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Proposal 1

Towards a cohesive society

That the Synod:

strongly encourage congregations to engage in constructive dialogue and fellowship with local communities of other faiths

The scope of a Proposal

This proposal comes from the Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee (SIRC). It is directed towards all congregations within the Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church who meet within a reasonable proximity of places where people of other faith communities gather. It is important that members of Synod understand that we are building relationships, creating friendships, not arguing points of belief. If anything, working in the interfaith space enables us to live out our own firmly held Christian convictions, with more clarity and greater love and respect for those who hold to other faith positions.

Rationale

Issues of social cohesion are becoming more and more important in what appears to be an increasingly fragmented world. Christians know our calling to be to “love our neighbour as ourselves” (Luke 10:27). We also know ourselves to be called to a ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) and peace-building (Matthew 5:9).

The Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church is a founding member of the very recently launched Queensland Faith Communities Council, whose mission is to:

- (a) engage in dialogue that enhances our understanding of shared values and develops respect for our diversity; and*
- (b) publicly promote interfaith relations by working together, through education, guidance and example, to support the positive outcomes of religious freedom, social justice, inclusivity and diversity.*

Ways in which a congregation may choose to engage with others are boundless. They include informal gatherings for coffee, the negating of harmful stereotyping when encountered within its own ranks and within the wider community, working with a local Muslim group to put on an Iftar dinner during Ramadan and accepting invitations from others to their important faith celebrations.

Members of the Synod Interfaith Relationships Committee are available to discuss these matters and to provide useful information sheets on accepted protocol for such encounters.

There are a variety of interfaith groups within our State, who are building bridges of understanding across faiths, and members of the Uniting Church are very active in such groups. A number of groups are named below with SIRC member contact details for obtaining further information:

- North Brisbane Interfaith Group (Garth Read - garthread@ecn.net.au)
- Toowoomba Interfaith Group (John Agnew - agnewjj@yahoo.com.au)
- Multifaith Advisory and Action Group (Gold Coast) (Bryan Gilmour - blq1555@bigpond.net.au, and Lesley Bryant - lesley-b@bigpond.net.au)
- Believing Women for a Culture of Peace Lesley Bryant and Heather Griffin - hgriffin@internode.on.net
- Chai Community (Gold Coast Women’s Group) Lesley Bryant

Proposers

A proposal from one of Synod's reporting bodies (committee, board, presbytery, task group) should be submitted and signed by an authorised officer of the body

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Proposal 2

Queensland Synod Governance Structure Changes

That the Synod:

Approve the following actions with respect to the governance structure of the Queensland Synod:

1. Disband the Legal Reference Committee
2. Create two new committees of the SSC:
 - a) Remuneration and Nomination Committee
 - b) Audit and Risk Committee
3. Disband the Governance Nomination Remuneration Committee

Rationale

The current governance structure of the church in Queensland reflects a high reliance on committees, boards and commissions to give effect to the broad responsibilities of the Synod.

This practice has confused the fact that the Synod is the council of the church that ultimately holds the responsibility for giving effect to general oversight, direction and administration of the church's worship, witness and service in its bounds (Paragraph 32 of the Constitution). The Regulations specify to some extent how this is to be done in relation to mission, theological and ministerial education, and resource management. However, the Queensland By-laws have been used to create bodies in order to manage perceived governance gaps. This has resulted in an inconsistent mixture of governance standards, functions and expectations.

This proposal provides clear and unambiguous reporting lines and authorities back to the Synod and the Synod Standing Committee. The proposal does not offend the church's regulatory, conciliar or governance framework as outlined in the Constitution and the Regulations, nor does it impact on the operations of the other councils of the church, namely the Assembly, Presbyteries and Church Councils.

Upon approval of the proposed structure, the Synod Standing Committee will amend the By-Laws as required to give effect to the changes.

Background

The proposal emerges from a review conducted early in 2017 into the By-Laws to assist the Standing Committee to determine what governance model could best provide support to the Synod.

The consultant's brief for this review was to:

1. decide what governance model is appropriate for a medium sized organisation such as the Synod that has multiple stakeholders in a complex environment and in a dynamic and changing world
2. recommend how to best utilise the people and organisational resources available to the Synod, particularly in the various boards, committees, commissions and councils in a way that makes sense within the model.

The consultant's report was presented to the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) at their 4 May 2017 meeting and it was broadly agreed that the key recommendations of the consultant's report were to change the By-Laws in order to:

1. Align the by-laws structure to a governance hierarchy
2. Devolve operational matters to management, with boards, committees and commissions focussing on strategy, risk management and performance monitoring
3. Assess the skills base of boards, committees and commissions.

To implement the recommended changes, a three stage approach was adopted:

- Tranche 1: some operational changes were effected immediately;

- Tranche 2: other matters to be brought to 33rd Synod in Session as proposals; and
- Tranche 3: a consultation process for the remaining matters will occur over the course of the 12 months past the 33rd Synod in Session.

The **Tranche 1 changes** were implemented in July 2017 and included:

- New by-law section for consistent meeting protocols, applying to all Synod boards, committees and commissions. All boards, committees and commissions affected by this change have been notified of the changes.
- New by-laws were added to clarify the functions of the Synod Office and Synod Property Officer
- Operational elements of the by-laws were removed, including:
 - Moderator provisions removed – these are now contained in call documents
 - General Secretary duties and responsibilities abridged – these are now contained in position description
 - Provisions relating to Synod Support Services and The Department of Finance and Property Services were removed – these functions are now consistent with the Regulations and sit within the responsibility of the General Secretary
 - Detail on Ministry Housing removed – these are now contained in the Ministry Agent Housing Policy
- Enhanced functions / powers for the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission, including risk oversight.
- The Synod Theology and Worship Committee was removed. That committee had not been active in some time and it was considered that the functions defined by the by-laws for this committee would neatly fit within the remit of Trinity College Queensland.
- Deletion of narrative repetitions of existing sections of the Act, Constitution and Regulations
- Deletion of various definitions considered no longer relevant (community service, institution, program, secretary, service centre, service group)
- Deletion of example boxes contained in the current by-laws which were not considered necessary (e.g. existing by-law Q2.3.4(4), definition for Governing Body)
- Renumbering and other minor mechanical changes

The **Tranche 2 proposals** are being put to this 33rd Synod. As outlined the changes focus on clarifying the current governance structure to more appropriately resource the activities of the Synod.

The proposed model recognises the SSC as the proper governance body of the Synod, with two committees, being a Remuneration and Nomination Committee and an Audit and Risk Committee. These two committees will be tasked to provide accurate, timely, strategic and best practice policy advice to the SSC. Matters that are operational in nature will be devolved to the Synod Office.

The detail behind the proposals is as follows:

1. Disband the Legal Reference Committee (LRC)
The Queensland Synod LRC was created to manage risk around the preparation of our governing documents. They have provided a strong and important role over many years and this proposal does not intend to dismiss the value that the members of the LRC have provided to the Synod over the years.

The current duties of the LRC are to “assist the Synod in matters of drafting, checking and interpretation of By-Laws, Constitutions and other governing documents.”

Given the recent enhanced legal and governance function, in-house skills are now available to undertake the work defined by the current By-laws for the LRC. More particular and advanced matters are briefed to legal firms as required. Any matter that involves a question of interpretation of the Constitution or Regulation is routinely referred to the Assembly LRC which is constituted under Regulation.

It is considered that this risk is adequately managed through these systems and the Synod LRC is no longer required to ensure the adequate checking of governing documents.

Benefits	Risk
Governance capacity is grown and enhanced at the Synod office level.	Assembly LRC may not respond with timeliness required for more complex matters.
In-house knowledge can be brought to bear across a range of legal and governance needs.	Competing work priorities of Synod Office staff may not allow adequate turnaround of requests.

2. Create two new committees of the SSC:
 - a) Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC)
To support the SSC in their remuneration and nomination functions across the whole Church in Queensland, including all Synod boards, committees and commissions
 - b) Audit and Risk Committee
To appropriately support the SSC in their risk management functions across the whole Church in Queensland

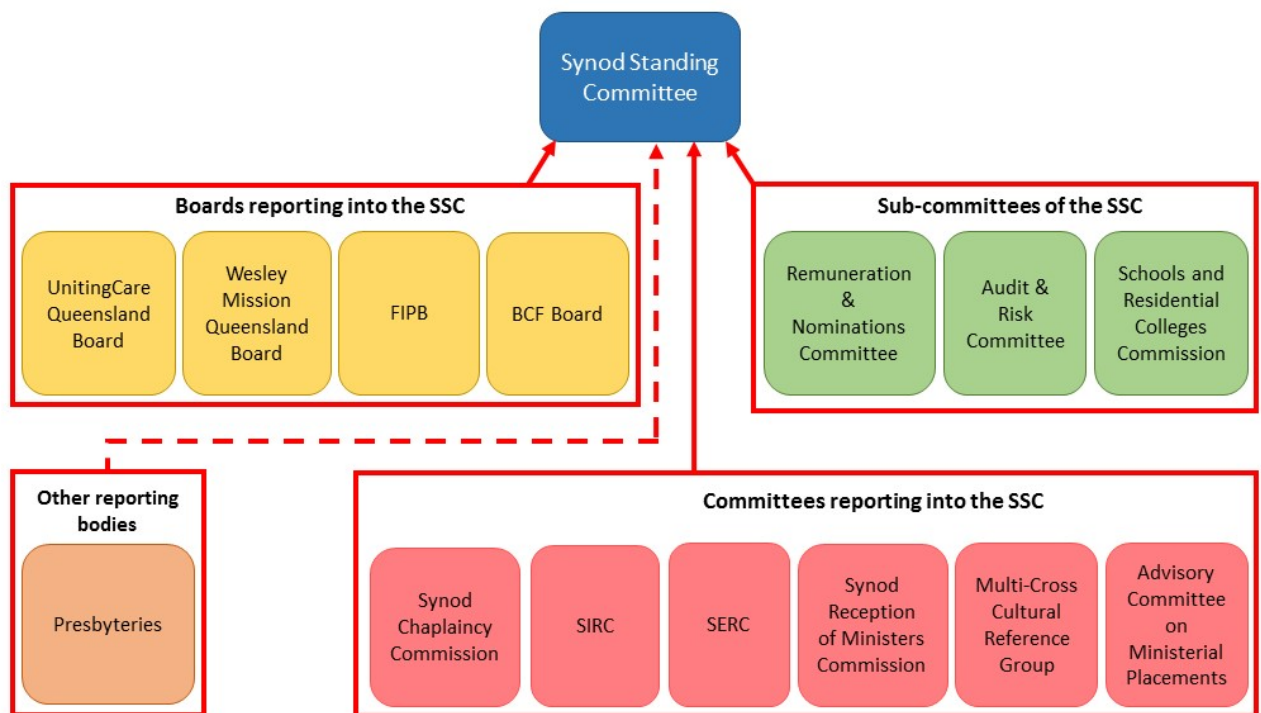
Benefits	Risk
Audit and Risk – Renewed focus and prioritisation of risk management at an enterprise level.	The SSC fails to properly engage with their responsibility to manage risk.
RNC – a well-resourced body advising on best practice in the remuneration and nomination area.	The RNC might see itself as a quasi HR function rather than a committee with specific governance responsibilities.
Clear and targeted responsibilities for committees to enable more strategic advice at a Synod level.	The committees become too operational and fail to properly resource the level of information required at SSC.

3. Disband the Governance Nomination Remuneration Committee (GNRC)
Subject to agreement to the proposed new governance structure, the GNRC responsibilities would be subsumed by the new Remuneration and Nominations Committee, and the governance responsibilities would form part of the SSC responsibilities with support from the Synod Office. As such, the by-laws relating to the GNRC would be deleted and included as part of the new by-laws for the Audit and Risk Committee or into operational roles of Synod Office staff.

Benefits	Risk
Escalation of governance as an overarching responsibility of the SSC.	Focus on governance may be reduced due to competing priorities of the SSC on risk and strategy.
Clearer roles and responsibilities of the proposed two new committees will lessen the likelihood of time being spent on operational matters.	

The proposed governance structure would look as follows:

Proposed Governance Structure – Tranche 2



Tranche 3 proposals will be contained in a discussion paper to be produced after the 33rd Synod in Session and are not considered in this proposal. Recommendations from the SSC will only be made after adequate consultation on these issues. Examples of some of the issues to be considered in the discussion paper are:

- appropriate oversight and governance of schools in light of current strategic work being undertaken in this space
- governance of Synod boards, committees and commissions more generally, including composition, skills base, level of lay membership, size of the SSC, and the ex-officio roles of the Moderator
- more frequent and shorter meetings of Synod in Session

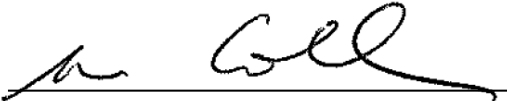
- composition and appointment of FIPB and subject to agreement to the proposed new governance structure, removal of the risk and audit elements of the FIPB by-law functions (moved to the new by-laws for the Audit and Risk Committee)
 - implications of the Review of Ministerial Payments and Benefits on the Ministry sections of the by-laws.
-

Proposers

A proposal from one of Synod's reporting bodies (committee, board, presbytery, task group) should be submitted and signed by an authorised officer of the body

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Proposal 3 The Sanctity of Marriage

That the Synod:

Call the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia to affirm the sanctity and uniqueness of marriage as resolved by the 1997 National Assembly and acknowledged by the 2012 National Assembly.

Rationale

The consequences of redefining marriage as between a man and a woman to include same-sex unions are serious:

- *The clear biblical witness to the creation of human beings in the image of God as male and female (Gen 1:27; Matt 19:4) and to marriage as the one flesh union of husband and wife (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5) will be undermined.*
- *The Uniting Church's doctrine of marriage as 'the unique sign of the unity which is promised in Christ' (Jeremiah 31: 32 and Ephesians 5: 21-32) will be severed from its biblical roots.*
- *The intrinsic God-given relationship between children and their biological parents will be intentionally broken.*

In the light of these serious consequences which clarify what holds the Uniting Church within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, we believe it is therefore appropriate and necessary for the Qld Synod to adopt this proposal.

Proposers

A proposal from one of Synod's reporting bodies (committee, board, presbytery, task group) should be submitted and signed by an authorised officer of the body

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Proposal 4

Moderator term of office

That the Synod:

- (a) In accordance with its power under s.34 of the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution set the moderator's term of office to six years, to take effect from the induction of the next Moderator.
- (b) In the event that the Synod is bound by regulation 3.6.3.1(c) authorise the Synod Standing Committee to pursue a standing exemption from the Assembly under regulation 3.6.3.1(d).
- (c) Request the Assembly exempt the Queensland Synod from regulations 3.7.4.1(i) and 3.3.7(a)(ii) in relation to the membership of the ex-Moderator on Synod and Synod Standing Committee.
- (d) Delegate the Synod Standing Committee the power to introduce a by-law to give effect to the immediate past Moderator having membership of the Synod and Synod Standing Committee for a period of 18 months after the term of their office expires.]

The scope of a Proposal

The 32nd Synod resolved that the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) consider the range of regulatory options that would allow sitting Moderators in the Queensland Synod to be nominated for a second consecutive term of office, up to a maximum of six years. This proposal came after many years of discussion around the concept. Extensive background material was provided at the 32nd Synod. As a result a Moderator Term Task Group was established to consider all the matters relating to the Moderator term.

Upon investigation of the options open to the Synod to pursue this resolution, the task group believed there may be a conflict between the Constitution and the regulation. In the event

that there is a conflict, the Constitutional provisions prevail. Subsequently the SSC endorsed an approach to seek clarification on the apparent conflict. The Synod Standing Committee report indicates that a Presidential ruling has been sought on this matter.

The Synod Standing Committee has drafted the proposals in a manner that can be actioned in the event the Synod is free to make a decision under the Constitution, or alternatively is bound by the regulation. In either case, the approach is to enable a Moderator to hold office for a period of six years.

The proposal also addresses the subsequent issue of the ex-Moderator's term on Synod and the SSC.

Rationale

Proposal (a): Six year term for moderator

Constitutional power to make the proposal

Section 34 of the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution states that the "Synod shall elect, in accordance with such rules and procedures and for such term as the Synod may determine, a Moderator who shall have such powers as may be prescribed and such further powers as may be determined by the Synod."

Regulation 3.6.3.1(c) appears to constrain this power by determining the term of office for a Moderator to be up to three years.

Proposal (a) is drafted in a manner that assumes that the regulation is not valid.

Six year term of office for a Moderator

The Synod Standing Committee believes that a six year term of office for the Moderator is the best option for the following reasons:

1. It allows a length of time for a Moderator to establish themselves as the Synod's spiritual and pastoral leader in the eyes of the wider community. This has been raised as probably the most significant issue by a number of former Moderators. Ecumenical relationships, relationships with government, commerce, leaders of other faiths, and community organisations are hampered by the three year term. If a Moderator is to embody the UCA's presence and exercise influence in these areas, relationships have to be established, and three years is too short a time.
2. It allows a Moderator to establish better relationships with significant bodies within the church. UnitingCare is a large and complex institution. Membership on the board allows the Moderator to have a deep understanding of the opportunities and challenges that UnitingCare Queensland, but it takes time to develop that deep understanding. A longer term will enable the Moderator to be a better advocate for UCQ in the life of the church, and for the church's purposes in establishing UCQ. While the Moderator is not a member of any of the boards of the church's schools and residential colleges, the same argument applies in terms of the Moderator's role of helping all the parts of the church know their connection to the whole.
3. A longer term also allows the Moderator to have a deeper awareness of the ministry of the Assembly, the synod office, the presbyteries, and the congregations. A significant role of the Moderator is to help the church be united in worship, witness, and service, and the longer period of time in office will strengthen that. It will also strengthen the oversight of directions and strategies discerned by the Synod in Session.

4. The nomination and selection process in place is suitable to the proposed longer term and does not need procedural change.
5. The length of term of six years is consistent with modern governance practice for chairs of institutions and not for profit entities.
6. The set term avoids the complications of a Moderator being renominated for a second consecutive term. While still preferential to a single three year term, the model of a Moderator being renominated has complications in terms of a sitting Moderator not being renominated, or being renominated and not being elected, and the challenge of finding people willing to be nominated along with a re-nominated Moderator. These issues were reported to the task group as being defects in the renomination model.

Risks

1. Challenges with the performance of a Moderator. This is an issue for a Moderator serving any length of term. The lengthening of the term would be enhanced by regular quality feedback processes. These allow for clarification of roles and expectations. These have been overseen by the Synod Standing Committee. Another means of providing feedback and support that is used is the informal counsel of the former Moderators and people experienced in the governance of the church.
2. Relationship with the General Secretary's role. The position descriptions of both roles have matured and developed over time, and the management of that relationship has been enhanced by increased executive function role of the General Secretary and by governance training for the Moderator as the chair of the Synod Standing Committee.
3. Fewer people have opportunity to serve as Moderator. In some circumstances, the role may be seen as a way to affirm the service of leaders in the life of the church. This proposal moves the expectation away from such a perception and grounds the role of Moderator as an institutional leader.

Proposal (b): Suspension of 3.6.3.1(d) – inability to stand for a consecutive term

Advice from the Queensland Legal Reference Committee and synod legal team is that the view that the regulations are inconsistent with the Constitution is very strong. However, should it be determined that the regulation is valid, the proposal authorises the Synod Standing Committee to seek a standing exemption under regulation 3.6.3.1(d). The effect will be to allow for the Synod to determine the term of the office of Moderator.

Proposal (c): Role of ex-moderator

1. The regulations have been written and amended over the life of the UCA. Regulations 3.7.4.1(i) and 3.3.7(a)(ii) in relation to the membership of the ex-Moderator on Synod and Synod Standing Committee, to the best of our research, have not been changed from the time when Synods in Session were yearly, and Moderators' terms were yearly and unstipended.
2. Given: the deeper level of processes around governance today; the continuity of membership of Synods and Synod Standing Committees; and the longer terms of Moderatorial office; the need to regulate for a former moderator to have an ongoing governance role for the complete term of the incoming moderator is redundant.
3. In the event of a six year term of office, retaining this regulatory requirement would mean a Moderator would serve for a total of 13.5 years – as Moderator elect, Moderator, and then immediate past Moderator. This is an impractical and onerous obligation. The SSC is recommending that the obligation on the immediate past Moderator be limited to 25% of the proposed Moderator term. This supplies enough time to hand over "corporate memory" and releases the immediate past Moderator to other service to the church. This change would not preclude a former Moderator from being nominated, should they be eligible, for membership of Synod or SSC.

Proposers

A proposal from one of Synod's reporting bodies (committee, board, presbytery, task group) should be submitted and signed by an authorised officer of the body

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