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## 1. DATES

From 2.00pm Thursday 11 July to 1.00pm on Tuesday 16 July 2024.

## 2. LOCATION

The Seventeenth Assembly will meet at the Novotel Sydney Parramatta, 350 Church St, Parramatta NSW.

## 3. TIMES / TIMETABLE

### 3.1 Opening Service

Rev Charissa Suli will be installed as our Seventeenth President in the opening service of the Assembly, which will be held in Sydney on the evening of Thursday 11 July 2024. The opening service will be held at 7.30pm at St Stephen's UC Macquarie Street, Sydney. Transport will be provided from 6.15pm from Market Street, Parramatta to the opening service for all members. Seating will be allocated for members of the Assembly, overseas visitors and invited guests. The service for the Installation of the President is also a public event.

After the installation a light supper will be provided in Ferguson Hall at St. Stephen's.

### 3.2 Registration of Members

Members will register via the web as previously advised. There will be a registration process at the registration desk at the Novotel Sydney Parramatta Hotel. The Local Arrangements Committee has arranged as much as possible for people to be able to check in and access their rooms prior to the commencement of the meeting, however some members may need to leave their luggage in a secure room at their accommodation until they can check in when they are able to do so in the afternoon. Please note that there will be a large number of people arriving in a tight timeframe at Novotel Sydney Parramatta Hotel so we ask for patience and that members take this into account when arriving at Assembly. Please do not wait until the last minute to register.

### 3.3 Timetable

A broad timetable, indicating the proposed order of business, is included on the [Assembly website](#). The Business Committee will issue a daily timetable during the Assembly.

### 3.4 Proposals / notices of revision

3.4.1 Proposals related to new business must be submitted to the General Secretary by 11 April for changes to the Constitution and Regulations and for other business by 11 June.

3.4.2 Notices of revision to proposals distributed with the working papers, and which could reasonably have been foreseen from a reading of the working papers, should be in the hands of the Convener of the Business Committee, Rev Heather den Houting, or



the General Secretary by 5.00pm (EST) on Friday 29 June. This is necessary so that they may be prepared for distribution to members and placed in the Timetable by the Business Committee.

**3.4.3 The only Proposals or notices of revision, which will be accepted after these times, will be those that arise specifically out of the debate and could not have been foreseen.**

3.4.4 Section 5.9 of *“A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church”* specifies that proposals must be presented 24 hours before they are considered. This rule must be kept in mind alongside the above closure times and members must check the timetable carefully, particularly for those reports and recommendations to be considered early in the week.

**3.5 Nominations and Elections**

3.5.1 Nominations for Standing Committee, Chairpersons of Agency Boards, Assembly Committees, Advocates of Circles of Interest close on 14<sup>th</sup> July at 5pm. Nominations for President-elect closed on April 26 2024.

3.5.2 Ballots will be held for Chairpersons of Agency Boards, Assembly Committees and Advocates of Circles of Interest (if required), President-elect and Standing Committee. All ballots will be electronic and a device will be required to take part.

3.5.3 Re the ballot for the President-elect

The 1st ballot for President-elect will be open from 11:30am until 5:30pm on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2024. If a second ballot is required, members will be advised of details.

3.5.4 The ballot for Standing Committee, Chairpersons and Advocates (if required) will be open from 10am until 5:30pm on Monday 15<sup>th</sup>.

3.5.5 Results of Ballots will be declared at 10.00am Tuesday, 16 July 2024 (Session 23).

**3.6 Other Functions**

There are some other activities associated with the meeting of the Assembly. Some of these events, due to space considerations are by invitation. Advice will be provided about related events during the course of the meeting.

**4. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**4.1 Location points / processes**

Information regarding Novotel facilities can be found on the [hotel website](#). All business sessions will be in the Lennox Ballroom. Community Working Groups and other group sessions will be as advised. The Registration/Info desk will be found in the Atrium.

**(1) Morning and Afternoon tea**



Morning and afternoon tea will be served each day except the first afternoon (Thursday) and last afternoon (Tuesday).

**(2) Business Committee Table (right, front of stage)**

The Convenor of the Business Committee will be found here. Messages for display on the projection screen are to be given to the official table (at the front stage in the Lennox Ballroom) for approval prior to projection.

**(3) Morning Prayer**

An optional daily service of Morning Prayer (with Communion on Sunday) will be conducted at 8am in the Hotel in the room set aside as a Chapel.

**(4) Reception and information desk**

A reception desk is located in the hotel atrium. The staff member on duty will assist members and visitors with general enquiries, and retain any items of lost property.

**(5) Toilet facilities**

Toilet facilities are available throughout the venues and have disabled access.

#### 4.2 Meals

Breakfast will be provided at your accommodation. Lunches will also be provided at the hotel.

The dinner meal will be the responsibility of members. There are many food outlets in the area surrounding the meeting venue at reasonable prices and offering quick service – so you can be back in time for the next session!

#### 4.3 Name Tags

Your official name tag is printed and will be issued to you at the time of your registration at Novotel Sydney Parramatta. You are asked to wear your name tag at all times on the lanyard provided. If you do not have your name tag you will not be admitted into the meeting. Meals will only be provided to people wearing appropriate name tags.

#### 4.4 Visitors

Day and Session visitors are welcome. All visitors must register. As with members, visitors will not be admitted to the venue without an official name tag.

#### 4.5 Latecomers

The doors providing entry to the hall will be closed, and no entry permitted, during morning Bible studies and worship sessions.

#### 4.6 Security

It is the responsibility of all members to secure their personal possessions. Lock your room at all times. It is recommended that people walk together after dark if travelling outside the hotel.

#### 4.7 Chaplains



#### 4.7.1 Chaplains to the Assembly

The Assembly has chaplains who are available to members who may wish to access pastoral care or conversation during the course of the meeting. Contact details will be provided at the Assembly.

#### 4.7.2 Chaplains to the President

The President has personal chaplains who assist her in a variety of ways. If you wish to make contact with the President about some aspect of the meeting or a matter of concern please do so through one of her chaplains.

#### 4.7.3 Complaints procedures

There will be a contact person for any complaint under the procedures for complaints as outlined in the papers. Contact details will be provided at the Assembly.

#### 4.8 **Distribution of current day's agenda, proposals and papers.**

A detailed daily timetable will be available each day on the App, along with any proposals and official papers. **Note: Only documents approved by the General Secretary or the Business Committee can be distributed within any part of the meeting venue. These will also be extremely limited due to the Assembly's environmental commitment to being as paperless as possible.**

#### 4.9 **Mobile Phones**

Members are requested to ensure that their mobile telephones are **switched off or set to silent** during business sessions.

#### 4.10 **Access for persons with reduced mobility or other needs**

The facilities are accessible to persons with reduced mobility. Arrangements will be in place to transport people with restricted mobility from the various places of accommodation and return.

### 5. **PROCEDURES FOR THE ASSEMBLY MEETING**

#### 5.1 **Assembly Responsibility**

Members are asked to remember that the Assembly has determining responsibility in matters of worship, doctrine, government and discipline (Basis of Union, paragraph 15). Hence, we are concerned with matters of major importance for the mission of God in the world, and are dealing with principle and policy rather than committee detail.

#### 5.2 **Manual for Meetings**





The Regulations require the Assembly to use the *Manual for Meetings* for its business procedures. Members should familiarise themselves with the *Manual for Meetings (available on the App and the website)*. The shape of the meeting seeks to follow the rhythm of the *Manual for Meetings*.

### 5.3 Major Issues

Selected major issues will be presented to the Assembly in plenary session and then sent to community working groups for discussion, as outlined in the *Manual for Meetings*.

### 5.4 Addressing the Assembly

The correct form of address when addressing the President is simply “President” (not Ms President). All speakers should provide their name and appointing body eg “I am “name”, Presbytery of ..., or Synod of .... If a person is ex-officio or appointed by an Assembly Agency the speaker should indicate their appointing body.

Following the appointing body, speakers are then to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land from which they come eg “I live on the land of the Gadigal people.” Persons wishing to speak should not wave blue cards towards the front table. The appropriate method for indicating that you wish to speak is to line up at a microphone and await the call of the President. All speakers must await the call of the President before speaking. All speakers **must** use the microphones. No matter how strong you think your voice is people will not hear you.

### 5.5 Inclusive Language

Members of Assembly are requested to use inclusive language.

### 5.6 Social Media, texting, etc

Engagement and sharing through social media is encouraged at Assembly meetings. However, Assembly Members are reminded that we gather as people whom Christ the head of the church has called together to discern his will for the church. This requires us to listen carefully to one another and not to become distracted or overly informed by the opinions of people who are not so called and resourced through prayer, worship and the community that is built over the course of the Assembly meeting.

Assembly Members and visitors are also expected to respect and commit to keeping the meeting a safe place in their face-to-face encounters with one another and in any comments made through social media.

While at Assembly we ask you to observe the Social Media Guidelines provided. The President in her role as Chairperson, will instruct Members to observe a social media silence when social media use has the potential to distract from discernment.

### 5.7 Quorum



A quorum consists of at least half the number of members of the Assembly within which number at least half the number of Synods shall be represented (Regulation 3.8.5 (g)).

## 5.8 Bar of the House

Plenary sessions will be held in table groups. Members and persons associated with the Assembly are invited to sit at these tables. The location for visitors will be well marked and stewards can point people in the right direction.

## 5.9 General

The Assembly meeting is meant to be a safe place where Christian community is fostered and encouraged. However, if at any time you feel stressed or subject to inappropriate behaviour please contact one of the Assembly chaplains or the persons nominated to handle complaints. While the Community Working Groups will have a primary focus on items of business one of their key functions is to help people have a group of people that they can know a bit better within the larger gathering, and hopefully provide you with a stronger sense of community than a gathering of 270+ people can always offer.

## 6. QUESTIONS

Questions on the reports of Assembly Agencies will be raised through the processes that will be provided for interaction with Agencies about their area of work.

## 7. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

### 7.1 NOMINATIONS

7.1.1 Nominations may be made by members of the Assembly for the following:

President-elect (Nominations have already closed)

Standing Committee

Church Polity Committee Chairperson

Defence Force Chaplaincy Committee Chairperson

Legal Reference Committee Chairperson

Standards for Ministries Committee Chairperson

UnitingCare Australia Board Chairperson

UnitingWorld Board Chairperson

Frontier Services Board Chairperson

Advocates of Assembly Circles of Interest

7.1.2 Members should note that:

- (a) Each Assembly agency and most Committees listed in paragraph 7.1 are bringing nominations to the Assembly, except in the case of the Standing Committee. Profile information on each of these nominees will be included in section D3 of the Assembly

- papers. Any vacancies will be addressed by the August meeting of the Assembly Standing Committee.
- (b) The Standing Committee elects members of agency Boards, as detailed in the Constitutions or Mandates of agencies / areas of work. The Mandates are attached at the end of reports agency / area of work.
  - (c) At the time these papers were prepared, nominations have been received for President-elect. Profiles for of these nominees will be provided in Section D2 of these papers.

7.1.3 Any nominations by Assembly members for Standing Committee membership should be completed on the appropriate form and emailed to the General Secretary or the Returning Officer by 5.00pm, 14 July 2024.

7.1.4 Two nominators are required for the nomination of a Chairperson, Advocate or ASC Member.

7.1.5 Nomination forms are provided in sections D4 and D5 of the Assembly working papers. Nominations need to be provided to the General Secretary by 5.00pm, 14 July 2024.

## 7.2 THE ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE

(Refer Constitution Paragraph 47 and Regulation 3.7.5.1)

### 7.2.1 Membership

- (a) The committee comprises the President, President-elect, ex-President, General Secretary, Chairperson and National Administrator of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (all ex officio), and 18 members of the Assembly to be elected by the Assembly;
- (b) The elected membership shall include at least one person from each synod and no more than five from any synod;
- (c) The number of lay members shall be not fewer than the number who are ministers;
- (d) The order of priority to be applied by the scrutineers in ensuring that the elected membership satisfies the above requirements shall be the order appearing in sequence in paragraphs (b) and (c).

7.2.2 The Assembly has resolved (Minute 00.05 and 09.03.05) that within the 18 elected members there should be no fewer than:

- eight members of each gender;
- two persons 30 years old or younger at the date of the commencement of the Assembly meeting;
- two persons who are recognized as being from among the multi-culturally and linguistically diverse members of the Assembly shall be elected, at least one of whom shall be a lay person.

### 7.2.3 Observers

Synod Secretaries, the Assembly Associate General Secretary, and other Assembly staff as the General Secretary may invite, may attend meetings of the Committee with the right to speak but not to vote.

7.2.4 The list of gifts and qualities which Assembly members may wish to bear in mind as they consider their voting for Standing Committee members is:

- knowledge of the church and the world/community in which we live;
- skills to receive evidence, evaluate it and make decisions;





- foresight to recognise the 'signs of the times';
- a willingness to listen and to learn;
- a sense of leadership and the courage to lead;
- able to work in, with and for a team; and
- an awareness of God's presence with them to guide and support them in discussion and decision-making.

### 7.3 NOTES

7.3.1 A full listing of Assembly agencies / areas of work can be found by reference to the index of the reports.

7.3.2 In relation to 1.2(b), in 1997 the Assembly adopted a policy on gender balance within the membership of all bodies appointed by the Assembly and the Standing Committee. It requires "that women shall comprise at least 40% of the membership of each body and men shall comprise at least 40% of the membership of each body, unless:

- the mandate of a particular body states otherwise;
- the Assembly specifically makes a different determination in respect of any particular body".

Authority was given by the 1997 Assembly to the Standing Committee "in relation to the Assembly bodies elected by it, to take such action as it considers appropriate to resolve any difficulties" arising from these requirements. These decisions (Assembly minute 97.04.11) remain in place, unless varied by this meeting of the Assembly.

7.3.3 It should be noted that the General Secretary is an ex-officio member of all Boards and Committees and similar bodies.

### 7.4 NOMINATING AND VOTING PROCEDURES

7.4.1 The following procedures were adopted for the 1985 Assembly and subsequent Assemblies. Three changes were approved by the 1991 Assembly and the procedure for voting for President-Elect was addressed by the 1997 Assembly and then modified by the 2012 Assembly. The current procedure is provided at 4.12.

#### Nominating procedures

7.4.2 Unless otherwise provided for by Regulation or the Assembly, nominations may be made by the relevant body or by members of the Assembly in writing in a form which:

- (a) states the name, address, presbytery and synod of the nominee;
- (b) states the position for which nomination is made;
- (c) states any qualification or information regarding the nominee which is a pre-requisite to appointment in that position;
- (d) is signed by two members of the Assembly who nominate the nominee; and
- (e) indicates the nominee consents to the nomination.

7.4.3 A short profile of a nominee may be submitted by the nominator(s) with the nomination form. Any such profile may be edited by the Returning Officer or the Business Committee.

7.4.4 Subject to any resolution of the Assembly the Business Committee shall have discretion to determine whether in the case of any election, profiles of nominees should be made available to members of the Assembly and if so, the manner in which they shall be made available.



7.4.5 Nominations for all ballots shall be lodged with the General Secretary or the Returning Officer or in such manner as the Business Committee shall direct.

7.4.6 Nominations shall close at such time as the Assembly determines. In the case of the meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, the Assembly will be asked to endorse a decision of the Business Committee that nominations for the Assembly Standing Committee and all Board and Committee Chairs, and Circle Advocates close on 14 July 2024.

### **Voting procedures**

7.4.7 If the number of persons who are nominated for appointment or election does not exceed the number of persons to be appointed or elected:

- (a) voting shall be by show of hands, or other means as determined by the Chair;
- (b) a single vote shall be taken in respect of all nominees unless the Assembly resolves that a separate vote shall be taken in respect of each nominee;
- (c) nominees who receive an absolute majority of votes shall be declared appointed or elected.

7.4.8 If the number of persons who are nominated exceeds the number of persons to be appointed or elected:

- (a) voting shall be by ballot;
- (b) ballot papers shall contain the names of all nominees in the order determined by the drawing of lots. In the case of the meeting of the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, an online voting system will be used.

7.4.9 If more than one person is to be appointed or elected and the number of persons who are nominated exceeds the number of persons to be appointed or elected:

- (a) each member of the Assembly shall have the number of votes equal to the number of persons to be appointed or elected;
- (b) each member of the Assembly may cast votes up to the number of votes equal to the number of persons to be appointed or elected;
- (c) if a specific or minimum or maximum number of persons having prescribed qualifications are to be appointed or elected, a ballot paper shall not be informal by reason only that the votes have not been cast for such specific, minimum or maximum number of qualified persons;
- (d) the voter shall not be required to indicate order of preference;
- (e) except insofar as a specific or minimum or maximum number of persons are required to have prescribed qualifications for appointment or election, the requisite number of nominees who obtain the greatest number of votes shall be appointed or elected and in the event of equality of votes the person or persons who shall be appointed or elected from those having equal numbers of votes shall be determined by lot.

7.4.10 If only one person is to be elected and more than one person is nominated:

- (a) the election shall be by preferential ballot;
- (b) each voter shall be entitled to one vote;
- (c) each voter shall record a vote on the ballot paper by placing the number "1" opposite the name of the nominee for who it is desired to give the first preference vote and shall give contingent votes for all the remaining nominees by placing the numbers "2", "3", "4" and

so on as the case may require opposite the names of such nominees so as to indicate by numerical sequence in the order of the voter's preferences for them;

- (d) upon the close of the ballot the scrutineers shall proceed to count the total number of first preference votes recorded for each nominee;
- (e) that nominee who has received the largest number of first preference votes shall, if that number constitutes an absolute majority of votes, be elected;
- (f) if no nominee has received an absolute majority of first preference votes, the scrutineers shall make a second count;
- (g) on the second count the nominee who has received the fewest first preference votes shall be excluded and each ballot paper counted to that nominee shall be counted to the nominee next in the order of the voter's preference;
- (h) if any nominee then has an absolute majority of votes that nominee shall be declared elected, but if no nominee then has an absolute majority of votes the process of excluding the nominee who has the fewest votes and counting each of the ballot papers to the continuing nominee next in the order of the voter's preference shall be repeated until one nominee has received an absolute majority of votes and such nominee shall then be declared elected;
- (i) if on any count two or more nominees have an equal number of votes and one of them has to be excluded that nominee amongst them who had the least number of votes at the end of the preceding count shall be excluded and if such nominees had an equal number of votes at all preceding counts the Returning Officer shall determine by lot which of them shall be excluded;
- (j) a ballot paper shall be informal and rejected if the voter has failed to indicate the number of preference in respect of the name of any nominee.

7.4.11 An 'absolute majority of votes' means a greater number than one half of the whole number of votes which are cast.

#### **Voting procedures for President-elect**

This process is that

- 7.4.12 (a) if more than two nominations are received for President - Elect, a first-round preferential ballot be used to identify the two candidates with the highest number of preferences;
- (b) if a candidate in the preferential ballot receives more than 50% of the first preferences of those participating in the ballot, that candidate be declared elected;
- (c) if there are only two nominations, or following a prior preferential ballot, in which no candidate received more than 50% of first preferences, the names of the two candidates who, after the distribution of preferences, received the most votes shall be submitted and members shall indicate their preference for one candidate; and
- (d) to be declared elected, a candidate must receive the support of more than 50% of those participating in the ballot.

## **8 WORKING PAPERS**

- 8.1 Working papers will have been distributed to all members of Assembly prior to the meeting via the Assembly App and the website [17th Assembly Papers – Uniting Church Australia](#)).



## 8.2 General

8.2.1 Pages are numbered within the following major sections:

- A Information
- B Reports
- C Proposals
- D Elections and Nominations
- E Members of the Assembly
- F Ministerial Matters
- G Member Information
- H Miscellaneous
- I Manual for Meetings
- J Daily Notices

Within each major section each body has a separate sub-section and its pages are then numbered consecutively - for example report "Retiring President" is B1 and the pages of its report are numbered B2 – 1, B2 – 2 .....

8.2.2 For supplementary reports, the pages continue the sequential numbering of the original report.

8.2.3 The Convenor of the Business Committee, Rev Heather den Houting, will be responsible for authorising material to be circulated during Assembly and any material should be handed to her or to Ms Jenny Bertalan in the first instance. Approved material must be delivered at least one session before it is to be circulated. It is our intention that the Seventeenth Assembly will be a paperless meeting, with all documentation being made available via an Assembly App and/or the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly website which can be accessed from tablet, handheld device and desktop/laptop computers.

8.2.4 Any member who has any query should seek an early opportunity for discussion with the Convenor of the Business Committee.

## 9. CAR PARKING

In line with the Assembly's commitments to environmental sustainability and emissions reduction, members are strongly encouraged to utilise public transport. Parking arrangements will need to be made by members at their own expense unless previously organized and confirmed with the Local Arrangements Committee:  
[events@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:events@nswact.uca.org.au)  
0436 803 566 and 0472 802 795

