

# renewal

FAITH FOR A NEW SEASON ■ SYNOD 37

## Procedural Proposals

It is proposed that the Synod:

- 1.01 (a) Notes the appointment by the Synod Standing Committee of members of the Business Committee and the authorisation by Synod Standing Committee to the Moderator, Moderator Elect and General Secretary to make further appointments to the Business Committee:
- Rev Andrew Gunton (Moderator)
  - Rev Heather den Houting (General Secretary)
  - Rev Bruce Moore (Moderator Elect)
  - Ms Kellie Broderick (Executive Officer Corporate)
  - Rev Brian Hoole
- (b) Notes the further appointments made pursuant to (a):
- Mr Steve Drinkall
  - Rev Fa Matangi
  - Ms Kym Korbe
  - Rev Linda Hanson
  - Rev Doug Foster
  - Mr Adrian Demack
- (c) Appoints Rev Brian Hoole as Convenor of the Business Committee.
- (d) Authorises the Committee to co-opt other persons as necessary for specific business.
- 1.02 (a) Appoints Rev Doug Foster as Convenor of the Facilitation Committee and authorises the Convenor to co-opt members for that Committee; and
- (b) Appoints Rev Linda Hanson as Small Group Co-ordinator (Yarning Circle Co-ordinator)
- 1.03 Appoints Ms Kellie Broderick as Minute Secretary.
- 1.04 Appoints Rev Scott Ballment and Rev Glen Schweitzer as Convenors of the Ballot Committee and authorises the Convenors to co-opt members as necessary.
- 1.05 Appoints Rev Roberta Stanley, Rev Peter Arnett and Rev Beatriz Skippen as Pastoral Coordinators.
- 1.06 Adopts the Roll of the Synod subject to the Roll only containing the names of those members who register by 12 noon on Saturday, 21 October 2023.

- 1.07 (a) Determines that unless otherwise agreed, the hours of session for the Synod shall be:
- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Friday, 20 October   | 7.00 pm – 8.30 pm   |
| Saturday, 21 October | 11.00 am – 12.30 pm<br>2.00 pm – 6.00 pm<br>7.30 pm – 8.30 pm |
| Sunday, 22 October   | 8.30 am – 12.30 pm<br>2.00 pm – 6.00 pm<br>7.30 pm – 8.30 pm  |
| Monday, 23 October   | 8.30 am – 12.30 pm<br>2.00 pm – 6.00 pm<br>7.30 pm – 8.30 pm  |
| Tuesday, 24 October  | 8.30 am – 12.30 pm  |
- (b) Adopts the timetable and order of business as determined daily by the Business Committee unless the Synod specifically determines otherwise.
- 1.08 Determines that the Bar of the House be defined as the numbered tables in the auditorium, unless numbered tables are not present, in which case the Bar of the House be defined as the auditorium.
- 1.09 (a) Adopts the use of the procedures of *A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church (2015)*.  
(b) Determines that when considering the procedural proposal “Determining the need for a decision now” (5.6.16 and 6.10), “leave of the council” be a simple majority. Refer below for rationale.  
(c) Determines that members asking questions for clarification and questions of reports, speak for no more than one minute
- 1.10 (a) Endorses the decision of the Business Committee that nominations to Synod governing bodies closed on Friday, 22 September 2023.  
(b) Determines that the ballots will be held as determined by the Business Committee.  
(c) Determines that ballots for Synod governing bodies be conducted electronically by secret ballot, and any proceedings in formal majority.  
(d) When it comes to a decision, any ballot taken as part of formal procedures shall be conducted electronically by secret ballot.  
(e) Determines that, unless otherwise determined, appointments to membership of various Synod governing bodies will be based on a simple majority and nominees must receive at least 50% of the votes to be elected.  
(f) Determines that a ballot for a proposal for the appointment of the General Secretary will be conducted by secret ballot with the proposal requiring not less than 65% support of ballots received for such a proposal to pass.  
(g) Authorises the Synod Standing Committee to perform the functions of Regulation 3.3.8(a)(iii)(5) and Regulation 3.3.9 as required to meet the Synod membership requirements for the meeting of the 17th Assembly, as advised by Assembly from time to time, including but not limited to appointing vacant positions and youth members as required.
- 1.11 (a) Endorses the decision of the Business Committee that Yarning Circles will perform the function and meet the requirements of small groups as referred to in the manual for Meetings.  
(b) For the purposes of the 37th Synod, the small group leader/facilitator of the Yarning Circle is named the Wayfinder. This reflects their task as assisting in discerning a way forward, creating a safe space for speaking, building Christian community as members share the life they have in Christ.

- 1.12 Endorses the decision of the Business Committee that General Proposals were to be submitted by 4.00 pm on Monday 21 August 2023.
- 1.13 Receive the written reports contained at R00 – R15.
- 1.14 Authorises the General Secretary to convey greetings on behalf of the Synod to other Synods within The Uniting Church in Australia.
- 1.15 Authorises the Moderator to convey a greeting to the State and Federal Governments.
- 1.16 Authorises Rev Bruce Moore (Moderator), Rev Heather den Houting (General Secretary) and Rev Brian Hoole (Business Committee Convenor) to confirm the Minutes of the 37th Synod.
- 1.17 Adopts the Memorial Minutes as presented concerning ministers who have died since the 36th Synod and notes the ministers who have retired permanently and receives a minute of appreciation for each.
- 1.18 That any business not dealt with on the floor of the synod, will be referred to the Synod Standing Committee pursuant to regulation 3.7.4.1(d and e)
  - (1) The SSC is empowered:
    - (a) to act on behalf of the Synod between ordinary meetings of the Synod in relation to all matters that are the responsibility of the Synod, except such as the Synod may determine; (clause 36 of the Constitution; regulation 3.7.4.1(d)); and
    - (b) to deal with matters referred to it by the Synod; (regulation 3.7.4.1(e)); and
    - (c) to exercise the powers, and fulfil the responsibilities, as provided for in the Synod By-laws.
  - (2) In exercising its powers and fulfilling its responsibilities, the SSC must have regard to the following guiding principles:
    - (a) focusing on the strategic and policy issues of the Church;
    - (b) engaging in competence-building activities for its members;
    - (c) efficiency and timeliness in approvals and decision-making.
- 1.19 It was **RESOLVED by Consensus** that the Synod adopts the Roll of the Synod subject to the Roll only containing the names of those members who register by 6.00pm on Saturday, 21 October 2023.

## 1.20 Association of Visitors

It was **RESOLVED by Consensus** that the Synod associates the following people with the Synod:

- (a) For the purpose of the bible studies:
  - Katie Isles
- (b) For the purpose of the Plenty report:
  - Mr Steve Drinkall
- (c) For the Act2 presentation:
  - Mr Andrew Johnson
- (d) For the purpose of the report of the Uniting Education Schools & Colleges presentation:
  - Mr Jon Moriarty
- (e) For the purpose of the Norman and Mary Millar Lecture:
  - Dr Stanley Grant
  - Aunty Kym Henderson
- (f) For the purpose of the report of the UnitingCare Board:
  - Craig Wildermuth, Sue McKean, Suzanne Marlow and Ruth McKechnie

## 1.21 That the Synod note Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Ministerial changes

Appendix 2 – Governing body member changes since the 36<sup>th</sup> Synod

Appendix 3 – Minutes of Appreciation

Appendix 4 – Ministerial Retirements and Memorial Minutes

Appendix 5 – Spirit of Synod Award – Winner

Appendix 6 – Moderator’s Community Service Medal - Recipients

## 1.22 38<sup>th</sup> Synod dates

That the Synod determines that:

- (a) the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod will be held from 16 May to 20 May 2025 at Alexandra Park Conference Centre, Alexandra Headlands.
- (b) the Synod Standing Committee be given authority to vary the dates and the venue of the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod if necessary.

1.23 It was **RESOLVED by Consensus** that the Synod determines that:

(a) the meeting dates of the Synod Standing Committee shall be:

- 2 November 2023
- 7 December 2023
- 8 February 2024
- 7 March 2024
- 4 April 2024
- 9 May 2024
- 6 June 2024
- 4 July 2024
- 1 August 2024
- 5 September 2024
- 3 October 2024
- 7 November 2024
- 5 December 2024
- 6 February 2025
- 6 March 2025
- 3 April 2025

authority be given to the Moderator and General Secretary to vary the dates and times of the Synod Standing Committee meetings if necessary.

1.24 **Courtesies Extended**

It was **RESOLVED by Consensus** that the Synod places on record its sincere appreciation of:

- the coordinators and the of the Synod Worship Celebrations and those that brought the Bible Studies
- the Business Committee Convenor, members of the Business Committee and the 37th Synod Project Manager
- the Facilitation, Yarning Circles, Ballot Convenors and members of their respective teams
- the staff of the Synod office
- the Moderator's Chaplains and the Pastoral Coordinators
- the Coordinators of the Celebration of Ministries
- all staff of the Alexandra Park Conference Centre for support in preparation and hosting of the Synod
- to CPC Productions, IT and AV teams, Events and back of house team, including Sunshine Coast Coffee Roastery
- the Moderator, Rev Bruce Moore and the General Secretary, Rev Heather den Houting, for their leadership of the Synod meeting
- the past Moderator, Rev Andrew Gunton
- the members of Synod for their time, dedication and discernment
- God, our Father, Son and the Holy Spirit as we met to his glory.

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**Rationale for procedural proposal 1.09(b):**

*Recent meetings of Councils of the UCA have demonstrated that 25% of council's members plus one can prevent a decision being made on any matter before a council.*

*This is a consequence that can arise from a faithful application of the Manual for Meetings. The manual stipulates that after the consensus process of decision making on a matter, if a number of participants do not agree with a decision being made, either by consensus or by agreement, the chair is required to bring the procedural proposal "That the council needs to resolve this question now." (Manual for Meetings 6.10)*

*This procedural proposal requires leave of the council to be carried. In the Manual for Meetings definitions, "leave of the Council means permission granted by the council by a three-fourths majority vote or by such other majority as may be specified by the council". (Manual for Meetings 5.1 Definitions)*

*Consequently, a minority of just over 25% who are opposed to a proposal can effectively determine against that proposal when this procedural proposal is put. In other words, and perhaps to be a little provocative, the minority can disenfranchise the majority.*

*The Business Committee believes a simple majority, as allowed for in 5.1 above, would be a fairer and more reasonable bar for seeking leave of the council to be given.*

*While the consensus model for decision making sets a worthy ideal for the councils of the church to work by, the capacity, through the rules, for a decision to be prevented to be made by as few as 26% of the membership is, we believe, a vulnerability to decision making that should be mitigated.*

*Where there is significant concern about a decision, there are means at the council's disposal to manage that matter – the participation of the members themselves in presenting rationales for not proceeding with a proposed course of action, proposition of alternatives, proposals from the facilitation committee, etc. The Business committee believes that the 75% bar represents a risk to the capacity of the Synod to make decisions on matters before it.*

*This proposal does not impact other procedural proposals where leave of the council is required as per the Manual for Meetings (a three-quarter majority vote would still be required).*

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# General Proposal 1

## Remove requirement for membership to the church as mandatory requirement for appointment to Synod Governing Body

### That the Synod

1. Amend Queensland Synod By-Law Q2.7.8 (1) (f) to:  
The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body, not including Synod Standing Committee, are that a person appointed must:
  - (i) where the person is appointed as the Chairperson, the person must be a member of the Uniting Church at the time of appointment.
  - (ii) for positions other than the Chairperson, the person is either a member of the Uniting Church, or a non-Uniting Church member who demonstrates commitment to the mission of the church and an ability to reflect on the faith and values of the church.
  - (iii) that each Synod governing body is to maintain the requirement that a majority of persons be church members.
  
2. direct the Synod Standing Committee to amend charters and governing documents to ensure a balance of majority must be held by church members.

### Scope

To increase the candidate pool for appointment to a Synod governing body while ensuring a majority of members on any single governing body are Church members.

### Rationale

The regulatory and governance environment in which society operates today demands a range of skills and capabilities. Appropriate experience for governing bodies is difficult to be sourced solely from within the membership of the Church given the changing and increasing complexity of business requirements of Synod operations.



## **Queensland Synod Governing Documents**

Pursuant to Queensland Synod By-Laws Q2.7.8, the current eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointed must be a member of the church.

The proposal to remove this mandatory requirement has been assessed against the Basis of Union and Manual for Meetings and has been determined not to contravene any provision or have any conflicts.

## **Clarification on Issues to Support Proposal**

### Mission and Theological Alignment

A number of governing bodies require a minimum threshold for lay and ministry agents including the Synod Standing Committee and the Remuneration and Nomination Committee. This submission does not seek to remove the mission and theological alignment but allow for the exercise of discretion on a case-by-case basis to decide to recommend an appointment of an exceptionally skilled candidate.

Note that a person is required to be a member of the Synod in Session in order to be elected to the Synod Standing Committee. To be a member of the Synod in Session, you are required to be a member of the church. This proposal does not seek to alter these requirements so Synod Standing Committee members elected by the Synod in Session will continue to be members of the church.

### Previous exercise of the suspension rule

By-law Q2.7.8 covers eligibility for office including clause (1)(f) which reads “*be a member of the Uniting Church*”.

This rule has been suspended where a candidate has demonstrated skills, experience and expertise to complement the governing body or fill a current gap. Where a suspension is required, the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) has made a deliberation.

In this synodial term, the SSC has discerned and approved the suspension of this by-law on four (4) occasions including Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC), Uniting Education Schools and Colleges (UESC) and Finance Investment and Property Board (FIPB).

The Synod has and will continue to perform its due diligence process by way of an assessment against the policy, capability matrix and evaluation criteria before making recommendations to the SSC for all governing body appointments moving forward.

### Majority rule

The Synod acknowledges that any decisions are to be underpinned by the mission, vision, values and theology of the church. Therefore, this proposal maintains need for a balance of majority be church members and be affected in individual charters for each Synod governing body.

### Operational considerations

Supporting procedures and tools for governing bodies has been moved to a capabilities-based assessment. This includes a capability of “theological and mission”. This capability is defined as:

- Demonstrated understanding of the Christian tradition
- Appreciation of, and commitment to, the mission of the church

- Deep knowledge of theological frameworks and experience in adult education, particularly faith education
- A demonstrated ability to reflect on the faith, heritage and values of the Uniting Church in Australia and to consider the implications for the current and future work of the Synod governing body.

There are and may be circumstances where a vacancy cannot be filled within the church. The Synod Standing Committee (SSC) is empowered to suspend Q2.7.8(1)(f) subject to rigorous consideration for an exceptional circumstance. It is not best-practice governance to routinely exercise this power for non-church members considered appropriate for appointment.

### **Strategic implications**

#### Fit for Purpose

Provide the structural foundations for the one church to meet the existing and emerging needs allowing communities to flourish.

#### Review and mature governance arrangements across Synod

Simplify processes and governance structure and increase availability and reliability of information. There is value in leveraging the knowledge and skills offered by non-church members across NFP, NGO, government, and the private sector.

### **Chairperson**

The Synod recognises that all decisions and actions of Synod governing bodies be underpinned by theology and church mission. Therefore, the proposal seeks to maintain the requirement for membership of the church for the position of chairperson.

### **Operational Risks**

Several synod governing bodies hold key decision-making powers. Not achieving a quorum and non-compliance of the synod governing body with its charter limits the ability to conduct its activities in a timely manner. Synod and synod wide entities rely or have dependencies on timely decision making.

### **Amendment to the Queensland Synod By-Laws**

The amended by law does not preclude other operative provisions of by-law Q2.7.8 and other processes for ensuring the best and appropriate candidates are appointed. Rather, they allow the Synod office to respond flexibly to the current market conditions in attracting the best talent possible. Candidates will still undergo due diligence checks to ensure they meet and agree to reflect the mission and values of the Church.

#### Application of the proposed amended by law

The new amended by law will apply for all current and new Synod Governing Bodies and their current and new future sub-committees.

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## Amendment to the Queensland Synod By-Laws (cont.)

### Current Reading:

#### **Q2.7.8 Eligibility for office**

(1) The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointment must:

(f) – be a member of the Uniting Church

### New reading

#### **Q2.7.8 Eligibility for office**


(f) The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointed must:

- (i) where the person is appointed as the Chairperson, the person must be a member of the Uniting Church at the time of appointment
- (ii) for positions other than the Chairperson, the person is either a member of the Uniting Church, or a non-Uniting Church member who demonstrates commitment to the mission of the church and an ability to reflect on the faith and values of the church.

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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**Signature:**

## General Proposal 2

### Act2 Realignment

#### That the Synod

Requests that the UCA Assembly reprioritise the work of Act2 to focus firstly on engaging the church in exploring and renewing our understanding of the faith and purpose of the church, before continuing conversation pertaining to structure and governance.

#### Scope

The report *Act 2: In Response to God's Call*, is a commendable move by the Assembly to bring forth a new season in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). In response to the Act2 report, this rationale calls for the Assembly to reprioritise the exploration and articulation of the church's faith in the ongoing work of Act 2.

The first half of the Act2 report does a good job in showing where the church is at and some of the symptoms of decline and stagnation that we are experiencing. We believe however that the report does not adequately address the core reason for this problem, which we believe lies in a lack of understanding and commitment to the faith and purpose of the church as outlined in the Basis of Union. Any discussion which goes to structure and governance as solutions without first addressing the root cause is premature and may exacerbate the current issues that the church is facing.

Structural and organisational enhancement can facilitate partial growth and renewal in the church. There is already sufficient flexibility and provision in the current UCA Regulations to allow for adaptive expressions of councils to better suit emerging expressions of church and their required resourcing, leadership, and oversight. However, the governance and regulatory life of the church will always be a secondary concern.

## Rationale

The Act2 initiative is to be commended for the intent of seeking collective discernment amongst the church for the shape of the UCA's next season. Much of the "Act 2: In Response to God's Call" report is concerned with an inward reflection on the UCA's identity, governance systems and resourcing structures. This is reflected in the current prioritised workstreams that focus on themes such as fit for purpose governance arrangements, new structures and practices that empower different expressions of gathered communities of faith and a range of options for a renewed interconciliar life involving a local, area, regional and national council. These organizational considerations are important. However, the primary focus on structural considerations tilts the emphasis of the Act2 report toward an institutional approach to change.

The institutional bias seems contradictory given that the report declares:

**"As the people of the way of Jesus, disciples of the risen crucified One we need not change simply to avoid death. Were the Uniting Church to die as an institution, God would do a new thing. Our calling and opportunity is to do a new thing now which lies before us; to enter more fully into the vision to which God has called us as a Uniting Church in Australia."<sup>1</sup>**

A significant gap within the report is an obvious lack of articulation regarding the vision to which God has called the UCA. This is particularly evident in "Section 3: Theological Reflection" which conveys an inward, self-facing approach to how the church seeks to understand itself within the Act2 project. This is exemplified by the theological reflection which sparingly draws on the Basis of Union in order to offer three images of the Church. In doing so it narrows the scope of the theological reflection to an ecclesial endeavour and misses the mark in offering God's vision for the UCA.

This paper calls on the Assembly to refocus the work of Act2 in order to provide the UCA with a clear articulation of God's vision for the church. Exploring God's vision for the UCA requires a return to act 1, the work of church union.

The work of the Joint Commission on Church Union (JCCU) has certain resonances with the Assembly approach to a second act in that both are concerned with discerning God's leading for the church. However, the JCCU refused to start church union with a focus on ecclesiastical structure. The work of the JCCU in producing its first report "The Nature of the Church" became focused on God's vision, not the inward organisation of the church. The development of this first report had three guiding questions/principles:

- **What is the Church's faith?**
- **Where is it to be found?**
- **How can we as individuals, and the Churches from which we come, strengthen our grasp of the faith by which we are held?**

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<sup>1</sup> Act 2: In Response to God's Call 2023 p. 35

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The significance of these three questions is seen in the shape they gave to the Basis of Union. For instance, paragraph 3 of the Basis answers the question concerning what the Church's faith is while paragraphs 5 – 11 direct the UCA as to where this faith is found. In addressing these fundamental questions, the Basis of Union identifies the mission at the heart church union, namely a participation in the reconciling work of God through Christ in the world.

The current Act2 report pays no heed to these fundamental questions in the life of the UCA.

This paper is a call for the second act of the UCA to be built on the foundational question of what the church's faith and purpose is. It is the enduring truth of God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ that unites the church in the midst of diversity and decline. This provides a basis for other councils of the church, to explore responses as to how individuals and gathered communities of faith can strengthen their grasp of the faith by which they are held.

Structural and organisational enhancement can facilitate partial growth and renewal in the church. There is already sufficient flexibility and provision in the current UCA Regulations to allow for adaptive expressions of councils to better suit emerging expressions of church and their required resourcing, leadership and oversight. However, the governance and regulatory life of the church will always be a secondary concern.

The primary concern of the UCA must be the reconciling work of God in Jesus Christ who rules and renews the Church. The ongoing work of Act2 should give priority to this primary concern.

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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## General Proposal 3

### Adjustment of the work unit principle (wellbeing of ministers)

#### That the Synod

1. Directs the Placements Committee together with the Remunerations and Nominations Committee to adjust the work unit principle in the Ministry Agents – General Placements Conditions (Previously called the Ministry Agents Handbook) from 14 Units per week (one day off) to 10 Units per week (two days off) for ministry agents for a trial period of 18 months.
2. Directs the Placements Committee to work with the assistance of the office of the Synod, including the Health and Wellness Coordinator, to develop discussion material and pre and post evaluation metrics for an 18-month trial, to assist in conducting research into the contributing factors that are leading to a significant decrease in the wellbeing of ministers.
3. Having gathered appropriate data, the Placements Committee and Health and Wellness Coordinator report back to the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod in Session with further recommendations.

#### Scope

This proposal is underpinned by the premise that there is great variation in when and how ministry agents serve their congregations most effectively. The expectation that ministry agents work 14 out of 21 units (or have only a single day off) per week is an established but outdated and unhelpful principle that has a number of key impacts. For example:

- contributes significantly to the levels of burnout, unhappiness, and fatigue, in ministry agents.
- seriously limits the opportunity for ministers to model missional living by engaging with the wider community themselves in a meaningful way.

The work unit principle as it currently stands in the Ministry Agents – General Placements Conditions (previously called the Ministry Agents Handbook) perpetuates an unsustainable expectation in Synod, Presbyteries and congregations and is (at least in part) contributing to what is fast becoming a

work practice where the mental health, wellbeing, and productivity of ministry agents, is negatively impacted.

**This proposal seeks an 18-month trial where the work unit principle is changed to 10 units to reflect a more sustainable, productive, and healthy balance.**

While the practical aspects and outworking of this trial will still need to be negotiated between ministry agents, councils and congregations, and a measurement and evaluation process will need to be established, this proposed adjustment to the current policy:

1. Creates a platform for intentional conversations to reset expectations/processes of effective long-term ministry and healthy agents
2. Facilitates ministry agents taking the necessary time to rest and reset for productive and long-term ministry
3. Creates space for a minister to live missionally outside the congregational context/ in the wider community and model missional living to the congregation.
4. Encourages ministry agents to engage more intentionally with the 'priesthood of all believers' by making room for and empowering ministry and leadership from within the wider congregation.

It is proposed that discussion material be developed and provided to church councils and ministry agents to facilitate the whole congregation and council being proactive in this process, and which would include specific pre and post evaluation measures.

At the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod in Session, a comprehensive report can be tabled by the Placements Committee and the Health and Wellness Coordinator, considering the evaluated data and experiences of church councils, ministers, Presbyteries, Presbytery ministers, and the Synod. Following this report, the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod in Session can make an informed, permanent decision on the Work Unit Principle.

## Rationale

### Mental health / wellbeing:

Following the 2023 Moderators Convocation on "*Wellbeing and Resilience, Sustainably having and supporting life in all its fullness,*" it was clearly apparent that one of the greatest obstacles to wellbeing and resilience, as well as to the mental health and happiness of ministry agents is that there is simply not enough time or opportunity to rest, refresh and be rejuvenated for the work of ministry. Ministry agents have been operating on the "one day off per week" principle for many decades, but during that same period of time, the level of productivity required, the expected availability, the pressures faced, and the expectations laid upon ministry agents has increased dramatically. As a result, ministry has one of the highest rates of burnout, and has fewer and fewer people (especially young people) offering themselves for full time service. The emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental demands of ministry have only increased over the years, making meaningful rest essential for effective ministry and healthy ministry agents. Society in general is realising that

happy, healthy, and well-rested workers are highly beneficial to productivity, however, the Work Unit Principle in the Ministry Agents – General Placements Conditions, from which many congregations and church councils draw their expectations, does not allow ministry agents to meaningfully rest in the course of a normal week.

## Theological

From a theological perspective, the current work unit principle also makes it difficult for ministry agents to live missionally and model missional living in their community outside of their congregational responsibilities. The current expectations and workload tend to mean that almost all ministry opportunities and work for ministry agents are limited to within the congregation. The single day off is required for rest, recovery, and home/family commitments. There is no time to participate meaningfully and regularly in community activities beyond the congregation where ministry agents can engage with, witness to, and model missional living as a means of outreach.

The current principle also leans heavily into a “minister-centric” model and creates an expectation of ministry involvement that is not consistent with, or helpful to, the furtherance of our theological practice of the priesthood of all believers.

As a Church seeking ways to embrace the initiatives of “Shared Life Flourishing Communities,” this proposal offers a meaningful way to “refresh our discipleship culture,” to “transform our communities in terms of wellbeing and mental health support,” and to “become fit for purpose in terms of Mission presence, health and vitality,” as well as improving “Operational Efficiencies.”

The Church must proactively examine our structures and processes to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society and we need to be willing and courageous to trial new ways in which ministry can operate. The expectation that ministry agents can work as they always have regardless of the change in society and increased expectation placed upon them, will only lead to a decline in our discerned missional initiatives, an increase in burnout, fatigue, and cynicism, limiting the church’s capacity for growth.

An 18-month trial in which ministry agents are encouraged to work towards 10 units (or having 2 days off in the week) will give ministers, congregations, Church Councils, Presbyteries, Presbytery ministers, and Synod, sufficient time to gauge the long-term effects and changes in mental health, productivity, effectiveness, missional engagement, and church growth.

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## Proposers

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Signature:



# General Proposal 4

## Instruction to the Synod Standing Committee regarding governance reform

### That the Synod

1. Instructs the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) to do all things necessary to allow the separate incorporation of any body of the church when requested to do by that body on the following conditions:
  - (a) That there be no financial detriment to the Synod as a result;
  - (b) That the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) remains the sole member of any incorporated body;
  - (c) That the SSC is satisfied that the mission and purpose of the Uniting Church in Australia is maintained and enhanced as a result of incorporation.
2. In light of the commentary contained in the Fit for Purpose – Governance Review paper; a model Trust Deed be developed by the Synod to guide the implementation of any move to incorporation; and
3. Directs the Synod Office to develop and improve any existing program designed to induct, train, and improve the skills of any person in a governance role across the Synod.

## Scope

Proposal 1 is intended to apply to any existing body or institution that already exists within the life of the church that requests a move to incorporation. It does not apply to any future company or entity yet to be created by the Synod.

Proposal 2 will be used to consistently guide the policy settings around current and future conversations around the creation of new entities of the church.

Proposal 3 is intended to apply to all existing governance bodies in the life of the Synod, whether they are seeking incorporation or not.

## Rationale

### Plenty

The Queensland Synod has embarked on a body of work under the banner Plenty, dedicated to tackling four 'Mission Priorities' and eleven Commitments which form part of the strategic ambition of the Uniting Church. The four Mission Priorities are:

- Discipleship
- Transforming Communities
- Fit-for-Purpose
- Life Together

### The Jameson Report

In late 2022 Board Matters was engaged to conduct a body of research in relation to the third Mission Priority, Fit-for-Purpose. This research was to enable decisions to be presented to Synod in October 2023 in relation to 'Governance Reform' which is an explicit Commitment under the Fit-for-Purpose Mission Priority. Board Matters were asked to capture an overview of other existing governance models and apply the criteria as part of an evaluation process, which would result in a short-list of



models for more detailed and in-depth exploration to assess application to the Uniting Church in Queensland governance requirements.

The resulting report the “Governance research Brief Report” (the Jameson report) was the product of this brief. The full report can be found here: [Jameson Report](#)

This well researched and considered report will be a foundation for a program of governance reform work for the Synod for at least the next decade. The principles contained within it should be used by the Synod to guide its continuing conversation about a fit-for-purpose model of church.

We recognise that legal and compliance challenges of the day, will impact us, but should not be used as an excuse to detract from the call of discipleship to Christian witness,

Those principles are:

- I. Staying true to our purpose and values
- II. Empowering our people
- III. Adapting for context
- IV. Being accountable to ourselves and our stakeholders
- V. Connecting the parts of the ‘body’ into a cohesive whole
- VI. Respecting the Immutable Polity and Government of the Church
- VII. Protecting and enhancing the assets and resources available for delivery of Mission

The report was circulated throughout the Synod over a period of months in the first half of 2023.

The summary of responses is **attached at A**. This summary document has been circulated throughout the Synod to allow for continued conversation around those matters that are important for the Synod at this time.

There has been no significant resistance to the idea of incorporation per se. Reservations however have been expressed that any change in our legal structure must be accompanied by the demonstrated case that the move improves the management of risk and enhances our capacity to deliver against the deep missional purposes of the church. The proposals that follow are an instruction to the Synod Standing Committee to not deviate from those principles when considering applications. In summary, we direct the SSC not to deviate from our deep calling to be the body of Christ when we consider the legal options that we can choose in which to operate in the world.

### **The Proposals**

At this Synod there are a number of issues that can be actioned in the short term that will enhance the governance capacity of the church immediately. The resolutions proposed capture some immediate steps that do not offend against the basic principles contained in the Jameson report. The approach is to give the Synod Standing Committee broad principles to guide their decision making around a number of requests for incorporation that are currently before it, to insist that there be a consistent approach to the question, via a model Trust Deed and an instruction to resource a deliberate campaign of what it means to govern complex organisations on behalf of the church.

These anticipated outcomes are to allow for continuing conversations around the best way to govern in the future; deliberately direct resources to improve the governance capacity of those on our boards, committee, and commissions; and allow for a due diligence process to be undertaken in response to the current requests for incorporation. The current requests for incorporation are from Wesley

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Mission Queensland, Uniting Care Queensland and Uniting Education. Some schools and Uniting Early Learning have also indicated a preference for incorporation and we have purchased an off the shelf company to continue our due diligence in operating a registered Training organisation.

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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Phone: 0437 728 420

Signature:



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Signature: Andrew McBryde



## Fit for Purpose – Governance Review

### Summary of Feedback July 2023

#### Introduction

In May 2023, the Fit for Purpose - Governance Review paper was distributed, with invitations to comment to the General Secretary by 14th July 2023.

This document is a summary of the material received in response to that paper. This summary will be circulated widely for further reflection across the life of the Synod to allow you to gauge the “mood” of those who have responded. [Appendix 1](#) is a deidentified list of those who have responded to this round of consultation.

In addition, the Synod Standing Committee will bring proposals to the October 2023 Synod meeting to further the fit for purpose work based on the Governance Review paper and your feedback.

You are welcome to respond to this summary paper by emailing the General Secretary at [general.secretary@ucaqld.com.au](mailto:general.secretary@ucaqld.com.au).

Further, we will facilitate information sessions across the life of the church to assist you to unpack some of the issues raised.

Where commentary was received that was not related to the governance review, the material received has been noted in the paper, and forwarded to the relevant council receiving the feedback.

Thank you again for your attention to this important work.

In grace and peace

**Rev Heather den Houting**

General Secretary



## 1. Themes identified.

Those who responded appreciated the need for the work and agreed that changes do need to be made as long as we:

- I. Stay true to our purpose and values.
- II. Empower our people.
- III. Adapt for context.
- IV. Improve accountability to ourselves and our stakeholders.
- V. Connect the parts of the 'body' into a cohesive whole.
- VI. Respect the Immutable Polity and Government of the Church; and
- VII. Protect and enhance the assets and resources available for delivery of mission.

1.1 Not negotiable – anything we do must enhance, not detract from the mission of the church.

Simply – we must resist any move toward satisfying an external expectation about our identity unless we are satisfied that our identity as the church remains intact. For instance:

*“The question for us is how do we appropriately resist the push to separate the expression of our life - the gospel imperative of our worship, witness, and service being kept integrated, or growing in integration. That’s what I’d like to see addressed. What challenges to the integration of worship, witness and service will incorporation bring, and how can they be mitigated?”*

1.2 There is a sufficiently demonstrated need for incorporation for some entities of the church.

There are multiple arguments about the fact that we cannot operate fully to provide the depth, breadth and capacity of our ministry unless we allow ourselves to operate less awkwardly in the regulatory space. Having strategic conversations about incorporation will assist us to:

- Define and clarify our focus.
- Ensure there is adequate oversight and accountability of our activities.
- Could strengthen the alignment of mission because we would be intentional about this.
- Would allow for better management of risk across our activities.
- Will assist us in funding and compliance activities; and
- Would clarify the roles and expectations of people who govern the institutions of the church, which would increase transparency and accountability.



1.3 Whatever we do we must strengthen the church's capability and capacity to oversee multiple complex organisations.

Unfortunately, under our current systems, only a few people understand how all the pieces of the Church fit together. Unless more people are trained to read the regulatory and governance structures of the church, so they understand the multiple issues that arise, then decision making will remain a frustrating mystery. Deliberate programs of induction, training and skill development are essential to build and sustain the capability of serving members. The increase in compliance obligations and external expectations mean that this is no longer optional.

There was recurring emphasis on the need to review the composition of the Synod Standing Committee (SSC).

Some suggestions were made to solve this:

- split the SSC into 2 councils, one of which was compliance focussed, the other missional and strategic.
- the reintroduction of the Chair of FIPB into the SSC.
- invest in programs of induction, training, and skill development.
- can people from outside of the church with the expertise we need, be brought in to complement members from within the church.

1.4 The roles of multiple bodies in governing an entity.

There was commentary about how we manage the different councils of the church to be fully involved in governance. Under incorporation, the proposal is that the Property Trust is the sole member.

How does the Synod best resource the other councils of the church who have a clear role in the delivery of the mission through services accommodated?

1.5 Methods of sharing the churches resources.

As we review our fit for purpose governance, we also need to review how resources are shared across the life of the church. While this question is properly the subject of the Queensland Synod Resourcing Review, the two issues are related.

There was a general understanding that each part of the church needs to be properly resourced through some form of "belonging" fee to the Synod and Presbyteries to ensure that these bodies can maintain adequate systems and missional oversight of all church entities. However, the benefits of sharing the resources in this manner need to be adequately communicated.

1.6 Developing a model Trust Deed for further examination.

Several submissions asked that a model trust deed be developed to assist the church to understand how this would all fit together. We also intend to include a diagrammatic representation of the proposed structure for further clarity.

A number of questions arose in the consultation that could be incorporated into a model trust deed to test some of the principles.



This could promote further discussion with the various entities who are seeking incorporation.

2. Frequently asked questions to address in any proposal to the Synod.
  - i. Will a transfer of money or assets between entities breach funding legislation or ACNC expectations?
  - ii. Do any regulatory structures prefer non-incorporation?
  - iii. What would the financial model look like?
  - iv. What would be the role of UCIS?
  - v. What would be the implication for our joint insurance model?
  - vi. Would incorporated institutions be subject to Synod wide policies/Assembly outcomes?
  - vii. What would a set of indicators which we could measure to see that the relationship is improved? Are we going to build in a method to review the arrangements?
  - viii. How can we protect against locking up assets under a PBI status? How can we release or redeploy PBI assets; and

#### Specific questions around any potential incorporation:

- ix. What are the costs? and Who will bear the costs to separate incorporation?
- x. What does a transitional plan look like?
- xi. How do we ensure parts of the church are appropriately protected against any potential financial consequences?

#### 3. Who is driving this discussion and how will decisions be made in the future?

The feedback emphasised the growing pressures from external sources, particularly the regulatory and compliance requirements of State and Commonwealth governments.

The entities of the church do not make their own decisions about incorporation. This is the decision of the Synod, who will consider the issues that arose in the original paper and in this summary of the discussion so far.

It is likely that the SSC will ask the Synod to provide broad direction around our next steps and ask the SSC to implement the proposal over the 18-month term of the Synod.



## Appendix A – who has responded so far?

Property Trust schools – 2

Institutions – 1

Presbyteries – 1

Boards Committees and Commissions - 2

Individuals – 5

Synod staff - 1

# General Proposal 5

## General Secretary Nominated Candidate

### That the Synod

- a) Under Regulation 3.6.3.3 appoint the nominated candidate as Secretary of the Synod.
- b) That pursuant to Queensland Synod Bylaw 2.4.1(3)(a), such appointment be for a period of five years from the 37<sup>th</sup> Synod.
- c) confirms that this proposal be determined by secret ballot with the proposal requiring not less than 65 per cent support of ballots received for the proposal to pass.

### Scope

The rationale to this proposal notes the following:

1. The recruitment process undertaken by the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) over the last 12 months.
2. The SSC brings this proposal to Synod as required under Bylaw Q2.4.3(b) and proposes a **single** nominated candidate.
3. Provides a confidential link to the profile of the nominated candidate, to be accessed by registered members of the Synod only.

### Rationale

#### Regulated role

The General Secretary role is a regulated role required under Regulation 3.6.3.4. When it is known that the General Secretary role requires appointment, the SSC is empowered under By-law 2.5.3 to bring the name of a nominated candidate to the Synod for appointment.

# renewal

Over the past 12 months the following activities were undertaken by the SSC:

Timeline	Actions
<b>Aug -Sept 22</b>	Stakeholders consulted and due diligence undertaken of proposed position description & recruitment process against Synod Bylaws and church governing documents. SSC determines that the current General Secretary be recused from all participation in this process.
<b>Oct – Dec 22</b>	Working group for the review and development of the position description appointed by the SSC led by Mr Scott McDonald Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC) Chairperson, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rev Andrew Gunton Moderator; and</li><li>• Rev Bruce Moore Moderator-Elect.</li></ul> Position descriptions reviewed iteratively between working group and updates provided to the SSC. Final version position description tabled to the SSC.
<b>Jan – Mar 23</b>	Selection panel appointed. Recruitment agency appointed.
<b>April – June 23</b>	Advertisement for General Secretary released to market and search underway. Candidates shortlisted, interviews, reference and probity checks completed. This process was performed by the General Secretary Recruitment Panel appointed by the Synod Standing Committee. It was led by the Moderator Rev Andrew Gunton and included Moderator-Elect Rev Bruce Moore, Mr Nigel Alexander (UnitingCare Queensland Board Chair), Mr Scott McDonald (RNC Chair) and Rev Yvonne McRostie (The Downs Presbytery Minister)
<b>July – Sep 23</b>	Offer made to desired candidate and package negotiated subject to a successful ballot at the Synod in Session Debriefing report made by the selection panel to the SSC and recommendation made. SSC endorsed the recommendation of the RNC.
<b>Oct 23</b>	Proposal tabled by the SSC at 37 <sup>th</sup> Synod recommending appointment of nominated candidate

## The Nominated Candidate

The information pack on the nominated candidate is available only to registered members of the Synod meeting.

The information pack can be accessed [here](#).

This information is purely to be used for the purposes of this meeting and this proposal and not to be otherwise used, shared or published by members of the Synod.

renewal

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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**Phone:** 0449 986 390

Signature:



**Name:** Rev Yvonne McRostie  
**Email:** [pm@downspresbytery.org.au](mailto:pm@downspresbytery.org.au)  
**Phone:** 0427 962 781

Signature:



# General Proposal 6

## Funding of Public Hospital Chaplaincy

### That the Synod

- a) believes that the Synod Standing Committee decision to cease funding for public hospital chaplaincy is a matter of significant missionary importance, such that it should have been referred and deferred to the meeting of the whole Synod.
- b) directs the Synod Standing Committee, in partnership with Presbyteries, to develop and resource a Mission Plan for ministry in public hospitals, and as part of that plan investigate ways in which we can continue to 'hold the space' in these places, as we wait upon God. This Mission Plan and progress to be reported to the meeting of the 38<sup>th</sup> Synod.

### Rationale

The decision to cease funding for public hospital chaplaincy is a significant decision that will have a wide-reaching impact to mission across Queensland, as it is a ministry of the church that reaches thousands of people each year.

We recognise this was a difficult decision, not lightly taken, and yet we believe that there is something worth pursuing here, in terms of testing the mind of the Synod.

Given that the decision has already been taken, and many wheels of this are already in motion, the proposers recognise the difficulty in formulating a proposal that would be helpful and constructive at this stage. We offer this in the hope that it may be constructive, allow for some healing, and enable us to forge a way forward together.

The proposal that is offered is in two parts. The first part refers to the guidelines for how the Synod Standing Committee relates to the meeting of the full Council of Synod:

*That in matters of such missional importance that the general Synod should be the decision maker or provide guidance.*

We believe that it is important to acknowledge and record those times when the Synod may have a different mind to the Synod Standing Committee, as may be the case in this instance. The hope for this part of the proposal is that it might offer Synod and Synod Standing Committee a moment of acknowledgement and reflection that will inform our ways of working together.

The second part is to offer a practical way forward.

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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**Signature:**

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Phone: 0488 488833

**Signature:**