



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Proposals 11

That the Assembly resolve:

1. To set up a Covenant Revival Working Group (made up of equal numbers of Congress and non – Congress members) to:

- a. hear the stories of what has worked well and not so well since the Covenant agreement was signed in 1994;**
- b. establish how Congress may build up a capital and income base (including from the proceeds of Uniting Church property sales), so that Congress ministry can grow and flourish;**
- c. report back to the 18th Assembly with stories, ideas, principles and proposals, so that together we (the Uniting Church & the UAICC) can “live out” the gospel through a redesign and revival of the Covenant.**

2. to endorse and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Proposer: Mark Kickett

Secunder: Alison Overeem

Rationale:

First Proposal

At the last Assembly we had a re-reading of the Covenant, which was called a Renewal of the Covenant. President, Rev. Sharon Hollis read out the 1994 statement read by then president Dr. Jill Tabart, while Rev. Mark Kickett read out the response made by the late Pastor Bill Hollingsworth.

It was a moving moment at the Assembly. But apart from being a symbolic reading what did this mean to people? For some it may have been the first time they read or heard the Covenant statements. But what has happened since? Has there been any actions or changes taking place in our relationships because of this rereading of the Covenant statements?

At the 2016 President's Conference in Darwin, many of the older Congress leaders who spoke expressed their disappointment in the failure of the Covenant. What was in their minds when the Covenant was established? What were their hopes and expectations?

In the last triennium the Congress and the Uniting Church struggled with the effects of Covid. The Congress has also struggled with many issues in the life of the church, not least being relationships in some of our Synods including reduced resources, and the feeling again of being second class citizens and being “mission managed”. A key plank of the Covenant is the desire of Congress leaders to have self-determination in all areas of their life, so that



Congress members can conduct ministry in their own churches and agencies in culturally appropriate ways.

This disappointment in our Covenant relationship occurs in different ways across the life of the church. For example, some Regions (Synods) have experienced a loss of income and resources over the last few years. Some Synods have a policy whereby a percentage of proceeds of sales go to Congress, while other Synods have no such policy.

We believe it is time on the 30th anniversary of the Covenant to set up a working group to review the outcomes of the Covenant, and to look at the issues that challenge Congress so that together we can enable Congress to be equipped for ministry for the next 30 years.

We need not just a renewal of the Covenant, but a redesign and a revival.

Second Proposal

The failure of the Voice referendum has been felt very strongly in most Congress communities. It has been used by governments, and other people to slow local voices to State governments and regional representation, and even to stop Welcomes or Acknowledgement of Country.

First Nations people are looking for another way forward including support from the churches.

UNDRIP (<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/united-nations-declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples>) affirms the Rights of Indigenous Communities worldwide. It recognizes their self-determination, cultural integrity, lands and resources. It demands protection against discrimination and ensures participation in decisions affecting them. The declaration urges states to honour treaties and agreements and provides remedies for historical injustices. It promotes preservation of Indigenous languages, traditions and knowledge. Despite being non-binding, it serves as a guideline for governments, fostering dialogue and cooperation with Indigenous peoples.

UNDRIP is already referenced by the Secretariat in its advocacy work, in government submissions and in “Our Vision for a Just Australia” document (<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/711>). Our Covenant Action Plan (<https://ucaassembly.recollect.net.au/nodes/view/714>), commits us to being guided by the Articles of UNDRIP.

By endorsing this document as an Assembly, we commit ourselves again at this time to its principles, including that of self-determination, in our relationships with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and all First Peoples in Australia.





threads of love
WEAVING CHRIST'S LOVE ACROSS
CULTURES & BOUNDARIES

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA 17TH TRIENNIAL ASSEMBLY
11 - 16 JULY 2024

