

Walking Together Action Plan 2021-2023

PROPOSAL

On the recommendation of the Synod Standing Committee
the Synod

- (i) Request that the Synod, in discernment groups, review and provide feedback on the draft Walking Together Action Plan 2021 - 2023
- (ii) Note that feedback will be reviewed by the Synod Standing Committee
- (iii) A revised proposal will be presented to the August meeting for discernment and decision.



Walking

together

ACTION PLAN 2021-2023

A plan for the Synod of NSW and the ACT to support First Peoples in NSW and the ACT



Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

Walking Together Action Plan 2021-2023

A plan for the Synod of NSW and the ACT to support First Peoples in NSW and the ACT

Background

The Covenant Statement 1994

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) has a long history of engagement with First Peoples. In the early decades many Christian denominations unfortunately contributed to some devastating impacts on First Peoples, and these are eloquently highlighted in the UCA's Covenant Statement of 1994.

In more recent decades the UCA has made concerted efforts to address past wrongs and provide positive support for First Peoples, the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress ("UAICC") in 1985, and the **Covenant Statement of 1994** being examples of this. The Assembly has also recognised the unceded sovereignty of First Peoples in Australia, to the extent that the Church can within Australia's Constitutional and legal framework, and has acknowledged the right of First Peoples to self-determine their own futures within relevant geographic, cultural and legal frameworks.

The *Covenant Statement 1994* includes the following paragraphs:

"We recognise, as was declared in the Assembly's 1988 Statement to the Nation, that the Australian people and this church continue to benefit from the injustices done to your people over the past two centuries. We believe it is right for the Uniting Church to make reparations to you for land taken from your people and used by the churches which became part of this church."

.....

"It is our desire to work in solidarity with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress for the advancement of God's kingdom of justice and righteousness in this land, and we reaffirm the commitment made at the 1985 Assembly to do so. We want to bring discrimination to an end, so that your people are no longer gaoled in disproportionate numbers, and so that equal housing, health, education and employment opportunities are available for your people as for ours. To that end we commit ourselves to work with you towards national and state policy changes. We commit ourselves to build understanding between your people and ours in every locality, and to build relationships which respect the right of your people to self-determination in the church and in the wider society."

The full Covenant Statement, and the UAICC response, can be viewed at:

<https://assembly.uca.org.au/covenanting>

The Synod of NSW and the ACT (“the Synod”) acknowledges that there is significant and ongoing disadvantage impacting First Peoples’ communities throughout NSW and the ACT, as evidenced through the socio-economic indicators highlighted in annual “Close the Gap” reports by the Australian Government. The Synod acknowledges its mission to assist vulnerable and disadvantage people, and to advocate for the vulnerable and the oppressed.

The Synod continues to recognise and support the UAICC in NSW and the ACT, through financial and administrative support for a number of active Aboriginal Ministries. The Synod will continue to collaborate with UAICC representatives to seek their advice in relation to First Peoples Ministry and how the Uniting Church in NSW and the ACT can ensure its Ministries incorporate First People’s theology and are inclusive of Aboriginal and Islander members of the Church.

The 2019 Synod resolution – Treaty, Makarratta, Statement from the Heart

In 2019, a proposal – “Treaty, Makarratta, Statement from the Heart” (“the Makarratta Proposal”) - was put to, and approved by, the Synod of NSW and the ACT.

The passing of the Makarratta Proposal resulted in the Synod’s commitment to the following recommendations:

- “1. To commend the Assembly’s Walking Together resources (see <https://assembly.uca.org.au/walkingtogether>) to Presbyteries, Congregations, Parish Missions, Schools and other UCA organisations for study and consideration,
2. To listen to the 2017 Statement from the Heart made at Uluru, recognising that it provides a consensus position of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across Australia, who have drawn on twelve regional dialogues amongst First Peoples, expressing the preferred pathway towards reconciliation.
3. To commend the 2017 Statement from the Heart to congregations, presbyteries and agencies for prayerful engagement and discussion, noting especially the resource prepared by the Anglican Board of Mission, “A Voice in the Wilderness: listening to the Statement to the Heart” (2018),
4. To urge the NSW State Government and the ACT Government each to establish a process of agreement-making between those governments and First Nations, and provide a means for truth-telling about the history of Australia’s First Peoples.
5. To urge the Commonwealth Government to implement (a) the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution to empower First Peoples to have a greater say in policy and legislation which governs their affairs and, in so doing, improve their autonomy and prosperity; and (b) the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations, and provide a means for truth-telling about the history of Australia’s First Peoples. “

This Walking Together Action Plan includes actions and initiatives that will support the Synod’s continuing work in the implementation of the Makarratta Proposal and related Synod resolution.

Purpose

As an ongoing commitment to the Covenant Statement 1994, and to assist in actioning the Synod's Makarratta Proposal of 2019, this Walking Together Action Plan ("WTAP") is designed to identify practical ways that the Synod can continue to support the UAICC in NSW/ACT and to engage in other Ministry and Mission activities that will help to address socio-economic disadvantage impacting First Peoples' communities and individuals in NSW and the ACT.

The WTAP seeks to define goals to be achieved over a 2 year period, that are measurable¹ and achievable, with a view to reviewing outcomes at the end of the 2 year period and developing a new WTAP for the following 2 year period.

Governance and Responsibility

The Synod General Secretary, and the Synod Secretariat, have primary responsibility for the implementation of the WTAP, working collaboratively with the various branches of the Synod, as well as Presbyteries.

The WTAP is structured in a way that indicates which area of the Synod has the lead responsibility for each goal or action. Each goal/action has been developed in consultation with the leadership of the relevant area of the Synod to ensure that there is consensus that each goal/action is realistic, measurable and achievable.

The Synod acknowledges that addressing entrenched disadvantage, particularly disadvantage that has existed for and been reinforced over many generations, will take longer than 2 years. We do not expect to change the world in 24 months, but rather to effect some positive change over the initial period of the WTAP and to set a path for a longer-term commitment of ongoing action. The intention is to move forward, and to keep moving forward.

The Synod also seeks to adopt an approach of "under-promise and over-deliver" as we know that for too long First Peoples have been made promises by Governments and other organisations that have not been met, leaving those communities feeling hurt, betrayed, and sceptical of the genuineness of any future relationships with those organisations. Many of the actions and goals outlined in the WTAP are in this sense "minimum" expected outcomes.

¹ Implementation of some actions, for example those implemented at a congregation level, may be difficult to accurately measure as feedback will be sought via an annual survey, and the survey will rely on voluntary responses.

Walking Together Action Plan 2021-2023 (DRAFT ONLY)

Synod

Goal	Measurable outcome
To actively promote awareness of the UCA's Covenant Statement 1994, and encourage Covenant based initiatives across the Synod of NSW and the ACT.	Regular messaging promoting the Covenant Statement (e.g. via Insights, Synod Website, and other communications).
To commend the Assembly's Walking Together resources (see https://assembly.uca.org.au/walkingtogether) to Presbyteries, Congregations, Parish Missions, Schools and other UCA organisations for study and consideration,	The Assembly's Walking Together resources will be regularly promoted through Synod communications such as Insights Magazine, and via the Synod's First Nations Resources webpage, as well as through engagement with Presbyteries and congregations to promote Covenanting initiatives.
To commend the 2017 Statement from the Heart to congregations, presbyteries and agencies for prayerful engagement and discussion, noting especially the resource prepared by the Anglican Board of Mission, "A Voice in the Wilderness: listening to the Statement to the Heart" (2018),	The <i>Statement from the Heart</i> text, and the "A voice in the Wilderness: Listening to the Statement from the Heart" resource to be available via the First Nations Resources webpage on the Synod website, and these resources actively promoted across the Synod.
To continue to provide financial and administrative support for 3 operational UAICC Ministry Centres	Budget allocation to support wages of Ministry agent and operational costs of the Ministry Centre
To provide practical support to UAICC Ministry Centres and faith communities in NSW/ACT via access to advice and expertise from the Synod Office.	Number of requests for assistance and assistance provided.
To ensure that all Synod staff, at least 50% of Presbytery staff, and at least 200 congregation members complete Cultural Capability training within 2 years.	Utilise Synod LMS data to measure uptake and completion of online Aboriginal Cultural Capability modules.
All Synod Staff meetings to include Acknowledgement of Country. All Synod Standing Committee Meetings to include Acknowledgement of Country.	Agenda and Minutes of relevant Synod meetings reflect that an Acknowledgement of Country occurred.
Adopting a target of a minimum of 3% Aboriginal employees across the Synod staff cohort	Synod employment data reflects minimum 3% Aboriginal employment. All Synod positions advertised in Koori Mail.
Offer 2 traineeship opportunities with a view to provision of full time employment.	2 trainees employed, with view to ongoing employment, in Media and Property areas.

<p>Adopting a target of ensuring that a minimum of 3% of the Synod's procurement spend is supporting Aboriginal businesses/suppliers.</p>	<p>Synod procurement data reflects minimum of 3% procurement spend on Aboriginal businesses/suppliers.</p>
<p>Supporting advocacy campaigns in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Statement from the Heart; • The ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal people in the NSW/ACT justice systems, the full and effective implementation of the 339 RCIADIC recommendations; and, • The need for urgent and effective action to "Close the Gap". 	<p>Advocacy campaigns completed in relation to each area (email/letter writing, etc)</p>
<p>Actively looking for opportunities to utilise Church properties to support Aboriginal Ministry and/or community program initiatives – making space available for Ministry, community meetings, Elder gatherings, etc.</p>	<p>The number of Church properties utilised by Aboriginal groups.</p>
<p>Supporting Presbyteries and congregations to engage in practical activities to support local Aboriginal Communities and to address disadvantage (Food banks, Op shops, Men's Sheds, etc)</p>	<p>The number of practical activities undertaken that engage Aboriginal people and communities (data obtained via survey).</p>
<p>Proceeds of Sale Policy – ensuring that minimum of 3% of Proceeds of Sale ("PoS") are placed into a fund for use to support UAICC Ministry and Mission activities, and to support other Church led mission activities specifically targeted towards addressing disadvantage in First Nations communities in NSW/ACT.</p>	<p>PoS Policy updated to reflect that a minimum of 3% of Proceeds of Sale are to be utilised for UAICC Ministry and Mission activity or to support other Synod led initiatives specifically targeted towards addressing disadvantage in Aboriginal communities in NSW/ACT.</p>
<p>Review and refresh of Scholarships available for First People to undertake Theological Study</p>	<p>Scholarships reviewed and refreshed. Advertise Scholarship opportunities in Koori Mail and via UAICC network.</p>
<p>An annual WTAP Survey (electronic) conducted by the Synod Office to seek responses and data from Presbyteries and Congregations, to assist in the reporting of WTAP outcomes.</p>	<p>A survey conducted at 12 and 24 month points to provide the opportunity for Presbyteries and Congregations to highlight successful outcomes achieved</p>

UME	
Goal	Measurable outcome
At least 2 Scholarships available annually for First People to undertake Theological Study	At least 2 Scholarships advertised annually.
Creation of clear study pathways to enable and equip First People to undertake roles in Lay Ministry, Pastor and Minister of the Word/Deacon.	Study pathways created/clarified and information available in to prospective students/applicants.
Inclusion of First Peoples' history and current issues in Formation studies.	Formation studies include subject/topic on First Peoples.
Pulse initiatives to engage with young people from UAICC Ministry Centres and other First Nations youth.	Pulse initiatives demonstrating engagement with First Nations young people.
National Church Life Survey to capture data about local engagement with Aboriginal people and communities.	NCLS captures data relating to local engagement of Congregations and parish missions with Aboriginal people/communities.
UME to provide a brief Annual Report to the General Secretary on achievements in relevant WTAP goal areas (for use in reporting overall WTAP achievements)	UME provides an annual report of achievements under relevant WTAP goal areas.
Presbytery	
Goal	Measurable outcome
Undertaking an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of Presbytery meetings.	Agendas/Minutes of Presbytery Meetings reflect that an Acknowledgement of Country occurred.
Presbytery staff to undertake Aboriginal cultural learning (for example via on-line Aboriginal Cultural Capability modules provided by the Synod)	Presbytery staff employment records (or LMS records) reflect that Presbytery staff have completed Aboriginal Cultural Capability training
Supporting UAICC Ministry Centres within Presbytery boundaries via regular engagement and the development of collaborative relationships.	Feedback from UAICC Ministry Centres within the presbytery Boundary. Presbytery records of engagement and evidence of collaborative activities.
Supporting advocacy initiatives for First People's issues led by the Synod.	Advocacy issues promoted to congregations. Number of people engaging in advocacy initiatives (e.g. number of email advocacy submissions tracked)

Congregations	
Goal	Measurable outcome
Undertaking an Acknowledgement of Country at the start of Services and Church meetings	AoC reflected in Service documents and in Agenda/Minutes of Church meetings.
Congregation members to undertake Aboriginal cultural learning (for example, via learning resources provided by the Synod).	Synod LMS data reflecting completion rates.
Supporting any local UAICC Ministry Centres via regular engagement and developing collaborative relationships.	Engagement captured in Presbytery reports, and/or via annual Survey results.
Supporting advocacy initiatives for First People's issues led by the Moderator.	Advocacy initiatives supported by congregations. Number of people engaging in advocacy initiatives (e.g. number of email advocacy submissions tracked)
Assisting with fundraising initiatives for UAICC Ministry Centres and/or mission-based projects that support local Aboriginal communities (i.e.. caring for vulnerable/disadvantaged people and communities)	Minutes from Congregation Meetings and/or Church Council meetings reflect initiatives/outcomes. Annual survey Results.
Assisting with fundraising initiatives for UAICC Ministry Centres and/or mission-based projects that support local Aboriginal communities (i.e. caring for vulnerable/disadvantaged people and communities)	Congregations report on fundraising initiatives supported, funds raised and outcomes.

Walking
together
ACTION PLAN 2021-2023



Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT