

15. Covenanting Commission

<i>Co-Chairperson</i>	Rev Robert Jetta, Rev Steve Francis
<i>Staff</i>	Geoff Bice
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Cheryl Lawson Uto Fotu Catherine Kelly Rev Ivan Clark Rev Dennis Doust Richard Smith Mitchell Garlett Lenny Yarran Rev Mervyn Anderson

The Covenanting Commission continues to work at creating and strengthening relationships between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA (Congress) and the broader WA Synod. The Covenant calls us to work together for the sake of greater understanding, justice and flourishing of First Peoples. To this end the Covenanting Commission continues to walk with Congress in advocating for the rights of Aboriginal people and encouraging relationships between First and Second Peoples across the Synod.

1. CO-CONVENOR CHANGE

Due to a change of leadership within Congress, the Covenanting Commission also had a change with Rev Robert Jetta stepping in for Des Lawson as the co-chair. This was an automatic change to the ex-officio co-chair appointment from the UAICC WA Regional Committee.

2. CONGRESS UPDATE

The last 12 months have been particularly challenging for Congress in WA as they go through a transition period. Despite this, the ministry of Congress continues across their local communities and broader networks locally and nationally. The Covenanting Commission has been working to support some consolidation efforts within Congress as well as continuing some long-standing agenda items. Robert Jetta, Mitchell Garlett and Cheryl Lawson have all had an increase in responsibility and it has been particularly pleasing to see Mitchell progressing through his ministry studies.

3. COVENANTING ACTS

The Covenanting Commission would like to highlight the role of the Uniting Church in the City (UCIC) in supporting the Boab Network's work with the Mowanjum Community. UCIC make a generous contribution of \$10,000, which is allocated to transporting young people from Mowanjum to Perth for various activities as part of their School Holiday Program.

4. SHARING OF ASSETS

The Covenanting Commission has restarted discussions about the sharing of Synod assets and income with Congress. The process was on hold while the WA Regional Committee of Congress was going through a review process with the national Congress. That process has now been completed and the Covenanting Commission has recently restarted discussions with the Financial Covenanting Task Group established by the 2015 meeting of the Synod.

5. SYNOD/PRESBYTERY/ASSEMBLY

Discussions have begun between the chairs and secretaries of Congress, Synod and Presbytery to look at ways of making Synod and Presbytery meetings more culturally inclusive. A discussion has also begun about local implications from Assembly resolutions about affirming sovereignty of First Peoples and developing MOU's with Congress.

6. SORRY DAY

The Covenanting Commission is connected to both the Bringing Them Home Committee and the WA Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation. Since the occasion fell on a Saturday in 2018, the usual engagement with schools was not possible, so a greater focus was given to Stolen Generations survivors in a more intimate event across Yagan Square and St George's Cathedral.

7. COLLABORATIONS

- This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Moore River Native Settlement/Mogumber Methodist Mission and various negotiations have been taking place to hold a commemorative event at the site. The Covenanting Commission will be looking to engage Uniting Church members connected to the site and will support Kaalip Aboriginal Corporation who have been tasked with co-ordinating an event on 25–27 October.
- The Covenanting Commission is supportive of Social Reinvestment WA who are continuing to campaign to reduce Aboriginal incarceration rates through investment in holistic preventative measures. The key target campaigns are currently about having justice targets included in the Closing the Gap Framework, establishing social reinvestment trial sites in WA and abolishing jail terms for unpaid fines.

8. OTHER ISSUES

The Covenanting Commission takes a keen interest in a range of other issues affecting First Peoples across WA. This included:

- Supporting the Social Justice Commission writing to Fortescue Metals Group asking to discuss concerns emerging from the ruling in the Federal Court about their dealings with the Yindjibarndi People.
- The Covenanting Commission also wrote to the WA Education Minister with concerns over the closure of Moora Residential College and the possible related impacts on education for Aboriginal young people in the area.
- The Mowanjum Community continue to receive support from the Boab Network who have been advocating for fairer funding arrangements, particularly in relation to housing maintenance.
- There are a number of federal policy issues of concern to the Covenanting Commission including the unfair nature of the Community Development Program, the Cashless Welfare Card trials, the inadequate response from the Federal Government to the Uluru Statement From the Heart and the cessation of federal funding for remote community housing. The Covenanting Commission is awaiting feedback on these issues from national Congress.

The Covenanting Commission will continue to monitor all these issues and request advocacy from the relevant bodies where possible.

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