



## SYNOD 2023 REPORT

### COVENANTING COMMISSION

#### MEMBERSHIP

Co- chair	Rev Robert Jetta
Moderator & Co-chair	Suzy Thomas
General Secretary	Rev Dr Andrew Williams
Member	Dr Richard Smith
Member	Rev Dr Alison Longworth
Member	Rev Mervyn Anderson
Member	Ron Coster
Member	Gwen Coster
Appointed by General Secretary	Geoffrey Bice (until April 2023)
Member	Rev Mitchell Garlett
Member	Jennifer Turner
Member	Daphne Bennell

#### REPORT

##### “A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE”

The Covenanting Commission continues to work toward a vision of a Christian community for everyone, walking together as First and Second Peoples, creating and strengthening relationships between the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (WA) and the broader WA Synod. The Covenant calls us to work together for the sake of greater understanding, justice and flourishing of First Peoples.

## **Congress Update**

The ministry of Congress continues through the Coolbellup and Waroona congregations and the group worshipping in the Tammin Uniting Church. There are continuing challenges for Congress in WA with significant responsibilities falling to a few key people but we continue to look for fresh ways to sustain our people and ministry. Support from National Congress has been welcome and we are keen to work together to strengthen our governance and review staffing support. We enjoyed connecting with other members of Congress from around the country as we gathered for our national conference in Darwin. A continuing lack of connection to Beananging Kwuurt Institute (BKI) remains an issue. Congress in WA still does not currently have any direct involvement with BKI and this remains a point of concern for us.

## **Commission Meetings**

Two of the scheduled Commission meetings have been held at Waroona and included sharing time over lunch at the Lake. This has been valuable in enabling Congress members from Waroona to attend the meeting. It is planned that this will continue and hopefully include a visit to Tammin and possibly Quairading.

## **Covenanting Action Plan**

The Commission has been actively supporting the work of the Covenanting Action Plan Working Group established by the Synod Standing Committee in line with the decision of the previous meeting of the Synod.

## **Congregational Covenanting Guide**

The Commission would like to remind people of the Congregational Covenanting Guide that is available for use on the Uniting Church WA website. The Commission developed the resource to provide a simple list of suggested actions congregations can take to progress their Covenanting journey.

## **Stolen Generations**

The Covenanting Commission is connected to both Bringing Them Home WA and the WA Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation whom we support to coordinate the annual Sorry Day events and other collective healing events and activities for Stolen Generations survivors and their families. Sorry Day was held at Moort-ak Waadiny (Wellington Square) and broadcast online for schools and other groups to engage with. The event was followed

up with a protest at Parliament House to call for a response to a petition for Stolen Generations survivors to receive compensation, as has occurred in most other jurisdictions.

### **Voice Referendum**

The Commission is keen to build awareness and understanding of the benefits of the Voice to Parliament in preparation for the referendum that will be occurring later in 2023. The Uniting Church in Australia and the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress have both been very clear in their support for the Voice to Parliament and we encourage everyone to utilise the resources provided at [www.uniting.church/voice](http://www.uniting.church/voice)

### **Staff Support**

We were disappointed to lose the staff support allocated to the Commission earlier this year. As a result, the capacity of the Commission is now stretched. Alison Longworth has acted as Convenor and Richard Smith is taking minutes until the meeting of Synod to facilitate meetings.

### **Beananing Kwuurt Institute (BKI)**

The Covenanting Commission is very concerned about the long-standing tension between the Regional WA Congress, National Congress and the WA Synod regarding Beananing Kwuurt Institute. We are urging the Standing Committee to make this situation a priority and work towards a resolution.

### **Other Issues**

The Covenanting Commission takes a keen interest in a range of other issues affecting First Peoples across WA. This included:

- The Commission supports Social Reinvestment WA who are continuing to campaign to reduce Aboriginal incarceration rates through investment in holistic preventative measures. The current key campaigns are advocating for the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to fourteen and raising concerns over the welfare of young people in Banksia Hill Detention Centre and those transferred to adult prison.
- The Mowanjum Community continue to receive support from the Boab Network.

### **Minutes of Appreciation**

- The Covenanting Commission express our thanks to the Moderator Susy Thomas for co-chairing the Commission during her time as Moderator and wish her health and God's blessing in the future.

- The Covenanting Commission acknowledges with thanks the support Geoff Byce and Wendy Hendry have given to the work of the Covenanting Commission.

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