within the National Assembly, continued fundraising efforts to provide relief to those communities impacted by natural disaster across the country, with relief activities delivered via the relevant UCA Church Council, to several communities.

Matters of Redress and Civil Claims

As noted above, during the Triennium the National Assembly (via UCA Redress Limited) continued to be a participant in the Federal Government's National Redress Scheme. Since joining the Scheme in March 2019 (the scheme continues to 2027), the Assembly has received claims from former residents of the following historical missions:

- **Former Methodist Overseas Mission (MOM)**
 - Mogumber Mission - remote Western Australia
 - Croker Island Mission - Croker Island Northern Territory
- **Former Australian Inland Mission (AIM)**
 - Several matters relating to activities at Coen and Normanton (Queensland)
- **Former Presbyterian Board of Ecumenical Relations and Mission (BOEMAR)**
 - Several matters relating to the Mornington Island Mission

It is pleasing to see the National Assembly and its Agencies (mainly UnitingWorld and Frontier Services) work together to provide the funding for these Civil and Redress matters.

Provisions, Contingent Liabilities and Contingent Assets – Compliance with Australian Accounting Standard – Matters of Redress and Civil Claims

AFARC works closely with Management to ensure the adequacy of the (financial) Provision for Claims as required under Australian Accounting Standards. This process involves considerable engagement with the Assembly's External Auditors and its legal and other advisors. At the date of this report, and since the commencement of the Federal Government National Redress Scheme, the Assembly and its Agencies have recognised total Gross Provisions of approximately \$13.5M (being 200 anticipated claims at an average value of \$67.5k) in relation to Civil and Redress matters expected to be received until the end of the National Redress Scheme - being 30 June 2027.

The \$13.5M has been represented in financial statements on the following basis – National Assembly \$9.2M, Uniting World \$3.24M and Frontier Services \$1.06M, totalling \$13.5M.

Also, as at the date of this report a total of approximately \$5M (being 77 claims paid to date at an average value of \$64.9k) has now been paid from this Provision, leaving a net remaining Provision of \$8.5M.

AFARC's previous report to the 16th Assembly reported a total Gross Provision of approximately \$3.9M. The increase to \$13.5M as at the date of this report - an increase of just under \$10M - is a sizeable increase, with the level of provisioning subject to ongoing assessment and scrutiny. While AFARC appreciates the inherent subjectivity in assessing the level of Provision as part of preparing annual financial statements, we note that there is now a higher level of comparable certainty with six years of the Scheme's nine year notification period now completed, as opposed to being only one third through the Scheme's notification period at the time of preparing the 16th Assembly report.

AFARC is also cognisant, however, that:

- there may be a late influx of claims towards the Scheme's closure date;
- the Redress Scheme may be extended past the original scheduled completion date;
- recent legislative changes now allow claimants to seek to re-litigate matters where any previous agreed settlements might be considered unreasonable; and
- there has been an escalation in claim values being determined by the Courts in recent (Civil) decisions.

It is AFARC's opinion, having engaged with relevant expert advisors, including Assembly's external Auditors, that the current level of financial Provisions is adequate whilst noting the abovementioned subjectivity inherent in such an assessment. This remains under constant review.

National Redress Recovery Scheme

As noted earlier in this report, the current Triennium saw a growing appreciation that claims arising from historic cases of institutional sexual abuse were being received disproportionately to where resources sit within the overall Church and its Entities, and with that an increasing acceptance of the need to include a capacity to pay measure as part of funding Redress and Civil matters.

It would be remiss to again not mention the National Redress Recovery Scheme in a discussion of the financial impact of Redress, and Civil, claims and associated Provisioning. Further to the above discussion, this is a significant development in the Assembly's financial position and while, as at the date of preparing this report, many matters of detail remain to be resolved, AFARC greatly appreciates this initiative and the generosity of other Councils of the Church.

National Assembly – Financial Sustainability

Whilst it has been pleasing to see the overall stability in total Net Assets of the collective National Assembly and its Agencies / Entities, there remains ongoing cause for caution as to the current level of reserves available within the National Assembly itself.

In AFARC's report to the 16th Assembly, it was noted that the National Assembly assisted significantly during the Frontier Services' transition in 2015, and whilst Frontier Services has done an amazing job

resolving this legacy matter and all related debts, the National Assembly has not yet been able to replenish its general reserves, which has been further compounded by the need to address Civil and Redress Matters. The need for long term sustainability has been a top-of-mind matter for AFARC, and ASC, throughout the Triennium.

AFARC is working closely with Management, including via the annual submission of surplus Budgets, to work towards increasing the level of reserves to ensure the National Assembly's sustained financial viability. AFARC is also mindful of the challenges of the National Assembly in absorbing a significant unforeseen financial, or other external, shock, should one eventuate, and we appreciate that although the Agencies / Entities have significant assets, in most cases these assets are not immediately available to the National Assembly due to "charity" and related legislative requirements.

The above discussed National Redress Recovery Scheme will assist in relation to ongoing financial sustainability. ASC has also established an "Assembly Secretariat Financial Sustainability Working Group" to explicitly consider initiatives in response to the challenge of financial sustainability.

As part of this discussion, AFARC readily acknowledges that the Synods, who annually provide grants to the Assembly as part of the long-established funding model of the Assembly, are also under financial pressure as they amongst other things also deal with matters of Redress. Appreciating this, we continue to look forward to strong working relationships with the Synods.

3. SUMMARY FINANCIAL REPORT - OVERVIEW

General Funds

General Funds reporting focuses on "unencumbered funds" or "free funds". The General Funds result for the last three years (actuals) plus a forecast for the 2024 year is noted in the table below.

National Assembly and Agencies GENERAL FUNDS			ASM	UW	UAICC	Ucare	FS & JFF	NSCU	Total
			\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000
Forecast	30-Jun-24	Income	7,023.8	3,389.2	483.6	2,518.2	5,609.4	572.9	19,597.1
		Expenses	3,545.7	1,955.6	457.7	2,252.2	5,635.2	406.8	14,253.3
		Profit	3,478.1	1,433.6	25.9	266.0	(25.8)	166.0	5,343.8
Year end	30-Jun-23	Income	4,276.4	2,070.7	702.3	2,024.8	5,551.4	461.8	15,087.4
		Expenses	4,096.6	3,121.6	535.4	2,166.7	4,797.9	430.5	15,148.7
		Profit	179.8	(1,050.9)	166.9	(141.9)	753.5	31.3	(61.3)
Year end	30-Jun-22	Income	3,567.8	2,501.3	161.4	1,659.4	3,985.2	550.0	12,425.0
		Expenses	8,905.2	1,764.6	287.2	2,263.9	3,827.4	576.7	17,625.0
		Profit	(5,337.4)	736.6	(125.8)	(604.5)	157.8	(26.7)	(5,199.9)
Year end	30-Jun-21	Income	3,640.7	2,569.2	843.3	2,412.4	7,262.6	559.2	17,287.4
		Expenses	3,306.2	2,970.2	220.9	1,671.5	4,659.0	509.2	13,336.9
		Profit	334.4	(400.9)	622.4	740.9	2,603.6	50.0	3,950.4

Note:

- UAICC is the Uniting Aboriginal Islander and Christian Congress
- Frontier Services includes The John Flynn Foundation

Key items of highlight include:

- National Assembly loss in 2022 is driven by additional Provisions for Redress and Civil Claims recognised in the Balance Sheet.
- National Assembly forecast profit in 2024 largely reflects the expected outcome of recent National Redress Recovery Scheme discussions (\$2.8M), as well as the notified receipt of a bequest of approximately \$750k anticipated to be received before 30 June 2024.
- The reduction in "red ink" is pleasing.

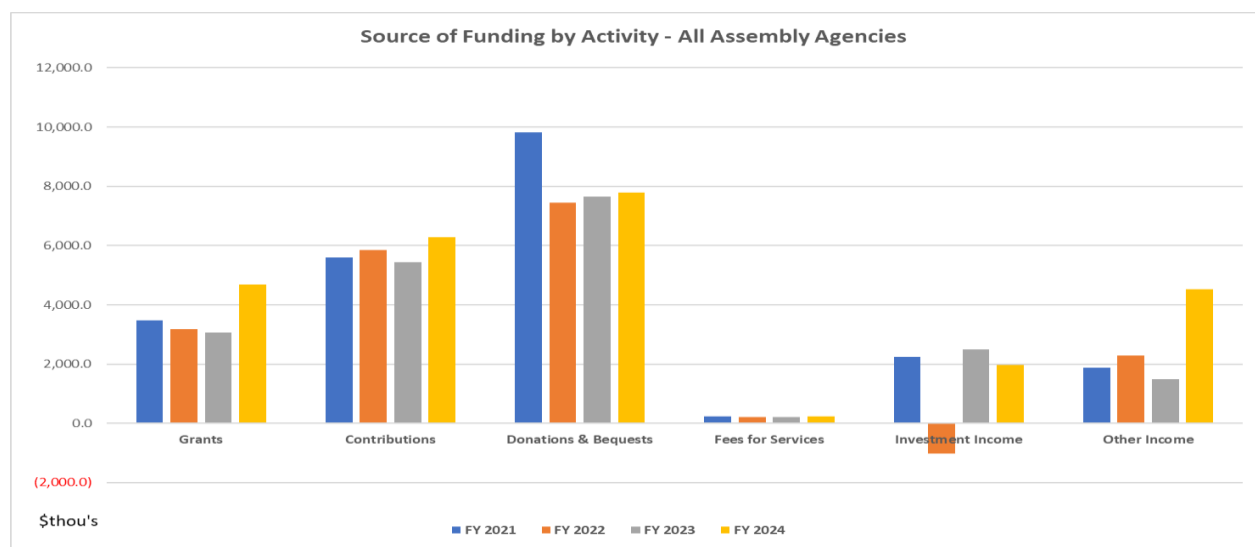
All Funds

At an All-Funds level, which include General Funds plus all other funds under the Assembly and its Agencies' / Entities' books (including those with encumbrances like Endowment and Specific funds, as well as "special purpose" DFAT funding received by UnitingWorld), high level results are:

National Assembly and Agencies ALL FUNDS			National Assembly	Uniting World	UAICC	Uniting Care Australia	Frontier Services	National Safe Church Unit	Total
			\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000
Forecast	30-Jun-24	Income	7,047.6	7,617.8	508.1	4,139.2	5,609.4	572.9	25,494.9
		Expenses	3,607.8	6,515.6	458.7	3,873.2	5,635.2	406.8	20,497.3
		Profit/(Loss)	3,439.9	1,102.2	49.3	266.0	(25.8)	166.0	4,997.6
Year end	30-Jun-23	Income	4,440.1	6,471.6	702.3	2,704.4	5,551.4	461.8	20,331.6
		Expenses	4,354.2	7,362.0	535.5	2,846.2	4,797.9	430.5	20,326.4
		Profit/(Loss)	85.9	(890.4)	166.8	(141.9)	753.5	31.3	5.2
Year end	30-Jun-22	Income	3,892.8	7,498.8	180.4	1,853.3	3,985.2	550.0	17,960.5
		Expenses	9,040.0	6,230.4	287.2	2,463.8	3,827.4	576.7	22,425.5
		Profit/(Loss)	(5,147.3)	1,268.4	(106.8)	(610.5)	157.8	(26.7)	(4,465.0)
Year end	30-Jun-21	Income	3,908.0	7,764.2	863.3	2,898.8	7,262.6	559.2	23,256.1
		Expenses	3,636.0	7,262.6	220.9	2,176.2	4,659.0	509.2	18,463.8
		Profit/(Loss)	272.0	501.6	642.4	722.6	2,603.6	50.0	4,792.3

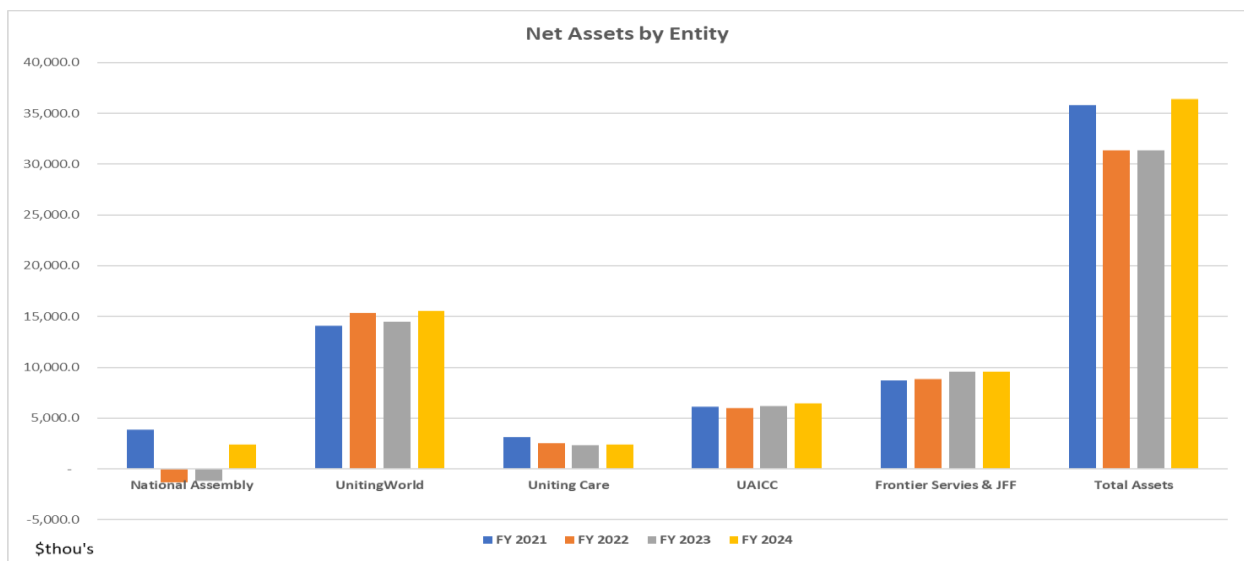
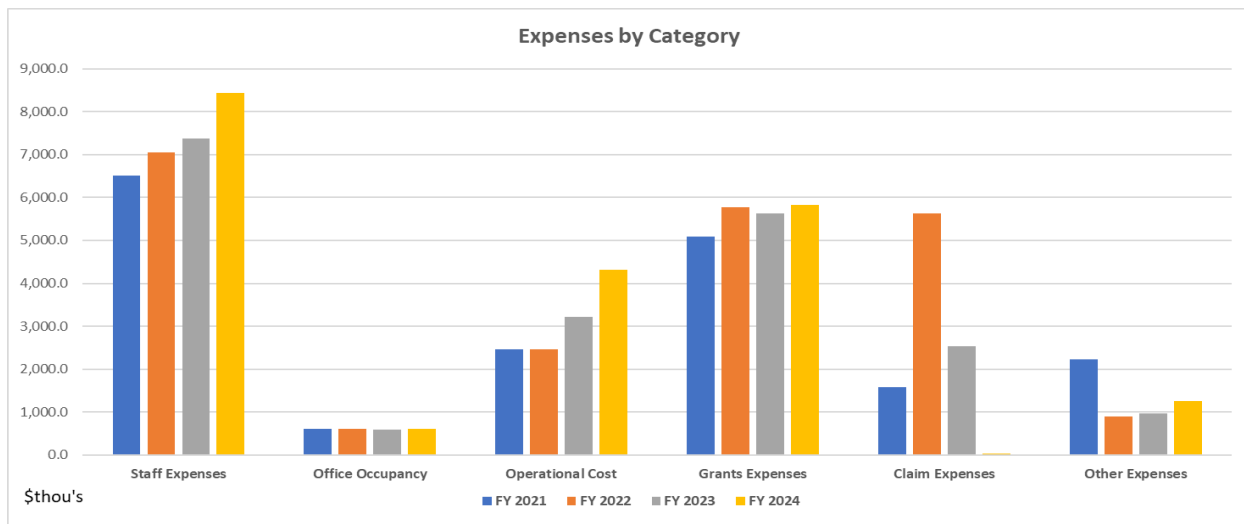
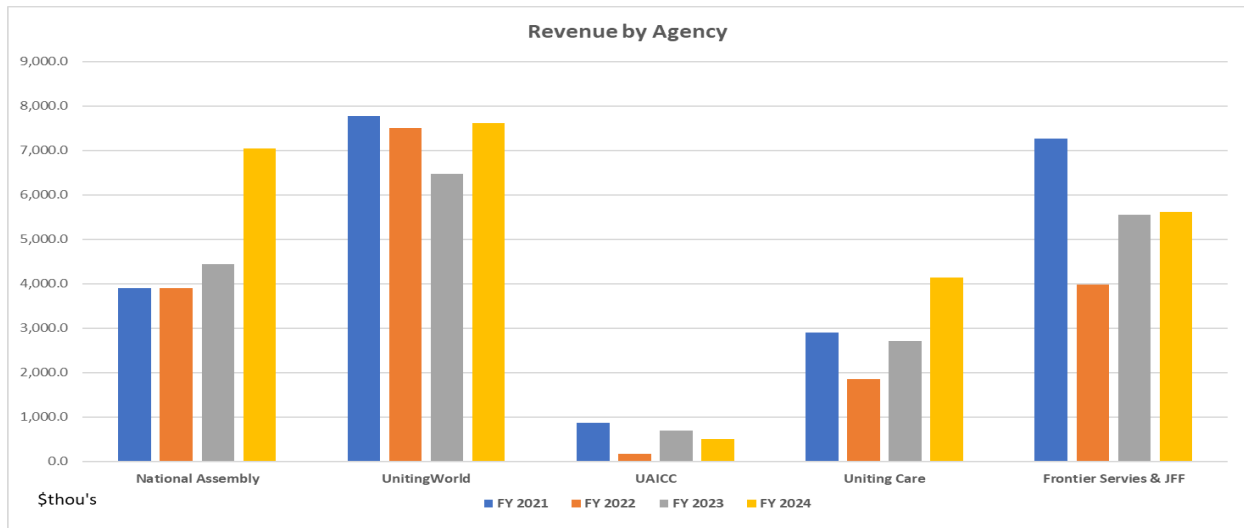
4. FINANCIAL REPORT – GRAPHS

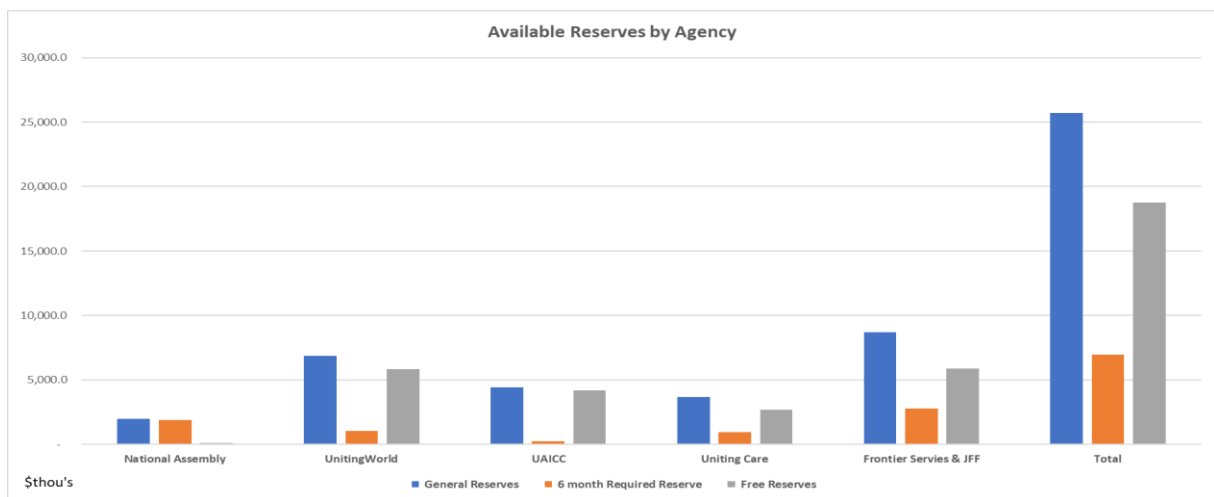
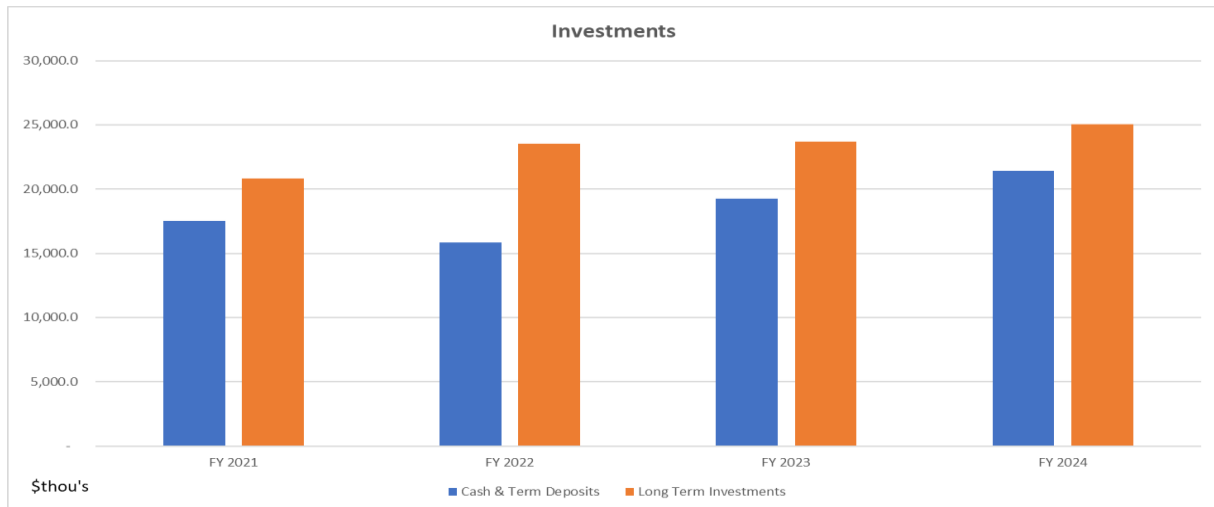
The following graphs show a snapshot of financial performance (focused on an All-Funds Level - noting actuals for 2021 to 2023 and forecast for 2024):



Notes:

- Grants –refer mainly for DFAT Grants for UnitingWorld and Remote Accord Grants for UnitingCare Australia
- Contributions – refer to Synod Contributions for National Assembly and Levies from the network for UnitingCare Australia.
- Other Income: 2024 forecast includes \$2.8M expected as part of the National Redress Recovery Scheme for the National Assembly





5. OTHER MATTERS – IN REVIEW

While AFARC's key focus areas over the past years are reflected in the above commentary, there are other matters of relevance and / or interest, to bring to the attention of the Assembly. These include:

Annual Budgets and Forecasts

Annual budgets are prepared by all parties for AFARC's recommendation and subsequent ASC approval. Deficit budgets are generally not accepted unless an Agency or Entity provides good reasons as to the deficit and provides clear plans of a return to surplus. AFARC also works with Management as they prepare annual reforecasts through the financial year.

Assembly Investment Advisory Committee (AIAC)

Further to the comments above regarding the major re-vamp and work of the AIAC, some of the AIAC's more detailed initiatives included working with the Assembly and each Agency / Entity in relation to -

- Assist each Entity in segregating their funds between operating funds (essentially the holding of six months of reserves in Cash at Bank and Equivalents) and Investible funds (which are invested based on the Entity's risk profile);
- With respect to operating funds - seeking to optimize the mix of funds between Cash at Bank ("working capital"), Term Deposits (to allow for seasonality in working capital requirements) and Bank Hybrid investments (which deliver a high yield in a secure manner); and

- With respect to Investible funds - seeking to ensure each entity articulates its investment appetite / guidelines and working to ensure a commensurate portfolio and asset allocation.

This is vital work, delivering tangible benefit to the Agencies and Entities. We again give thanks for the expertise of the AIAC.

Insurance

The Assembly continues to work with the Synods towards further levels of effectiveness as to insurance and insurance related procurement. Whilst progress has slowed in this area, the “Insurance Group” now effectively uses its scale to purchase insurance through a larger buying group.

The Insurance Group considered the option of a taking on more risk to generate savings in insurance premiums (given rising costs and shrinking coverage). It was noted, however, that current market conditions, although still quite difficult, still lend themselves to seeking to place cover in the market as opposed to greater “self insurance” or other techniques.

The decision of the Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) to move into run off cover as of June 2023, supports the approach to look to diversify risk and place as much cover into the market as commercially viable. It is also important to note that whilst CCI has been a key insurer for the National Assembly and its Agencies, the recent 2023/2024 renewal was still able to be completed in full and on time.

AFARC Governance and Engagement

AFARC has continued to work closely, and directly, with Assembly Agencies and Entities in relation to matters of finance, risk, governance, and key initiatives being undertaken by the Agencies and Entities. AFARC greatly appreciates the close working relationship we enjoy.

In relation to its own governance, over recent years AFARC has addressed a few key aspects, being:

- The renewal of the Committee over the Triennium with the appointment of four new members;
- The AFARC Charter was extensively reviewed, and updated, at ASC in late 2019 (noting it was again reviewed and reaffirmed at the March 2023 ASC); and
- We continue to work on a review of our operations by way of self-evaluation and 360-degree feedback for subsequent review at ASC – seeking continual improvement to the quality and effectiveness of our work.

6. LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead over the next three years, at the time of writing this report, it is quite likely that AFARC’s attention will again be directed to a broad range of issues. The following few points identify some such matters:

- Ongoing focus on financial performance, budgets etc. – including Audit and related “non-negotiable” aspects in an environment of heightened regulatory oversight;
- Financial sustainability – intertwined with ongoing attention to Redress and related matters;
- Attention to “Cyber” matters (which are increasingly complex with incremental costs likely);
- The ongoing evolution of, and improvements to, Assembly’s management of Risk; and
- Support for the broader Act 2 program of work.

Other significant matters are also likely to arise that are as yet unpredictable; we stand ready to focus and adapt as appropriate.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

AFARC has continued to discharge its responsibilities diligently and enthusiastically, and is pleased to report that the Assembly’s financial position since the 16th Assembly – notwithstanding ongoing pressures in relation to long term financial sustainability - is improving. We look forward to the 17th Assembly, and all that it will bring, as we continue to provide support and advice to the Assembly, its Standing Committee and Agencies and Entities. We will continue to act as the “eyes and ears” of the



ASC on matters within our remit, conscientiously and thoroughly; we will continue to ask, and seek answers to, tough questions; and we remain willing to get our hands dirty in the ongoing support of the Assembly, its Agencies and Entities, and its Standing Committee.

AFARC greatly appreciates the support of the Assembly Office and its dedicated leadership team - the stability of which has also been instrumental in the progress of the Assembly through the Triennium. Special recognition of the staff supporting the Committee's work - Esther Baidar, Jahanzeb Durrani, and Leo Iosifidis, as well as the NSW.ACT Synod Finance team – is warranted.

AFARC would also like to take this opportunity to thank the former Assembly General Secretary, Colleen Geyer, for all her work on, and support of, the Committee - not only during the current Triennium but also the previous Trienniums. We wish Colleen well as she moves to a new role, and are delighted to witness her ongoing services to the Church. We also want to recognise and commend the work of Lindsay Cullen as the Assembly General Secretary (Interim), acknowledging his participation in, and support and encouragement for, AFARC's work – in addition to his many ongoing responsibilities.

AFARC also pays tribute, and gives thanks, to three members who left the Committee during the Triennium. Tony Engel, a long standing Committee member, having served the Committee for the maximum tenure of nine years, brought his own unique, lived, perspectives of the Church to the benefit of the Committee and its work. Julie Ross and Ian Thompson, both of whom shared shorter periods on the Committee, were highly valued, contributing members of the Committee. We thank all three former Committee members for, amongst other things, their enthusiasm, insights, commitment, wisdom, and patience (and good humour) over the years. They all left the Committee having contributed significantly to the Committee's workings; they are all missed as the Committee continues its work; and we wish them all well for the future. Concurrently with these departures, however, we were blessed to welcome Brendan Flynn, Barry Honey, Alice McCleary and Sonia Milner as "new" members of the Committee. Along with Geoff Kerry as a "continuing" member of the Committee, the Assembly is most fortunate to be supported by enthusiastic, dedicated, knowledgeable Committee members.

Finally, in closing, this will be my final report to the Assembly as AFARC Chair, as I am now completing the full term of my tenure on the Committee, firstly as a member of the Committee and more recently as its Chair. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve the Assembly, and more specifically AFARC, in this manner – it has been a privilege and an honour. I am proud of the work of this Committee and I look forward to it continuing as it serves the ongoing activities of the Assembly in whatever lies ahead. A "new" Committee Chair will be appointed by the incoming ASC at its first meeting.

It is recommended that Assembly receive this report.

Stuart Woodward
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25 April 2024

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