



Synod Standing Committee

<i>Moderator</i>	Rev Steve Francis
<i>Acting Ex-Moderator</i>	Rev Ken Williams
<i>Moderator-Elect</i>	
<i>General Secretary</i>	Rev David de Kock
<i>Members elected by Synod</i>	Margaret Martin
	Rev Dr Ian Tozer
	Alison Xamon
	Steve Higgins
	Julie Ridden
	Heather Hamblin
<i>Appointed by Standing Committee</i>	Rev Andrew Syme (Schools Forum)
	Robert Watson (UnitingCare Forum)
<i>Appointed by Presbytery of WA</i>	Rev Lorraine Stokes (Until December 2018)
	Rev Bev Fabb (From February 2019 until April 2019)
	Robert (Bob) Hunt (From June 2019)
<i>Appointed by Congress Regional Committee</i>	Rev Robert Jetta
	Mitchell Garlett
<i>By Invitation</i>	Robert Locke (GM Resources) (Until June 2019)
	Rev Mark Illingworth (Deputy General Secretary)
	Maree Kemp (Minutes) (October 2018)
	Maureen Bourke (Minutes) (From December 2018)
	Maggie Johns (Media) (Until April 2019)

1. MEMBERSHIP OF SYNOD STANDING COMMITTEE

1.1 Membership

The elected members of Synod Standing Committee serve until the next meeting of the Synod in session. The following members were elected at the September 2018 meeting of Synod:

Margaret Martin, Rev Dr Ian Tozer, Alison Xamon, Steve Higgins, Julie Ridden and Heather Hamblin.

The Standing Committee appointed Rev Andrew Syme, Executive Officer – Schools and Agencies, and Robert Watson, Executive Officer – UnitingCare Forum to represent the two bodies respectively.

Presbytery of Western Australia Standing Committee appointed Rev Lorraine Stokes until December 2018. She was replaced by Rev Bev Fabb from February 2019 and following the election of Robert (Bob) Hunt as the Chair of the Presbytery of WA, he was appointed by the Presbytery Standing Committee. The Regional Committee of Congress appointed Rev Robert Jetta and Mitchell Garlett as members.

Rev Mark Illingworth (Deputy General Secretary) and Robert Locke (General Manager Resources) attended by invitation to resource the meeting.



1.2 Meetings

Six ordinary meetings of the Synod Standing Committee were held on 8 October 2018, 10 December 2018, 11 February 2019, 8 April 2019, 17 June 2019 and 12 August 2019.

A joint gathering of the Synod Standing Committee and the Synod Resources Commission met on 6 July 2019 at the Annual Resources Workshop to address matters of mutual interest.

2. MATTERS ADDRESSED

2.1 Moderatorial Nominating Committee

In preparation for the election of a new Moderator, the Standing Committee considered the needs and issues of the Church for the forthcoming Triennium and prepared a document for the Moderatorial Nominating Committee. (*Attachment 1*)

Rev John Dunn and Robert Watson were appointed to co-chair the Committee and the following persons appointed to the Committee, following nominations by the Presbytery of WA and the Standing Committee: Alison McCubbin, Hanamoa Vaitoga, Rev Ken Devereux, Livia Hool, Rev Anne McAndrew, Steve Higgins, Trevor Thomas.

2.2 National Safe Church Unit

The Standing Committee agreed to the establishment of the National Safe Church Unit as a joint co-operation between the Assembly and the Synods to guide the requirements set down by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and to determine national policy. The WA Synod contributes 6.7% of the cost of the Unit (\$32,443). This contribution is based on the number of congregations in each Synod.

Rev John Cox, who previously led the National Task Group, has been appointed as Director of the NSCU and the WA General Secretary has been appointed to the governance group.

2.3 Redress – Provision of Counselling and Therapeutic Service

There is currently no provision for counselling and therapeutic services for those who seek redress for child abuse but do not wish to use the National Redress Scheme. Some of these applicants seek redress through litigation and others through negotiated settlements. The WA Synod Redress Policy was amended to make provision for these services at the same terms and conditions as the National Redress Scheme (as it pertains to WA) ie \$5,000 per applicant.

2.4 Statement of Access and Welcome

Following the proposals at the Assembly, the Synod Standing Committee adopted the Statement of Access and Welcome and circulated the Statement to the Presbytery, all congregations, agencies, theological colleges and schools. The Statement seeks to eliminate access barriers pertaining to:

Attitude/Theology

Communication

Physical Environment

and to encourage the development of Disability Action Plans.

2.5 Beananing Kwuurt Institute

As a consequence of the rapid depletion of the capital amount of the Trust Fund (Sister Kate's) which was intended to support the work of BKI through interest earnings, the Synod Standing Committee determined that no further drawings from the Fund be allowed until further notice.

At the request of the BKI Board, the Constitution of BKI has been referred to HWL Ebsworth for review and updating to current legislation.

2.6 UCA Redress Ltd

UCA Redress Ltd was established by the Assembly as a co-operative venture with the Synods in order to handle all redress claims against the Uniting Church in Australia through the National Redress Scheme. The Standing Committee approved the Application, Participating and Funding Agreement for the Synod to be a Participating Institution of UCA Redress Ltd in December 2018. By default, the Presbytery and all congregations are participating members. The schools, colleges and agencies (including historical instrumentalities) are separately incorporated institutions under the Uniting Church in Australia (WA) Act 1976 and all but two have formally signed Participating Agreements with the Synod. The two remaining are simply waiting sign off by the relevant Council.

All redress claims received by the National Redress Scheme relating to any Uniting Church entity is referred to the relevant Synod who respond to the Request for Information (RFI). The National Redress Scheme assesses the claim against information provided and makes a determination with regard to redress (Money amount, apology and counselling services). The relevant entity is responsible for addressing the redress determination.

Each Synod Standing Committee is a member of UCA Redress Ltd and each General Secretary is the Member Representative at the regular meetings and has specific delegations from the Member (Standing Committee). The Synod contributes \$42,000 pa to the running of UCA Redress Ltd.

2.7 Embargoed Funds

The process for access to Embargoed Funds has been clarified, though not changed. The sale of congregation property results in the funds being held in an Embargoed Funds account for the future benefit of the congregation. Access to these funds requires the presentation of a Mission Plan approved by the Thrive Mission Committee and the approval of the Resources Commission.

St Andrew's congregation accessed a portion of their Embargoed Funds for the purchase and renovation of 182 Bennett St as their new Worship & Mission Centre. They had requested that the balance of their funds be made available to earlier offshoots of the congregation, viz Ross Memorial Church, Melville Uniting Church, Scotch College and Presbyterian Ladies College but the Standing Committee directed the Resources Commission not to follow this request. The balance of funds (\$5M) thus remain for the benefit of St Andrews congregation.

2.8 Media & Communications Review

The Standing Committee received the report of the external consultant relating to the media strategy of the Synod. The Committee agreed to the continuation of the hardcopy Revive publication in a less expensive format and acknowledged that an internal audit and cost benefit analysis would be

undertaken. A full Media Strategy Plan has been requested, including social media, online media and print publications.

2.9 Property Review Task Group

Following the collapse of a ceiling at the Melville congregation and reports of other ceiling collapses from Uniting Church Insurance Services, the Standing Committee endorsed the establishment of a Property Review Task Group and the commissioning of an external consultant to inspect all buildings. The reports from the consultant have been received indicating repair and renovation costs of \$6 million over 165 buildings. The Presbytery and Property Review Team are working together to address the issues on a most-urgent-first basis. Funding is a serious issue and complicates the situation. Many of the issues could have been avoided if buildings had been properly maintained and plans are being considered to ensure that maintenance is undertaken and properly funded.

2.10 Council for Mission

There have been no applications to the Council for Mission to access the funding made available for mission development. The Foundation makes available \$1million per annum for this purpose. The process requires that the presentation to the Council for Mission is developed in collaboration with the Thrive Mission Committee. Two proposals have been put forward but have not made it to the Council for Mission.

2.11 Fossil Fuels

Given the need to clarify its position on the need to act urgently on the climate crisis in the light of significant policy development being undertaken by the WA Government and WA Environmental Protection Authority, and noting that the proposal aligns with the Synod's existing position, the Standing Committee resolved to express its concern to the Western Australian Government regarding the approval of any new or expanded fossil fuel projects in Western Australia. The Standing Committee requested their commitment to taking responsibility for Western Australia's role in limiting global temperature change to 1.5 degrees Celsius by;

1. Designing and implementing a state-wide strategy to reduce Green House Gas emissions across all sectors of the economy that includes science-based targets to align with the Paris Agreement and requirements to offset emissions;
2. Designing and implementing transition plans to move away from fossil fuels in close consultations with workers and local communities connected to fossil fuel dependent industry.

2.12 Synod Structure and Property Officer

Following the retirement of Robert Locke as General Manager (Resources) in July, the Synod Standing Committee noted the revised Synod Organisation Chart (*Attachement 2*) and resolved to appoint Rev David de Kock as the Property Officer.

2.13 Ministers Stipends and Allowances

At the June meeting of the Standing Committee it was agreed to increase Ministers Stipends and Allowances by 1.3% from January 1, 2020. It was further agreed to increase the proportion from 30%

to 50% that Ministers can salary sacrifice to the Ministerial Benefits Account from January 1, 2020. Both adjustments, particularly the increased allowance for salary sacrificing, are designed to ensure that Ministers Emoluments are in line with other Synods.

2.14 Budget

At the August meeting the Standing Committee received the recommended budget prepared pursuant to Regulation 3.8.7 (h) from the Resources Commission and agreed that it be presented to the Synod for approval. The Standing Committee delegated the presentation of the 2020 Budget to the Synod meeting to the General Secretary, Resources Commission Chairperson and the Synod Chief Financial Officer.

In line with the resolution of the Synod, the aim was to produce a balanced budget with a three year forecast. The Budget surpluses are \$573 for 2020, \$3,462 for 2021 and \$ 3,702 for 2022.

It was resolved to abandon the Mission Grant of \$119,500 to Presbytery in favour of a non-specific grant of \$200,000 in 2020, thus allowing the Presbytery to administer their own directions.

2.15 Remote Area Ministry

The WA Synod currently has three Remote Area Placements – Rev John Dihm in the Pilbara, Rev Mitch Fialkowski in the Murchison and Ps John Tompkins in the Gascoyne. Two of these are funded by Frontier Services and one by the Synod.

The General Secretary is on the Assembly's Remote Area Ministry Working Group which assesses potential new Remote Area Placements and makes recommendations for funding to Frontier Services. Funding has been approved by Frontier Services for a Bush Chaplain placement in the Goldfields Patrol and a Joint Nominating Committee has been established.

The goal is to have five fully funded Remote Area Placements by 2021 viz adding funding for the Gascoyne role and a new Bush Chaplain in Port Hedland to the existing placements in the Pilbara, Murchison and Goldfields.

Rev David de Kock
General Secretary
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