

Business Committee

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Meetings in preparation for the 12th Assembly began in February 2008. This was a little later than usual while inquiries were made about the possibility of holding the Assembly in Canberra. However the cost made such an option unviable. Initial planning was undertaken by an Assembly Design Team and subsequently the Business Committee has finalised the program.
- 1.2 The members of the Business Committee are: Terence Corkin, Alistair Macrae, Geoffrey Grinton (Business Manager), Glenda Blakefield, Karen Burchell – Thomas, Cynthia Coghill, Anne Hogan, Andrew Johnson, Swee-Ann Koh, David Peters, Paul Swadling and a nominee of the National UAICC.
- 1.3 The Assembly is more than a business meeting. Therefore there are elements of celebration, thanksgiving, community life, Bible Study and prayer. The Business Committee emphasises that these are not optional components for Assembly members. All of these are valuable in their own right and together they are gathered together into the rhythm of the whole week so that the reports, deliberations and decision making are shaped by them. Through these processes of building community and fellowship around word and sacrament we believe that as a community we are best placed to discern Christ's will for his church.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The role of the Business Committee is to:
- serve the Assembly in ensuring that all business will be considered in a clear and timely manner
 - ensure that members are enabled to participate fully in the Assembly's decision making through the provision of all necessary information
 - recommend the agenda and timetable of the Assembly
 - generally assist the Assembly to deal with its business
- 2.2 The Assembly is in charge of its own business and recommendations from this Business Committee are open to debate, amendment or rejection by the Assembly, as are any other proposals that come before this Council.

3. ACTIVITIES

- 3.1 In developing the Assembly program particular consideration has been given to how the Assembly can give adequate

space in its agenda for worship, Bible study, community building, discernment processes, and of course decisions. An important feature of the Assembly will be the service on Thursday morning where we come together under the leadership of Congress in our covenantal relationship. On Sunday morning there is the opportunity to attend local congregations and the registration process has already assisted members in indicating if they need assistance for this arrangement.

- 3.2 The Community Working Groups will once again be a significant focus for the life of the Assembly. They will be used to assist the Assembly in exercising its oversight role and as a key part of the process by which we seek to discern God's leading for the Uniting Church in the next triennium.
- 3.3 There are a number of major areas of business that have arisen from decisions of the Assembly. They include reports from four Assembly initiated Task Groups on the use of Property in a Multicultural Church, the place of National Conferences from among our migrant communities, a statement on Jewish Christian relations and on the Code of Ethics. There will also be proposals in relation to the Constitution including the recognition of Congress in the Preamble, changes to Clause 39 ("matters vital to the life of the church") and the way in which membership is appointed to the Assembly and its Standing Committee.
- 3.4 In addition there are a number of proposals from Assembly Agencies and synods on a range of issues.

4. BUSINESS PROCEDURES

- 4.1 All business sessions of the Assembly will be conducted in accordance with *A Manual for Meetings in the Uniting Church*. A copy of the Manual is in section I of the 12th Assembly's working papers.
- 4.2 The Twelfth Assembly will again feature Community Working Groups. All voting members, and persons associated with the Assembly for the whole meeting, will be allocated to a Community Working Group. The exception is Congress members who have asked to meet together during those times. Community Working Groups are not an optional extra - they are an essential part of our discernment process. It is expected that people will participate in them. You will receive advice on which group you are in, and where it meets when you arrive at the University of NSW. The agenda shows the times allocated to Community Working Groups.
- 4.3 Members will receive their papers in a number of mailings. In addition all reports and, in due course, proposals will be placed on the Assembly web site for the information of members of the church. For

members of the Church who want them there will be some hard copies of the Reports and Business papers available for purchase from the Assembly Office.

- 4.4 Media at the Assembly has, on occasions, not been helpful to the working of the Council. Care will be taken to monitor the way the media operates and if required the General Secretary, on the advice of the Business Committee, shall determine whether any sessions shall be closed to filming. Where necessary the Business Committee will bring proposals in respect of how the media should be involved in sessions that deal with contentious matters.

5. BUSINESS PROCEDURES AND CONGRESS

Over a long period of time the UAICC has indicated that there are difficulties for Congress in participating in our style of meeting. Prior to the 11th Assembly a new process, consistent with the principles of the *Manual for Meetings*, was developed to address the particular concerns raised by Congress. These procedures were approved for use at that meeting and on review were seen to be very well received and to be helpful to the Congress and the Assembly. The ASC will bring a proposal that recommends the adoption of this process again for use at this and subsequent meetings of the Assembly.

When proposals are introduced the normal practice is that two speakers are given five and three minutes respectively to present the proposal. Subject to confirmation by the Assembly when it meets in its first session there will be some specific provisions made for Congress. On any issue of Congress' choosing Congress may indicate, ahead of time, to either the General Secretary or the Business Manager that they wish to contribute at that point. There will be no specific time limit applied to the Congress speaker(s), although there will be negotiation about timing beforehand in order to assist the flow of the meeting.

Congress members find it difficult to have to constantly show cards or to go to the microphones and justify why they do not agree. It will be understood that not showing cards during the deliberative phase should not be interpreted as a view for or against any proposal.

While Congress recognises that individual indigenous members of the Assembly may speak to any issue before the house, there will also be times when Congress members want to convey the views of the UAICC to the Assembly. Therefore on occasions, when this is indicated, the President will invite a Congress

representative to speak from the podium on the stage.

Where the Facilitation Group is bringing a report the Congress will be guaranteed a separate briefing, and need only request the General Secretary for it to be provided.

Congress members will not be allocated to the Community Working Groups, as are other members of the Assembly. These times will be available for Congress to meet and pursue its own agenda.

If there are times when the members of Congress find it helpful for a discussion to stop so that they can discuss some issue together then a request can be made to the President and the discussion will pause for a length of time determined by the President. Other business will continue and when Congress returns they will have the opportunity to speak (if they wish) at the time the matter resumes.

6. CLOSING DATES AND TIMES

6.1 Proposals

Proposals to the Assembly were invited from presbyteries, synods and Assembly agencies with a closing date of May 15 2009. The timing of meetings means that some proposals may arrive later. Proposals will be provided to members of the 12th Assembly in the second mailing due to be received in early June.

Presbyteries and synods may submit proposals on any matter arising out of the reports and working papers of the Twelfth Assembly by no later than 15 May.

Proposals on new matters to the Assembly, or to amend proposals that have been distributed with the papers may be submitted by Assembly members no later than 6.00pm on Friday 17 July.

Members are strongly encouraged to submit proposals in advance in preference to doing so on their arrival in Sydney. Any proposals which indicate a change of direction to those in the working papers should be communicated as early as possible. Such items should be faxed, emailed or mailed, and addressed to the General Secretary.

6.2 Nominations

6.2.1 President Elect

Changes to the nominations procedure for President – elect mean that nominations close on April 16 2009.

6.2.2 Other positions

See report D1, Ballots and Nominating Procedures, for full details. Assembly members may submit nominations until 6.00pm on Friday 17 July.

7. PROCESSING OF PROPOSALS

Following is advice to persons who want to submit proposals for the consideration of the Assembly. By following this advice members of the Assembly will greatly assist their cause and the efficient working of the Assembly business processes.

When proposals are received by the General Secretary, or the Manager of Assembly Business (Mr Geoffrey Grinton), they are reviewed to ensure that they are in a form that the Assembly can consider and that they address a matter that it is appropriate for the Assembly to make a decision upon (the technical word is that the proposal is “competent”). If either of these things is found to be lacking then conversations are held with the proposer in order to rectify these deficiencies.

It is not uncommon for a number of proposals to be brought that address the same issue. This is quite common when there are amendments being proposed to an original proposal, or that pick up a matter that is of lively interest to the Assembly. When there is similarity among proposals then the Business Manager will encourage and facilitate a meeting of persons bringing similar proposals, which might lead to a different and possibly joint set of words being developed. Sometimes this will result in one set of words appearing in a proposal that is produced in the Assembly papers and then quite a different set of words being presented later.

Contact details for persons bringing proposals. It is of great assistance if persons bringing proposals (movers and seconders) provide their mobile phone number.

8. GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSALS

- 8.1 Proposals should refer to policy matters, be precise and unambiguous.
- 8.2 Proposals should begin “That the Assembly...”
- 8.3 Proposals seeking amendment to the Regulations should begin, “That the Assembly request the Standing Committee, on the advice of the Legal Reference Committee, to amend Regulation..... to the effect that / to read.....”
- 8.4 Proposals must be submitted in writing (one copy is sufficient) and signed by two members of the Assembly or by the appropriate officer of the presbytery or synod.

- 8.5 Proposals should be accompanied by a written rationale of no more than 250 words which will be circulated to all members of the Assembly with the proposal.
- 8.6 The General Secretary and the Manager of Assembly Business are available to Assembly members who may need advice on business procedures or who may wish to raise a concern or make a suggestion.

9. VISITORS PROGRAM

- 9.1 The official Visitors Program will include times of attending business sessions of Assembly and many other activities. Brochures and registration information are available from the Twelfth Assembly Administrator, Mr Robert Key, at the Synod of NSW / ACT office at 222 Pitt St Sydney. Information is also available at the 12th Assembly web site – <http://www.assembly2009.uca.org.au/>

10. ASSEMBLY GUESTS

- 10.1 **Australian Christian Churches** – a number of churches in Australia have been invited to attend either the Opening Service and the Installation of the President or the whole of Assembly.
- 10.2 **Overseas Guests** - 35 overseas churches and ecumenical bodies have been invited to send representatives to the Twelfth Assembly. It is hoped that overseas visitors will share with us in the life of the Assembly in a variety of ways as we address the many issues before us.
- 10.3 **Other Faiths** - representatives of other faith communities have been invited to participate at certain times.
- 10.4 **Bible Study** - will be led by Rev Elizabeth Raine and Rev John Squires. The Saturday evening Cato lecture, ‘Overboard with Jonah; Over the Line with Ezra: Biblical Themes for the Church in Exile’ will be delivered by Professor Daniel Smith Christopher. Daniel is Professor of Theological Studies and Director of Peace Studies at Loyola Marymount University. This lecture will be a public lecture on Saturday evening, July 18. This opportunity is available to the Assembly through the generous assistance of the Cato Trustees. The Cato Trust will also publish the lecture, which will make it available to a wider audience.

Rev Terence Corkin
General Secretary