



## Assembly Standing Committee

### 19 Appreciation for Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF) National Committee

**Noting the decision of the UCAF National Committee to conclude its ministry that the Assembly resolve:**

**To give thanks to God for the ministry the UCAF National Committee through its members since 1982.**

**To record its deep appreciation for those who have served on the UCAF National Committee since 1982.**

**To commend the ongoing ministry of UCAF groups in local communities and the support provided by Presbytery and Synod Committees.**

#### **Rationale:**

In January 2024 the UCAF National Committee resolved to conclude its ministry. As the National Committee winds up its operation, it is working to pass on the work of the Joan Stott UCAF bursary and relationship with the World Methodist and Uniting Church Women to the Assembly Standing Committee. As this important work comes to an end it is good for the Assembly to pause, give thanks for their ministry and remember their life and history.

In 1977, at the time of the Inauguration of the Uniting Church, no formal provision was made for networking the many and varied Adult Fellowship Groups in Congregations, Parishes and Presbyteries. Each Synod acted as it saw fit to establish a committee to co-ordinate and encourage these Adult Fellowship Groups. It is worth mentioning, that at the time of Union it was never intended that Adult Fellowship Groups were only Women's Groups; it is an historical fact that never quite worked out until more recent times.

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. Over time this morphed into the UCAF National Committee, with a Mandate provided by the Assembly Standing Committee, recognising the National Committee as a Committee in Association with the Assembly.

In 2018, the National Consultation agreed to a new structure for the UCAF National Committee; that would include elected office-bearers plus chaplain, with two representatives from each of the Synod Committees. This format replaced a national committee that was established by the Synod Committees on rotation this new structure took effect in 2021.

Since 1982 there have been many members from UCAF groups who have served on the National Committee. It is appropriate to mention those who served as President / Chairperson since that time. The position title was changed from President to Chairperson in 2009.

- Mrs. Rhona MORTON President 1982 – 85 (deceased)



- Mrs. Dorothy HUNTER President 1985-88 (Deceased 2017)
- Mrs. Joan STOTT President 1988 -1991
- Mrs. Rhoda GATES President 1991 -1994 (Deceased 2018)
- Mrs. Jan ROSS President 1994-1997 (Deceased 2022)
- Rev. Lee EDWARDS President 1997-2000 (Deceased February 2024)
- Mrs. Ann CONNAN OAM President 2000-2003
- Mrs. Joan KELLEY President 2003-2006
- Mrs. Alyson MADSEN President 2006-2009
- Rev. Alistair CHRISTIE Chairperson 2009-2012 (Deceased June 2022)
- Mr Robert WATSON Chairperson 2012-2015
- Mrs Margaret PEDLER Chairperson 2015-2018 and 2021-2024
- Mrs Janet WOODWARD Chairperson 2018-2021

The UCAF National Committee is a member (Unit) of the South Pacific Area, which is part of the much larger World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women (WFM&UCW) with over 3.5 million members in 71 countries. This significant relationship has provided opportunity for UCAF women to attend World Assemblies and South Pacific Area Seminars, that are held every five years. These events bring together Christian women from across the world or the region and provide wonderful opportunity to share together the significant things that God is doing through them in their communities.

Through the WFM&UCW there are connections with the Women's Committee of the United Nations. There is a strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, which are often picked up as the focus for any mission project that the National committee identifies and promotes to the groups.

One key role of the National Committee was to provide encouragement for UCAF members across Australia to share in the wider ministry of the UCA. This has often been through supporting projects of Frontier Services – the Bush Chaplains and Outback Links are two such projects, as well as UnitingWorld, especially around safe water when the theme for the National Committee was 'Living Water – Come Drink'.

Two of the National Committee Presidents had significant roles on the WFM&UCW:

- Joan Stott became world Secretary of WFMW (World Federation of Methodist Women) in 1996 at a time when the movement became the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW). During 1991 – 2001 she was involved with many World Federation and United Nations Non-Government Organisation (NGO) Conferences held in various countries across the world.
- Ann Connan OAM was elected to the position of World President at the World Assembly in South Africa (2011-2016) and served as President Emerita 2016-2021.

In 2009 the UCAF National Committee set up a bursary to recognise the significant contribution of Joan Stott – called the Joan Stott UCAF Bursary. It is offered annually to people under the age of 50, committed to, or who already are, studying in the field of leadership or theology, within the ethos of the Uniting Church.



Over forty plus years there have been many highlights through the ministry of the UCAF National Committee, there isn't the time or space to include them all here. But a couple that should be mentioned, include

- a South Pacific Area Seminar that was held in Brisbane in 2014 – where Christian women from across the Pacific came together for five days of wonderful Fellowship, food and community and sharing what God was doing in their lives at that time.
- the National Celebrations – held every three years, in a different state, they brought together Uniting Church members from across Australia. One member recalls a Celebration held in Canberra where over 500 members attended. There was always a great sense of anticipation as members arrived.

While it is always dangerous to mention particular people in such recognition, it is appropriate to particularly thank current Chairperson, Margaret Pedler and Secretary, Pam Grant for their commitment to the process to ensure that with the closure of the ministry of the UCAF National Committee that its major relationships and projects will continue into the future.

Well done to all those good and faithful servants who have been involved in the ministry of the UCAF National Committee since 1982 to today.

Proposer: Sharon Hollis  
Secunder: Lindsay Cullen



