



COVENANTING

NINTH ASSEMBLY, UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Resolution 00.11

00.11 The report was presented by Peter Lewis (National Director), Shayne Blackman (National Administrator, UAICC), John Brown, Sue Blacklock, Ivan Copley and Vince Ross.

The Assembly resolved:

00.11.01 to receive the report;

00.11.02 **Towards Reconciliation**

noting that during 2000 the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has presented to the nation documents for reconciliation:

- (a) to endorse the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation* and commend it to all councils of the church for study and endorsement as a further step in covenanting and reconciliation;
- (b) to endorse the idea of a legislated process of negotiation between the leaders of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Australia towards a formal agreement (treaty) dealing with the “unfinished business” of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation’s process for reconciliation;

00.11.03 **Action to advance Covenanting and Reconciliation**

- (a) to urge Assembly agencies, Synods, Presbyteries and Congregations to study the Roadmap for Reconciliation, and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress suggested Strategies for Reconciliation (see section 6.3 of the report) and to report extensively to the church;
- (b)
 - (i) to implement, in partnership with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, an *Indigenous Employment Program* whereby at least 2% of the staff of the Assembly and Assembly agencies are Indigenous people;
 - (ii) to commit to maintaining and developing programs which provide young people with cross-cultural experience of each others’ communities and extend to all people of all ages as the opportunity arises;
- (c)
 - (i) to request each Synod to establish a process for monitoring the progress of the UAICC *Strategies for Reconciliation*, including within their schools and community service agencies, and to report annually to the UAICC, the Assembly standing Committee, and the Covenanting Reference Committee on their progress;
 - (ii) to request each Synod to implement, in partnership with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, an *Indigenous Employment Program* whereby at least 2% of the staff of the Synod and Synod agencies are Indigenous people;

00.11.04 **Ministerial education**

to request the Ministerial Education Commission, in partnership with Covenanting and the UAICC, to:

- (a) facilitate the further development of cross-cultural awareness and anti-racism programs as compulsory elements for candidates for the specified ministries of the Uniting Church and as church-wide continuing education programs for ministers in placement;
- (b) facilitate the development of theologically based community development training programs to support the ministry of the UAICC;
- (c) facilitate the development and recognition of Internships with the UAICC as field education and licensed year placements during education for ministry courses;



- (d) continue to foster, support and encourage the ongoing development of Indigenous theology and its contextualisation in each state;
- (e) organise a theological educators' conference to explore the above issues with the aim of developing a process for implementation;

00.11.05 **Government action**

to call on the Federal Government to:

- (a) adopt the *Australian Declaration Towards Reconciliation*;
- (b) support and implement the *Roadmap for Reconciliation* in consultation with Indigenous organisations and communities;
- (c) support and provide funding on request for *Reconciliation Australia*;
- (d) establish a consultative body consisting of equal numbers of Indigenous leaders and non-Indigenous leaders which will create a legislated framework agreement (treaty) which will:
 - (i) provide constitutional acknowledgment and recognition of the status of Indigenous peoples of Australia as 'First Peoples';
 - (ii) provide constitutional recognition of Indigenous rights and remove aspects of the constitution which can be used to discriminate on the basis of race;
 - (iii) provide constitutional protection to the Racial Discrimination Act;
 - (iv) provide for a process of Indigenous representation in the parliament;
 - (v) affirm and recognise native title, land rights, customary law and Indigenous heritage protection;
 - (vi) respect the right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples within the life of the nation;
 - (vii) provide the foundation for the co-existence of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of land ownership;
 - (viii) acknowledge traditional Indigenous economies and Indigenous rights as the basis for economic empowerment of Indigenous communities;
- (e) ensure that all Australian laws, policies and practices which impact on Indigenous people meet the requirements of relevant UN conventions to which Australia is a signatory;
- (f) apologise to Indigenous Australians for the negative consequences of all Australian governments' past laws, policies and practices that led to the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and establish a reparation and compensation tribunal for those negatively affected;

00.11.06 **Australia's national day**

- (a) to reaffirm the Assembly policy of moving Australia's national day away from the 26th January;
- (b) to ask Covenanting, in consultation with UAICC, to produce study guides in support of the Reconciliation process which include the Christian understanding of reconciliation between God and God's creation, including the reconciling work of Jesus Christ. And that these materials be in a suitable cross-cultural form and accessible to people of all ages including children;
- (c) to affirm the value of face to face meetings and of sharing stories in fostering reconciliation;
- (d) to apply to its own life the recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* Report;

00.11.07 **Appreciation of John Brown**

to place on record its appreciation of the contribution that the Rev. Dr John Brown has made to the life of the church in his foundational work on Covenanting and Reconciliation.

He was the first Covenanting Coordinator and later National Director for Covenanting for the Assembly and was, and continues to be, one of the nation's key leaders in the area of reconciliation. John continues his work in covenanting and reconciliation as a volunteer. He is currently the Co-Chair of the National Sorry Day Committee and assisted in the organisation of the Myall Creek Massacre memorial. John's contribution to reconciliation is an example of how the church can engage, challenge and provide a national vision.

We give thanks for the work of Rev. Dr John Brown.