

# UnitingJustice Australia

## 1. INTRODUCTION: FOR A WORLD RECONCILED

UnitingJustice Australia (UJA) is the justice unit of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia, pursuing matters of social and economic justice, human rights, peace and the environment. It is located within the Assembly's Uniting Faith and Discipleship Team.

It engages in advocacy and education and works collaboratively to communicate the Church's vision for a reconciled world. It provides resources for the Church as it considers its position on issues of national and international importance and public policy.

UnitingJustice Australia exists as an expression of the Uniting Church's commitment to working toward a just and peaceful world. This commitment arises from the Christian belief that liberation from oppression and injustice is central to the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ. This mission is inherently evangelical – it is an expression of the calling to share the good news of Jesus for the poor and the oppressed – and while it is part of the mission of the whole church, UJA has a particular responsibility for this area of service within the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. Its tasks include the following:

- identify systems and structures in society which cause and perpetuate injustice, violence and oppression
- identify critical issues of national and international significance
- conduct analysis and develop considered responses on these issues
- actively participate and advocate in public discussion
- strengthen the Church's prophetic voice and action in the world
- provide advice to Assembly, Assembly Standing Committee, the President and the General Secretary on justice issues of national and international significance
- educate, inform and resource the Church, so that members, groups, councils and agencies can effectively engage in actions for justice and peace
- support the Uniting Church justice staff network across the synods, encouraging collaboration on issues of national significance
- identify issues of (systemic/institutional) injustice within the Church and seek remedies.

Priorities are set and identified through resolutions of the Assembly and the Assembly Standing Committee, the advice

of the UJA Reference Committee, long-term strategic planning and analysis, urgent political and social issues and issues arising out of ecumenical co-operation.

In all our work, UJA aims to

- ground its work in the gospel;
- build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia;
- ground its work in the Church's relationships of solidarity with those most affected by injustice;
- be concerned with the needs of the whole creation;
- conduct its work on the basis of rigorous, contemporary research and analysis;
- work in co-operation with synods and other Assembly agencies, ecumenically and in partnership with other civil society organisations; and
- contribute positively to Australian civil society including by representing the Uniting Church Assembly as appropriate.

### 1.1 UJA AND THE ELEVENTH ASSEMBLY KEY DIRECTIONS

The Eleventh Assembly Key Directions (KDs) were the policy priorities set to direct the work and programs of the Assembly in the triennium. It is the responsibility of UJA to report on how it has given life to those strategic directions.

Two of the KDs reflect significant aspects of the mission of UJA.

Key Direction A, "to commit to continuing reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the UCA and wider community", and in particular a) (i) which refers to "strengthening the capacity for good working relationships", has been a particular challenge. While there is considerable expectation for UJA to take a proactive stance on what is the most significant justice issue in this country, it has not been appropriate for UJA to respond to public policy matters relating to Indigenous Australians without taking its lead from Congress.

During the triennium, however, UJA was able to provide support in the drafting of a number of press releases, particularly as the President and General Secretary responded to the Northern Territory Intervention. We produced some resources for Church members wanting to know more about and respond to the Intervention and we worked with Congress in the production of material for the 2007 Federal Election resource. The National Director accompanied Vince Ross and John Rickard when they met with Jenny Macklin, then Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs, prior to the last

election. UJA also produced a human rights analysis of the Northern Territory Intervention which the Northern Synod appended to its submission to the Northern Territory Emergency Response Review. Generally, however, UJA has been somewhat hampered by a lack of capacity in this area of public policy.

UnitingJustice believes that it can be better placed to provide policy support to the Assembly. In 2008, on behalf of the Assembly, UJA commissioned a two-stage project aimed to assist the Church's advocacy on matters of Indigenous policy. The first stage was to map the work and ministry, including advocacy, of the Uniting Church with and for Indigenous people and communities. Such a map would provide some direction for our engagement with public policy initiatives. Our advocacy in all matters is most authentic and effective when it arises out of our life as church. Once these areas have been identified, the second stage of the project is the production of briefing papers on those areas of public policy that most relate to our mission and service activities. This research will then be made available to Congress and the Assembly so that the Church may develop responses to Federal Government policy initiatives and positions on particular issues that arise out of both our life and service and a solid understanding of public policy.

UnitingJustice is committed to continual improvement of our relationship with Congress.

Key Direction B, especially b) vi, vii and ix, has been the major focus of our work throughout the triennium. Our work on the protection and promotion of human rights, has been guided by the human rights statement adopted by the Eleventh Assembly, *Dignity in Humanity*. The statement has also guided our work on other issues related to peacemaking, including terrorism and responses to terrorism, mutual respect and understanding among people of different faiths and the fostering of equity in Australian society. KD b) vii has been particularly addressed through our work on climate change.

In fulfilment of Assembly resolution 06.08f, UJA proposed two specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely (SMART) goals to the ASC. Both related to KD 06.08 b) (vi) on human rights.

The first SMART goal was

to develop a church-based human rights education program by end of June 2008 and achieve take-up by 2-3 congregations in each Synod by end June 2009

This project is well underway but the projected timeline has been extended. At the time of writing this report, we are working on the second draft of the kit and planning to have it ready for publication by end June 2009. We hope to have trialled it by the end of 2009.

The second SMART goal was

to continue working for an end to the system of bridging visas without rights by end 2008 through lobbying and advocacy which will include meetings with the Minister for Immigration, the Shadow Minister for Immigration, significant government and opposition backbenchers and participation in the community campaign through the second half of 2007.

October 2007 saw the tenth anniversary of the introduction of bridging visas without work rights and access to Medicare (BVEs). This has been, in effect, a policy of forced destitution, which is in contravention of Australia's human rights obligations. Uniting Church members, groups and congregations have a long history of providing financial and social support for people on BVEs and we have already engaged in persistent lobbying for policy change. While we were unable to meet with the previous Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews (although we did meet with his advisers a number of times) the change of government in November 2007 provided a new opportunity. We had met with the Shadow Minister for Immigration on numerous occasions and this prepared us well for engagement with the new Rudd Government. As well as continuing our own lobbying, UJA participated in a joint lobbying action with a number of organisations including the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Refugee Council of Australia, Amnesty International Australia, A Just Australia and the Asylum Seeker Project, Hotham Mission. One of the main aims of this action was to achieve an end to this policy. UJA is very happy to report that, as a result of our sustained lobbying on this issues, in December 2008 we were invited to participate in a Department of Immigration consultation with NGOs to review draft changes to the bridging visa regime to allow work rights. We look forward to the introduction of this change during 2009.

The following report on program activities details how the Eleventh Assembly's priorities for the triennium have been taken up by UJA. It does not describe all our activities but covers work across all major program areas.

## 2. UJA PROGRAMS

UnitingJustice is committed to using the most appropriate strategies to make a positive difference in the world. Work on major issues makes use of a range of strategies including:

- the drafting of statements for the consideration of the Assembly or Assembly Standing Committee;
- direct lobbying of Government and parliamentarians (meetings and letters);
- submissions to parliamentary and federal departmental enquiries;
- media statements;
- the production of resources for church members, including position and discussion papers, pamphlets, booklets and kits, and web-based resources such as information and action sheets;
- speeches and workshops at rallies, seminars and conferences; and
- collaborative work through ecumenical alliances and partnerships with civil society organisations.

UnitingJustice determines its program work along three foundational themes which reflect something of the gospel call to participate in the fulfilment of the reign of God in our world. The major areas of work, in terms of staff time, over the triennium have been human rights and climate change.

### 2.1 TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

Jesus challenged the religious, economic and political systems and structures of his time which served to exclude and marginalise people and taught that such systems needed to serve the needs of people, especially the poor and the most vulnerable, and not the other way around. Work in this area is about critical engagement with the political and economic systems which order our societies; encouraging systems and structures that promote justice and equity and freedom.

#### 2.1.1 Human Rights

The Eleventh Assembly issued a major statement expressing our commitment to human rights. *Dignity in Humanity: Recognising Christ in every person* describes the Church's belief in the 'inherent and inalienable rights of all people to live free of persecution and violence, with access to all that is necessary for a decent life'. Consistent with the World Council of Churches long history of advocacy in support of the international human rights system, the Uniting Church affirmed its commitment to the United Nation's human rights instruments as 'a valuable framework for

assessing political, economic and social systems' and 'an important tool for peace'.

This has been a major area of work for UJA during the Eleventh Triennium. Some of this work has included

- the promotion of *Dignity in Humanity* within and beyond the Church including its distribution to all federal parliamentarians;
- the development of a human rights education kit;
- responding to Government counter-terrorism legislation which severely curtailed the right to a fair trial and freedom of speech and association;
- continuing to advocate for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees including for an end to the mandatory, prolonged and indefinite detention of asylum seekers, including children, and an end to the bridging visa regime which denied work rights to asylum seekers in the community;
- responding to the Northern Territory Indigenous Intervention, which was introduced without consultation with the communities affected and which suspended the Racial Discrimination Act;
- supporting the removal of laws which exclude same-sex de facto couples from entitlements and obligations afforded to heterosexual de-facto couples;
- advocating for improved Government engagement with the international treaty system; and
- encouraging the Government to be clear about Australia's universal position against the death penalty.

One of the election commitments of the Federal Labor Party was to hold a national public consultation into how to better protect human rights in Australia. In March 2008 the Assembly Standing Committee resolved to encourage the Government to hold the consultation and to support the development of a human rights Act for Australia. Representing the Assembly, UJA was a founding member of a national network of civil society organisations which shared these two goals – the Australian Human Rights Group (AHRG). The National Director is a member of the AHRG Steering Committee. At the time of writing, UJA was preparing a toolkit to encourage and enable UCA members, groups and agencies to participate in the national consultation and also planning a major conference on human rights in Australia in partnership with the Centre for Public and Contextual Theology (PaCT) at Charles Sturt University.

#### 2.1.2 Economic Justice

A review of Australia's taxation system is one of the many reviews instigated by the new Rudd Government. The Assembly

Secretariat, supported by UJA and UnitingCare managed the preparation of a 'whole-of-church' submission to the Treasury Review of the architecture of Australia's tax and transfer system. 'Tax and transfer system' refers to the collection of taxes by government and its redistribution for the public good. It was the first time in many years that the Assembly and UJA has engaged in any serious work on this issue. The submission reaffirmed a long-standing position of the Uniting Church (*Economic Justice – the Equitable Distribution of Wealth*, Assembly Social Responsibility and Justice Committee, adopted for church-wide distribution and study by the 1988 Assembly) that

Taxation is necessary if the government is to fulfil its responsibilities in provision of services ensuring that all people in the community have their basic needs met (a matter of human rights) and correcting the inequitable distribution of income and access to goods, services and resources which results when distribution is left to the private sector and market mechanisms.

It is how people contribute, according to their means, to the well-being of the whole community, through redistribution and the provision of goods and services.

In the submission the Uniting Church committed itself to advocating for a tax and transfer system that supported government expenditure on service provision to the disadvantaged and vulnerable to ensure they have a decent life and can access the services they need to facilitate economic and social participation. It highlighted the importance of a nation as prosperous as Australia having an adequate income support system that enables all Australians to access the components of a decent life – adequate and appropriate food, clothing and healthcare; safe and secure housing; meaningful work, education, rest and enjoyment; and the opportunity to participate in and contribute to communities. The tax system should also be structured to encourage sustainable and ethical economic activity, facilitate individual and community wellbeing and inclusion and discourage activities that exacerbate social and economic disadvantage and vulnerability.

UnitingJustice will continue to work with UnitingCare Australia throughout the ongoing consultation process.

### **2.1.3 A Vibrant, Open and Participatory Democracy**

In 1977 the inaugural Assembly's *Statement to the Nation* committed the Uniting Church to engage in public life and affirmed the Church's

... eagerness to uphold basic Christian values and principles, such as the importance of every human being, the need for integrity in public life, the proclamation of truth and justice, the rights for each citizen to participate in decision-making in the community, religious liberty and personal dignity, and a concern for the welfare of the whole human race.

The Uniting Church has therefore a long interest in matters related to democracy and participatory citizenship. UnitingJustice is committed to supporting and encouraging church members to be active in Australia's political life.

In 2006 the Government made changes to the electoral laws which impacted unfairly on the ability of already marginalised people to participate in the political process by casting their vote at Federal elections. UnitingJustice prepared a submission and gave evidence to the Federal Committee which inquires in to conduct of a federal election, recommending that these changes be repealed.

Voting is one of the major privileges of citizenship and UJA is committed to supporting Church members to cast a prayerful, thoughtful and informed vote at election time.

In 2007, as it does every three years, UJA managed the production of the Assembly's election briefing resource, this time with the theme *Growing a Nation of Hope: your faith, your vote, your voice*.

*Growing a Nation of Hope* was developed to encourage Uniting Church members to consider their vote in light of the vision and values of the gospel of hope, that is, the approaches to policy which would be necessary for growing a nation grounded in hope: the hope for justice; for peace; for freedom from fear; for communities where people feel secure, respected and included; for a society where all people are able to contribute to the common good; and where those who are struggling are cared for in a positive way and treated with dignity and respect. The suite of resources included a printed booklet and A5 'hot issues' briefs, and web-based resources such as in-depth issues papers. They were the result of collaboration and co-operation across the Synods and Assembly agencies. The material was non-partisan and covered some of the most important areas of public policy in Australia including justice for Indigenous Australians, the state of our democracy, work justice, issues relating to rural and regional Australia, education, asylum seekers and refugees, multiculturalism, issues of peace and war, climate change, foreign aid and development and poverty in Australia. The

booklet and Hot Issues Briefs were reprinted twice, a total of 7500 copies of each being distributed to Uniting Church members and congregations around the country. A number of congregations used the materials, especially the Hot Issues Briefs, as materials for group study and public forums.

In the lead-up to the election in August 2007 the National Director met with a number of Federal Senators and MPs and senior political advisers across all political parties to talk with them about the policy priorities that were described in *Growing a Nation of Hope*. UnitingJustice also supported pre-election candidate forums held at Gosford Uniting Church (the National Director also made an introductory speech) and Paddington Uniting Church (the National Director chaired the forum and accompanied the Minister of the congregation to a follow-up meeting with the local member, Malcolm Turnbull).

#### **2.1.4 Meeting the Prime Minister of Australia**

On 21 October 2008, the President Rev. Gregor Henderson and the General Secretary, Rev. Terence Corkin, accompanied by the UJA National Director, met with the Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd MP. It was an open, frank and encouraging meeting, which covered a range of issues including Australia's aid budget, human rights protections in Australia and the proposed national human rights consultation, the death penalty and climate change.

#### **2.1.5 The Role of Religion in Australia's Political Life**

Interest in the relationship between religion and politics continued throughout the triennium and UJA continued to offer a voice into the public forum speaking about the call of Christians and the mission of the Uniting Church to engage in public life, speaking out for such values as compassion, justice, generosity, forgiveness and reconciliation and focussing attention on issues of injustice, discrimination, poverty, violence and greed.

The National Director has delivered a number of speeches on the role of religion in politics for conferences and seminars including at such events as the 2007 Common Dreams Conference in Sydney, Politics in the Pub in Sydney in 2007, the Australian Secular Association Annual Conference in 2008, the 2008 conference on church, state and media at St Ninian's Uniting Church, Canberra, and a NSW Greens Party Forum at NSW Parliament House in 2008.

## **2.2 RECONCILING HUMANITY**

The work of UJA is grounded in the hope that Christians have for the reconciliation of all creation with God. In the light of Jesus' call to work for peace, we seek an end to violence and division so that all people can live together, free from violence, prejudice and fear.

### **2.2.1 Uniting for Peace**

The Tenth Assembly issued a major statement expressing our commitments to the Decade to Overcome Violence and to working for peace and genuine security. *Uniting for Peace* outlines the Uniting Church's belief that the 'ownership, use, or threatened use of nuclear, chemical and/or biological weapons is evil' and that 'genuine global security will only be achieved by working for an end to the trade in illegal weapons and the arms trade, preventing the proliferation of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction, and requiring progressive disarmament of all nations'.

UnitingJustice has continued its work in the area on nuclear disarmament. This work has included representing the Assembly in its membership of ICAN, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, a recent submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament and support for media releases on the occasion of the International Day of Peace.

The National Director has given a number of speeches and workshops on issues of war and violence, including a presentation in March 2007 entitled *Complicity, Confession and Reconciliation Hope: the Uniting Church in Australia and the confession of non-violent faith* at a seminar on the theology of non-violence with Father John Dear SJ and Donna Mulhearn.

### **2.2.2 Citizenship and National Identity**

In November 2006, UJA made a submission expressing concern about the proposed changes to Australian Citizenship Test. The changes would function to incorrectly assign many of the positive benefits and social cohesion that develop from community life to the institution of Australian Citizenship. Citizenship is an institution of the state designating certain democratic rights and responsibilities. The Government proceeded with its plans despite considerable community opposition.

In March 2008, the Assembly Standing Committee determined to oppose the Australian Citizenship Test, which sought to assess a person's worthiness of citizenship according to their willingness to take on a set of arbitrary, inadequate and

ill-defined 'Australian values' and remember obscure and trivial matters of Australian history. The General Secretary wrote to the Minister for Immigration and Elenie Poulos and Tony Floyd, Multicultural and Cross-cultural Ministry National Director, met with the Minister in May 2008 to discuss the Church's position. (We also spoke with the Minister of other concerns regarding immigration and refugee issues.) UnitingJustice consequently made a submission and presented evidence to the Government's Citizenship Test Review Committee. While the Government refused to accept all the Review Committee's recommendations (which were consistent with our own), the test and its administration will be greatly improved.

### 2.3 CHERISHING CREATION

God, as the Creator of the universe, calls us into a special relationship with the creation – a relationship of mutuality and interdependence. The natural environment is, however, not merely a resource for the benefit of human beings but has intrinsic value as part of God's good creation. The planet is a sacred gift from God to us and to future generations and work in this area focuses on how we can tread more lightly on the planet, cherishing it rather than plundering and destroying.

#### 2.3.1 Climate Change

In November 2006, the Assembly Standing Committee adopted a statement on climate change, *For the Sake of the Planet and all Its People* and resolved to encourage UCA members, groups and agencies to, among other things, to model ways of living and working that minimise the production of greenhouse gas emissions and advocate for government to implement policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources.

*For the Sake of the Planet and all Its People* included the following statement:

The Uniting Church regards climate change as a serious threat to the future and integrity of life on earth... the threat posed by climate change therefore challenges the way we live in a fundamental way. If we are to meet and overcome the challenge we must think creatively about the organisation of our social and economic institutions, our relationship with each other across national and cultural boundaries and our relationship with the environment.

UnitingJustice, working together with synods and other Assembly agencies, and in collaboration with environmental groups as appropriate, has been advocating for the development of national policies which seriously and urgently address climate

change. Through submissions to government inquiries, media releases, letters to and meetings with parliamentarians we have advocated for the setting of significant targets for cuts to our greenhouse gas emissions, strong commitments to the development of clean and renewable energy and sufficient support for low-income and disadvantaged households in the face of increased energy prices. In collaboration with Uniting World, we have continued to work in solidarity with our church and ecumenical partners in the Pacific to bring the dire situation of many low-lying Pacific nations to the attention of Government and the community.

UnitingJustice has also been working to support the Assembly as it seeks to reduce its own contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. We have had a carbon audit of the Assembly operations and are currently producing an environmental management strategy for the Assembly.

## 3. WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

### 3.1 NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

UnitingJustice is a keen contributor to the life and work of the NCCA. In March 2009, the National Director took on the role of Chairperson of the Christian World Service Commission (the Commission of Act for Peace) after a term as Deputy Chairperson. Elenie is also a member of the NCCA Social Justice Network and has supported the NCCA General Secretary on the National Civil Society organising committee.

### 3.2 WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

In February 2006 the National Director attended the WCC Ninth Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil as a UCA delegate. She was invited to serve as Rapporteur for a series of workshops entitled 'Public Life, Religion and Politics: Ambiguities and Possibilities' as part of the Ecumenical Conversation program.

Following the Assembly, Elenie was elected to serve on one of the WCC's four advisory bodies, the Commission of the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA). She is the only Australian representative. At the first meeting of the Commission in Geneva in September 2007 she was elected as Moderator of the CCIA Working Group on Global Advocacy. At the time of writing, Elenie is preparing to attend the second meeting of the Commission in Cuba. The theme for the meeting is the relationship between politics and the economy in a time of global financial crisis.

### 3.3 AUSTRALIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

UnitingJustice is committed to collaborating with Australian civil society organisations (including inter-faith

networks, environmental groups, unions, professional organisations, community groups, issues-based networks, justice advocacy groups etc) which seek the same goals for a just, peaceful and sustainable society.

It has become increasingly important, especially when lobbying for public policy change, that Australian civil society organisations are able to work together. A strong presentation from a variety of different groups can make a significant impression on Government. The Uniting Church also has an ongoing commitment to participating in Australian life as one organisation within a diverse civil society and to working to uphold and strengthen civil society. To these ends, UJA continues to support the work of the NCCA on the annual National Civil Society Dialogue; we represent the Uniting Church as a founding member of the Australian Human Rights Group and are a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN); we participate in an annual joint lobbying activity with refugee and asylum seeker advocacy groups; we maintain memberships of a number of environmental networks including the Climate Action Network of Australia (CANAN); and work closely with a number of individual organisations such as Amnesty International Australia, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Climate Institute, the Refugee Council of Australia, A Just Australia and the Australian Lawyers Alliance. UnitingJustice has also developed relationships with a number of university-based centres including the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (University of Sydney), the Griffith University Multi-Faith Centre and the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (Macquarie University).

#### **4. STAFFING AND RESOURCING**

UnitingJustice received a major boost in its capacity when the role of Research Officer was increased from 0.6 to full-time in January 2007 (including some time allocated to the work of Covenanting at the Assembly). The development of Uniting Faith and Justice as a team within the Assembly has also assisted UJA, opening up an avenue for more focussed project collaboration across different areas of the Assembly's work.

Despite these improvements, UJA's two staff members do struggle to meet the demands and the expectations placed on UJA. Difficult decisions about priorities continue to be made, often leaving significant work on hold and major issues unaddressed. For example, we have been unable to progress the work in the area of peacemaking (especially militarism,

disarmament and defence funding) as was intended.

Alicia Pearce joined UJA in May 2005 as Research Officer working three days a week and moved to full-time in January 2007. She left to take on a more senior position in political advocacy in December 2007. Alicia's contribution to the life and work of UJA was exceptional and we are grateful for her outstanding skills in policy critique, research and writing, her understanding of Australia's political system, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, her heart for justice, and her passionate commitment to and involvement in all aspects of the work.

In March 2008 Jennifer Whyte began work as the UJA Research Officer. Jennifer has a research background in international studies and political economy and interests which include human rights, economic equity and environmental justice. Jennifer has excellent research, writing, communication and interpersonal skills and has developed outstanding website skills as well! She has made a most valuable contribution to the work of UJA.

#### **5. COMMUNICATION**

UJA is committed to communicating with members of the church and speaking into the public forum about the work of the Church on issues of justice and peace. Our UnitingJustice-news subscription email list has over 200 members. We contribute a regular update on our work in *Assembly Update*, and take whatever opportunity we can to communicate through stories in synod newspapers and magazines.

With the invaluable support of the Assembly Communications Unit, in 2008 UJA launched its completely redesigned and redeveloped website. The website is our primary means of communication within and beyond the Church. It is updated almost daily to keep people informed about all our work. The new website provides easy access to all UJA resources, all Assembly resolutions and statements on matters of justice, peace and the environment and news and information from around the Church. With advice from the Australian Human Rights Commission, we are continuing to update the site for better accessibility for people whose vision is impaired.

As well as the workshops and speeches related to particular issues and program activities already noted, the National Director has had a number of opportunities to speak more generally about the Church's commitment to justice and peace. These opportunities have included the following:

- speaker at the Walk Against Warming Rally, Martin Place, Sydney, 2006
- speech at the National Civil Society Dialogue, Parliament House Canberra, 2006
- workshop about the Uniting Church and its justice and environmental work, NSW HSC Studies of Religion teachers in the Catholic diocese of Broken Bay, 2007
- speech on the relationship between ecology and social justice, Centre for Progressive Religious Thought, Canberra, 2008
- speech on the relationship between economics and climate change, 'A Moral Climate? Faith Encounters Global Warming' conference, UTC/PaCT, 2008
- annual guest speaker, Santa Sabina College, Sydney, Year 9 Social Justice Program
- speech on the recovery of connection and compassion, 'Women, Faith and a Culture of Peace', Asia-Pacific Interfaith Symposium, Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University, 2008
- workshop on the Uniting Church and its advocacy for social justice, 'One Humanity, Many Faiths', Interfaith Summit, Multi-Faith Centre, Griffith University, 2009
- invited preacher and presenter at a number of UCA congregations including Carlingford, Mortdale and Peakhurst, Revesby, Gordon (World Day of Prayer 2007), Pitt Street (guest leader at Youth Camp 2006), Balgowlah and Maroubra Junction
- appearances on Sunday Nights with John Cleary, ABC Local Radio

## 6. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The UJA Reference Committee has identified some possible priorities for UJA over the next three years. The strategic directions that will determine UJA's priorities will be set by the Twelfth Assembly, but it may be helpful to the Assembly to offer here some ideas about what some of the key justice issues might be over the next few years.

Some of the areas of work which we believe will continue to reflect significant issues in our current context include:

- human progress and wellbeing
- economic justice (global economics, Australian taxation reform, work justice)
- the environment (climate change)
- peacemaking and overcoming violence (nuclear disarmament, militarism)

- human rights (education, protections in Australia, Australian interaction with the international treaty system)

A proposal in these areas will be brought for the consideration of the 12th Assembly.

UnitingJustice will continue its commitment to work for social and ecological justice and peace. We will continue to seek change in national policy and public discourse, and to encourage the examination of core value systems. We continue to engage in this prophetic mission believing that working for justice and peace is central to faithful discipleship. UnitingJustice seeks to serve God believing that Christianity which is true to the Bible, true to the person and being of Jesus Christ and true to the fullest experiences of our humanity must be a source of great hope in our society. It can remind us that we are capable of something better and that if we work together we can build a world where nature is respected and all humanity flourishes in dignity and hope.

**Ms Janeen Barker**  
**Chairperson**

**Rev. Elenie Poulos**  
**National Director**