



General Proposal 5

Gender Representation for Synod Standing Committee from 36th Synod

That the Synod

1. Amend By-Law Q2.2.7 (Relevant competencies for SSC elected members) by inserting the following:
 - (o) gender diversity
2. Amend By-Law Q2.2.13 (Election of SSC elected members) by inserting the following:
 3. At least 50% of persons to be declared elected to fill the required number of elected member positions at the Synod meeting must be female
3. Apply the proposed changes to By-Law Q2.2.7 and Q2.2.13 from and including the election of SSC elected members at the 36th Synod

Precis

This proposal is only to introduce a quota for the elected members of the Synod Standing Committee. Because other committees are appointments, the expectation of gender diversity is managed in that appointment process.

There are 8 elected Synod Standing Committee members. However, because we now stagger membership turnover there are only 4 positions currently up for election at the 36th Synod. This proposal, if accepted will ensure that 2 of those people elected at this Synod will be female.

The proposal would then also apply for the 37th Synod and thereafter to ensure that at least 4 elected members of the Standing Committee would be female.

Background

The Synod Standing Committee (SSC) acts on behalf of the Synod between meetings of the Synod and under current Queensland Synod By-Laws has up to 15 members (up to 7 ex-officio and 8 elected members by Synod). Elected members are appointed for two ordinary meetings of the Synod. Current ex-officio membership is:

- Moderator
- ex-Moderator

- Moderator-Elect
- General Secretary
- chairperson of the UnitingCare Queensland Board
- chairperson of the Wesley Queensland Board
- nominee of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for Queensland.

Results of elections of the members to the SSC has shown a significant lack of female representation. We have seen almost equal numbers of male and female people nominating for this committee, but this has not resulted in a change to the gender diversity. This has been the case specifically for the past three Synods where we have not seen meaningful and sustained elected appointments of women to the SSC. The Australian Institute of Company Directors, in their publication *Towards Board Gender Parity* identified key drivers for women on boards, such as gender is a significant indicator of diversity and inclusion, diverse boards are more effective, and the main governing committee should represent the diversity of the community it serves.

Rationale

The Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC) has a charter responsibility to “oversee the strategy and approach to the creation of a diverse and inclusive workplace and membership of Synod governing bodies”. The RNC has identified that during the next Synodal term, the committee will develop practices for improving diversity and inclusion. This will include, but not be limited to, a Diversity and Inclusion policy, consideration of quotas, recruitment processes, training, consultation and identification of supportive strategies. This proposal intends to give this work a kick start by ensuring we have gender diversity on the SSC.

Basis of Union

The Uniting Church, from inception, will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members men and women called of God to preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in the government and to serve those in need in the world (Paragraph 14 of The Basis of Union).

Paragraph 15 of The Basis of Union includes:

The Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them. The Uniting Church therefore so organises her life that locally, regionally and nationally government will be entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing gifts and graces with which God has endowed them for the building up of the Church.

Paragraph 17 of The Basis of Union includes:

The Uniting Church will keep its law under constant review so that its life may increasingly be directed to the service of God and humanity, and its worship to a true and faithful setting forth of, and response to, the Gospel of Christ.

Historic Synod in Session voting patterns

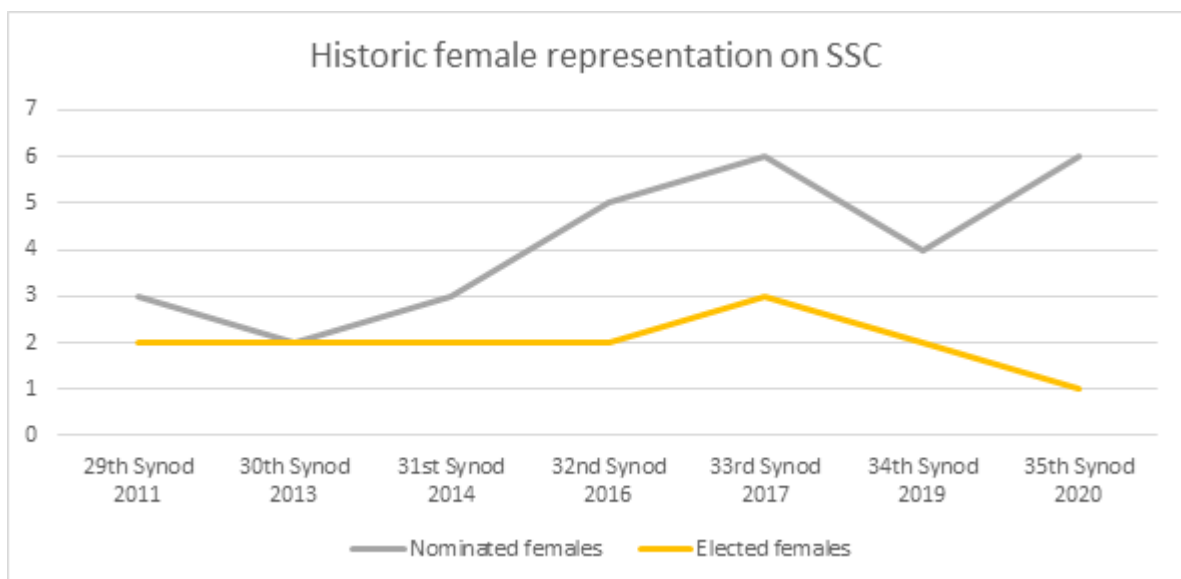
There have been previous attempts to increase gender diversity on the Synod Standing Committee, by providing greater information to Synod to assist members in their discernment for elected members to SSC.

This has included data posted on the entrances to buildings at Synod, short videos from nominees and short videos from governing body Chairperson. More recently, efforts have been made to increase female representation for nominees which resulted in 50% female representation for nominees at the 35th Synod.

Despite these measures, the historic voting patterns by the Synod evidence an under-representation of females elected to the SSC. Whilst the number of females who nominate for the SSC is below that of males who nominate, the previous five Synods also show that the number of elected females is consistently low.

Indications are that despite suitably qualified female nominees making themselves available for nomination, the Synod trend favours the election of male nominees over female nominees.

	Nominated males	Elected males	Nominated females	Elected females	% females elected
29th Synod 2011	17	8	3	2	20%
30th Synod 2013	10	8	2	2	20%
31st Synod 2014	10	8	3	2	20%
32nd Synod 2016	14	8	5	2	20%
33rd Synod 2017	8	7	6	3	30%
34th Synod 2019	11	7	4	2	22%
35th Synod 2020	6	6	6	1	14%



Gender representation amongst the communities the church serves

The overall results from the 2016 National Church Life Survey reveal that 60% of Australian church attenders identify as female and 40% as male. This figure has been constant since 2006 and in every

denomination, in every age grouping, women outnumber men. Australian churches contain proportionally more females than the wider population, with 60% of churchgoers being female, in comparison with 51% of all Australians.

With respect to the Uniting Church specifically, 63% of attenders are female and 37% are male. It is worth noting that of the placements within the Queensland Synod, 64% are held by males and 36% are held by females.

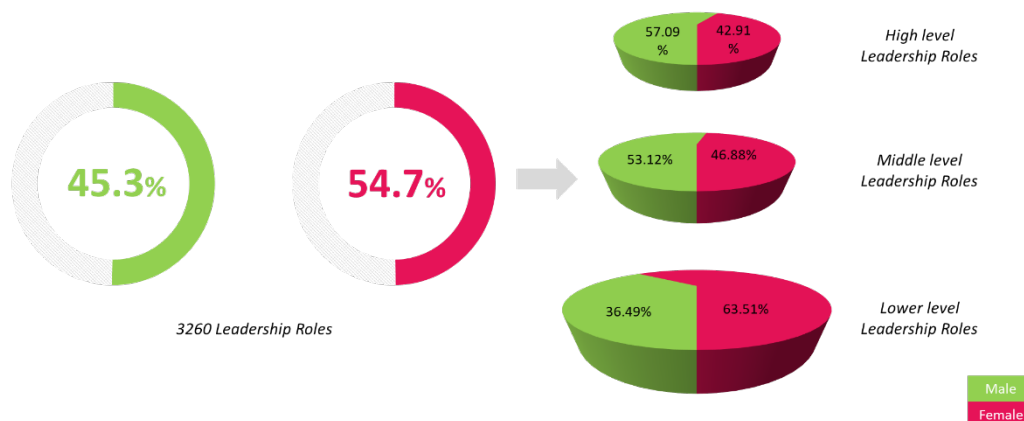
At the 32nd Synod in 2016, it was resolved that a diversity task group be established to workshop representation on boards, committees and commissions. This task group presented strategies to improve diversity in leadership positions across the whole of the church to SSC in 2017.

The first recommendation was to implement a deliberate developmental strategy for identifying and preparing people to take on roles. After years of work exploring what this might look like and conducting extensive stakeholder engagement across the whole of the church, the Women in Leadership program was developed. In 2020, the Synod initiated the Plentiful Leadership Women in Leadership Program. Due to COVID-19, the program was expanded to male and females.

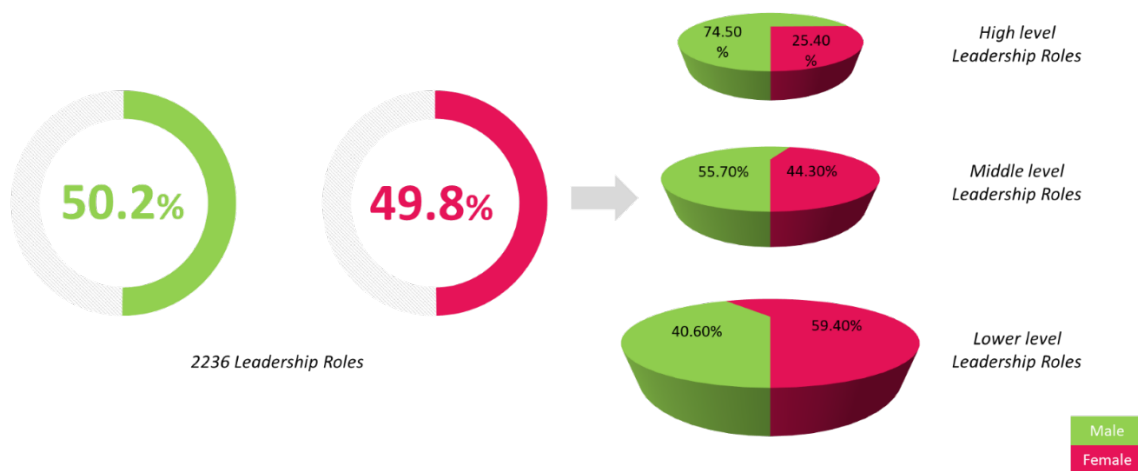
Analysis to support the need for the program focused on three levels of leadership across the Synod:



Data sourced from the Commonwealth Government’s Workplace Gender Equity Agency public reports (UCQ, WMQ, 6 of 19 schools and residential colleges) and the Synod’s registers for office holders/governing bodies identified 3,260 leadership roles with the following gender representation:



While the above data suggests a reasonable balance of gender representation across all leadership roles, by excluding agency and school data, the remaining 2,236 leadership roles identifies a significant disparity in high level leadership roles:



When it came to strategic leadership roles like SSC, boards, chairs, church council leaders, the male to female representation of 75:25 strongly supported the need for the Plentiful Leadership Women in Leadership Program, that aimed to:

- Increase effective leadership capacity across the Synod
- Increase skills and engagement of senior leaders
- Increase the pool of women for future governance roles
- Increase feelings of inclusion and connection with and across the Church
- Increase awareness of hidden gender bias with the Synod
- Increase the engagement across the Synod of a lived-out faith and spirituality

Why a quota?

Anecdotal information indicates that at union there was originally a 1/3 quota of females on each Synod committee, however a move was made soon after to a regional representation model.

The Synod by-laws in March 2009 (refer Attachment A) were far more prescriptive around representation but the SSC (or Council of Synod as it was called then) was also much larger.

At the 29th Synod, the composition of the SSC was changed from this representative focus to a greater focus on representational competence. By Law Q2.2.7 outlines the relevant competencies for SSC elected members, including consideration of some aspects of diversity and inclusion:

- Multi-cultural expertise
- Indigenous expertise
- A youth perspective

The Uniting Church in Australia has traditionally tried to incorporate diverse voices across its Councils by using the Manual for Meetings. The consensus decision making process captured in the Manual is designed to encourage multiple voices to be heard in its debates and decision making.

Governing bodies typical use two methods to improve gender representation, targets and quotas.

This proposal suggests a quota, as the impact of this approach will be a gradual transition to gender diversity on the SSC over a period of several years. It will help focus attention and demonstrate commitment to deliver on the commitment.

Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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EXTRACT – SYNOD BY-LAWS MARCH 2009

Membership and Method of Election

Q1.2.3 The membership of the Council of Synod shall comprise -

- a. Members ex-officio -
 - The Moderator;
 - The Moderator-Elect; The Ex-Moderator;
 - The General Secretary (who is also the Secretary of Synod as referred to in the Assembly Regulations);
 - The Chairperson of the UnitingCare Queensland Board; The Chairperson of the Finance and Property Board; The Director, UnitingCare Queensland;
 - The Director, Department for Financial and Property Services.
- b. Elected members - Twenty-two (22) persons elected at each Synod from amongst its members, provided that there shall be included in those elected -
 - i. at least one (1) representative from each presbytery;
 - ii. at least three (3) women;
 - iii. at least two (2) persons of age twenty-five (25) years or under;
 - iv. at least one (1) person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island descent;
 - v. at least one (1) person from another culturally diverse background;
- c. Should nominations not be received in sufficient numbers to fill the various reserved places, those places not filled are to be filled from general nomination.
- d. The twenty-two (22) elected members shall include the six (6) persons elected to the Synod Leadership Team as provided by By-Law Q1.3.2. Those persons shall be taken into account in determining whether members elected to the Council of Synod include persons satisfying the specific qualifications listed in By-Law Q1.2.3(b).

Q1.2.4 Each Presbytery shall submit to the General Secretary prior to the commencement of each Synod one (1) nomination for membership of the Council of Synod, provided that the person so nominated shall be a member of the Synod at which the nomination is to be received.

Q1.2.5 Nominations for election as members of the Council of Synod may be received from members of the Synod until the time fixed by the Synod for the closing of such nominations. Each such nomination shall be made on the form provided by the General Secretary and shall be accompanied by the written consent of the person nominated and a declaration by that person of his or her ability to attend meetings of the Council of Synod.

Q1.2.6 Should more nominations be received in accordance with the provisions of By-Laws Q1.2.4 and Q1.2.5 than the number of members of the Council of Synod to be elected, a ballot shall be conducted.

Q1.2.7 (a) The names of the persons nominated by the Presbyteries under the provisions of By-Law Q1.2.4 shall be placed first on the ballot paper with the respective names of the Presbyteries from which the nominations have been received against them.

b. The names of the other persons nominated shall then be placed on the ballot paper in alphabetical order of surname with the name of the Presbytery in which the nominee holds confirmed membership noted against each name.

Q1.2.8 Subject to the provisions of Regulation 3.5.45, members of the Council of Synod to the number required in By-Law Q1.2.3 shall be declared elected in accordance with the number of votes received.