

The Uniting Church in Australia
Northern Synod

Handbook

47th Meeting
3rd-6th April 2025

I want you woven into a tapestry of love - Colossians 2:2-3



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Acronyms

AMC	Area Ministry Council
APY	Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands
ARRCS	Australian Regional and Remote Community Services
ARDS	Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation
ASC	Assembly Standing Committee
AuSIL	Australian Society of Indigenous Languages
FAPS	Finance and Property Services Committee
JNC	Joint Nominating Committee
NRCC	Northern Regional Council of Congress of UAICC
NS	Northern Synod
PPNA	Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia
PPNA PRC	Pastoral Relations Committee
SSC	Synod Standing Committee
UCA	Uniting Church in Australia
UAICC	Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Synod would like to acknowledge and pay our respect to the Larrakia Nation Peoples, Elders past, present and all descendants, who have cared for the land where we meet as this 46th Northern Synod of the Uniting Church.

We acknowledge all First Nations Peoples as the sovereign custodians of this continent Australia, whose cultures are among the oldest living cultures in human history, with their own unique languages, law, culture and traditions and where their sovereignty has never been ceded.

Northern Synod Purpose and Vision Statement

Mission (Purpose)

To make known and share God's abundant love, transforming people and communities in Jesus' way.

Vision (What does church in Northern Synod look like?)

We follow Jesus, walking together in the reconciling love of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Northern Synod endorses these guiding principles:

- Discipleship
- Serving our communities
- Fit for purpose
- Working together

Acknowledgement and Warning for First Nations Peoples

The Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod acknowledges the sovereign First Peoples of the lands and waters where we work in locations across the country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to all their descendants who have cared for this place since creation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that presentations and reports during this meeting may contain images, voices, and videos of deceased persons.

Do you need assistance?

If you have any questions, please speak with a member of the Synod Business Committee:

- Rev Tony Goodluck
- Rev Janet Staines
- Rev Dr Peter Hobson
- Rev Felicity Amery
- Ms Sebastia Ward
- Ms Heidi McKelvie

Please ask Synod Staff or our Chaplains for assistance if you need it.

HOW WE DO SYNOD MEETINGS

Where we meet

- In this room, the Casuarina Uniting Church facilities at the times stated in the Synod Timetable of Business Sessions.

Who are the voting members?

- Members of Synod are ministers and pastors in active service, lay congregational representatives, co-opted members of Synod and Ex-officio members.

How we meet

- In table groups so we can share and learn from each other.

Papers for Synod

- Have we all got a copy of the Synod Handbook either on your device or a printed copy?

Who can speak and for how long?

- The Moderator is the Chair of the meeting and invites people to speak.
- When speaking, please move to a microphone so everyone can hear you.
- The Moderator invites people to speak for **three** minutes. After that the Moderator may decide to give a person more time to speak.
- If the Moderator stands up, everybody must stop speaking, including people invited to speak by the Moderator.

How we speak to and listen to each other

- As a Christian community our Synod needs to be a safe place for all people to ask questions and to be free from abuse. The Synod Business Committee expects all people to follow the RESPECTful Communication Guidelines:

R = take RESPONSIBILITY for what you say and feel without blaming others

E = use EMPATHETIC listening

S = be SENSITIVE to differences in communication styles

P = PONDER what you hear and feel before you speak

E = EXAMINE your own assumptions and perceptions

C = keep CONFIDENTIALITY

T = TRUST the other to speak and listen with integrity.

Does NRCC need to stop to fully understand the business?

If NRCC wants the session to pause so they can discuss the business for full understanding, the Chairperson or Deputy Chairperson may raise a yellow card and ask the Moderator to pause the meeting whilst they meet. The Moderator may pause the session immediately or decide to pause that item and move to something else allocating time later for NRCC.

- Morning and afternoon tea and meal times are also great times for sharing and learning.
- Any concerns or complaints concerning being safe at Synod or the RESPECTful Guidelines should be made to our Chaplains.

How we decide things

- In Synod we use the UCA Manual for Meetings from the UCA Regulations.
- We use **orange** and **blue** cards because we want to share what God is saying to us and through others. We will also use a **yellow** card.
 - **Orange**: I agree, I like what I am hearing;
 - **Blue**: I don't agree, I don't like or I'm not sure about what I am hearing;
 - **Orange and blue crossed**: I want to move on, we are not going to decide on this at this time;
 - **Yellow**: I have a question
- Please wait until the speaker has finished speaking before you use your cards.
- Showing your cards helps the Moderator know how you are feeling.
- It also lets others know how you are feeling.

Mobile Phones and Wifi

- We are happy if you have a mobile phone. We are even happier if you can turn it off or to silent when we are meeting.
- There is no wifi in the meeting room if you require wifi we encourage 'hot spotting' your mobile phone.

Toilets

Ladies, Mens and Disabled toilets are located at the rear of the building.

Proposals and Elections

- Nominations for election to committees of the Synod close at 4.00pm on Friday 5th April at the close of afternoon tea.
- Elections take place on Saturday in Session 8 after lunch.
- Nomination Forms are available from the Business Table and online.

Got a question?

- During the meeting – hold up a yellow card.
- Ask the Moderator, General Secretary or someone who should know in a break.
- Synod Business Committee:
Rev Tony Goodluck, Rev Janet Staines, Rev Dr Peter Hobson, Ms Sebastia Ward, Rev Felicity Amery, Ms Heidi McKelvie

TIMETABLE – Day 1 Thursday 3 April 2025

TIME	SESSION
9.00am – 1.00pm	Pilgrim Presbytery Meeting Venue: Darwin Memorial Uniting Church
9.00am – 5.00pm	NRCC Full Council Venue: Nungalingya College
5.30pm	DINNER Nungalingya Theological College Chapel Veranda
7.00pm – 9.00pm	SYNOD SESSION 1 Opening Service of Worship Closure of Service for Rev Tony Goodluck Memorial for Rev Dr Michelle Cook Installation of Acting Moderator Venue: Nungalingya Theological College 72 Dripstone Road Nakara

TIMETABLE – Day 2 Friday 4 April 2025

TIME	SESSION
9.00am – 10.30am	SYNOD SESSION 2 Worship and Bible Study Orientation to meeting procedures Procedural motions
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am – 1.00 pm	SYNOD SESSION 3 Ex-Moderator's Report General Secretary's Report Information Session Elections & endorsements Proposals
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm – 3.30 pm	SYNOD SESSION 4 NRCC Presbytery Report Nungalinya College Report Coordinate Project Report UAICC Report
3.30pm	Afternoon Tea – Close of Nominations
4.00pm – 5.30 pm	SYNOD SESSION 5 Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (AARCS) Report Aboriginal Resources and Development Services (ARDS) Report St Philips College Report Somerville Community Services Report UnitingCare Australia Report Closing Prayers
5.45pm	Dinner

TIMETABLE – Day 3 Saturday 5 April 2025

TIME	SESSION
9.00am – 10.30am	SYNOD SESSION 6 Worship and Bible Study Finance & Property Services Report (FAPS) Financial Reports 2024 Auditors Reports 2023 and 2024
10.30am	Morning Tea
11.00am – 1.00 pm	SYNOD SESSION 7 Budget 2025 Property Trust Report Property Report Proposals
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm – 3.30 pm	SYNOD SESSION 8 Synod Standing Committees Ballot Governance Proposal Table talks Question time
3.30pm	Afternoon Tea
4.00pm – 5.30 pm	SYNOD SESSION 9 National Assembly Report Frontier Services Report Proposals
5.45pm	Dinner
7.00pm – 9.00pm	Fellowship Night Supper

TIMETABLE – Day 4 Sunday 6 April 2025

TIME	SESSION
9.00am – 11.00am	WORSHIP SERVICE Holy Communion Synod members and Casuarina UC congregation
	Morning Tea
11.00am – 1.00 pm	SYNOD SESSION 10 Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia Report Synod Placements Committee Report Moderator Seach Committee Election of Convenor Endorsement of Synod Representation on other bodies Proposals
1.00pm	Lunch
1.45 pm – 3.30 pm	SYNOD SESSION 11 Farewells - Retirements - Memorial Minutes Declaration of Ballots Outstanding Business Referrals of Unfinished Business Acknowledgement and Thanks Sending out Adjournment
3.30pm	Pack-up and departure from venue

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Constitution of Synod

- 1.1 That the 47th Meeting of the Synod be deemed to be constituted by an act of worship held at Nungalinya College on Thursday 3rd April 2025, and that its members be determined by the list of Members of Synod 2025 which will be adopted in Session 4.

2. Appointments and Arrangements

- 2.1 That the following be appointed:
Business Committee:
Rev Tony Goodluck, Rev Janet Staines, Rev Dr Peter Hobson, Ms Sebastia Ward, Rev Felicity Amery, Ms Heidi McKelvie
Minutes Secretary:
Returning Officer: Pastor Lauren Merritt
Scrutineers: Ms Gail Cresswell and Jane Garritju
- 2.2 That 'within the house' shall include the area of the Casuarina Uniting Church and Hall set as the meeting space.
- 2.3 That the Synod Business timetable shall be:

Friday 5 April 2024

Session 2: 9.00am – 10.30am Bible Study & formalities

Session 3: 11.00am – 1.00pm

Session 4: 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Session 5: 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Saturday 6 April 2024

Session 6: 9.00am – 10.30am

Session 7: 11.00am – 1.00pm

Session 8: 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Session 9: 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Sunday 7 April 2024

Worship with Casuarina Congregation 9.00am – 10.30am

Session 10: 11.00am – 1.00pm

Session 11: 1.45pm – 3.30pm

- 2.4 That the closing time for receiving nominations shall be Friday 4th April 2024 at 4.00pm
- 2.5 The ballots for Northern Synod Committees shall be held at Saturday 5th April 2025, in Session 8 after lunch. The ballots will be declared in Session 11 on Sunday 6th April 2025.
- 2.6 That the Moderator, the Synod General Secretary and the Chairpersons of Presbyteries be authorised to confirm the Minutes of Synod.
- 2.7 That the procedures for the presentation, discussion and voting on Recommendations and Notices of Motion are as set down in the Manual for Meetings and as directed by the Moderator.
- 2.8 That the program and timetable for Friday 4th April, Saturday 5th April and Sunday 6th April be adopted.

3. WELCOMES

That a warm welcome be extended to:

- All those attending Synod for the first time
- Visitors

*Please advise the General Secretary if you **do not** want your photograph to be included in Synod publications or social media.*

4. MEMBERSHIP OF 47th SYNOD 2025

- 4.1 That the following be a co-opted or invited member of Synod:
-
- 4.2 That the following be formally associated with the Synod:
- Rev Mark Kickett
 - Dr Yane Damanik
 - Ms Natasha Fyles
 - Ms Sylvia Nulpinditj
 - Mr Rob Floyd
 - Ms Julia Lennon
 - Mr Gawura Wanambi
 - Ms Claerwen Little

- 4.3 That the list of Members of Synod 2025 be adopted:
As per a separate list to be distributed at start of Session 4

5. APOLOGIES

- 5.1 That the following apologies be received:

- Ms Heidi McKelvie
- Ms Wendy Hubbard
- Rev Dr Christine Senini
- Mr Ben Grimes
- Mr Bruce McKay

6. REPORTS

- 6.1 Proposal regarding reports:
that all reports as printed in the Handbook, published online or presented to the Synod meeting be received.

7. PROPOSALS

- 7.1 Proposals presented in Proposals Booklet.

8. SYNOD REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES - ENDORSEMENTS

9. SYNOD COMMITTEES - ELECTIONS

10. GENERAL BUSINESS

11. RETIREMENT, FAREWELL, MEMORIAL MINUTES

- 11.1 That the Retirement, Farewell and Memorial Minutes be adopted and be included in the Minutes

12. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

13. ADJOURNMENT

- 13.1 That the Synod adjourn to meet in October 2026 on dates to be determined by the Synod Standing Committee.

REPORTS

1. Ex-Moderator



Greetings in the name of Christ.

I acknowledge the Larrakia people, whose land we meet on for the April 2025 Full Council of Synod. I pay my respects to all First Nations People and give thanks to God that we, in the

Northern Synod, are blessed to walk side-by-side with people of many nations and many cultures, First Peoples and Second Peoples, all of us children of God and one family in Christ.

The season of Lent is upon us, friends. In this season we remember the stories of Jesus in the wilderness. This was a preparation time for Jesus. The wilderness helped him to prepare for his ministry. Remembering these stories helps us to prepare for Holy Week, which is the time when we remember Palm Sunday and all the events of that week that led to the Cross and then to the Resurrection on Easter morning. We are reminded that the journey to resurrection passes through the hard places. We are reminded that it is the hard places, the desert places, the wilderness that helps to prepare us for the things to come; for good ministry and for transformed and resurrected lives.

How long was Jesus in the wilderness? We are told it was forty days. In the Bible when we hear the number forty it means 'the time that it took', maybe a long time. When I was a little boy in Arnhem Land, I heard a phrase that many of you will know. How long will it take? "Oh might be little-bit-long-time." A little bit long time is like forty days of Jesus in the Wilderness, or forty days and forty nights of rain in the Noah story, or forty years wandering in the wilderness for the people of Israel in the Moses story. How long? Little bit long time. . . . as long as it takes.

Being in the Wilderness can be a time when God is preparing the people for the things to come. Over the past forty months or so, it has felt like we in the Northern Synod have been in the Wilderness. God has been at work actively preparing us for the things to come.

As I now conclude as Moderator, I am pleased to see the Synod in a better place than it was forty months ago. The wilderness journey was hard. You know it was. We had financial challenges. We had governance challenges. We had staffing challenges. We had all sorts of challenges. We faced them and by the grace of God, we have been able to move forward to where we are. You will hear reports at this Synod about finances and property. You will hear reports from different Councils of the church that are operating well in their support of congregations and communities. You will see a transparency in financial reporting and ample evidence of good governance procedures. You will see strong leadership in key positions of support for our people and our congregations. Of course we are not out of the wilderness yet, but we can see across the Jordan from where we stand. What God has done amongst us, in the past forty months is nothing short of miraculous. What a journey it has been and what a blessing for me to be able to walk with you all through these times. Thank you for trusting me in this role. As you will hear in the various reports, our Governance, Finance, Property and Admin are in order at long last and the work of supporting our communities and encouraging discipleship is alive and well.

The greatest blow to our journey, from my point of view, was the sudden, unexpected death of our beloved sister and Moderator-elect, Rev Dr Michelle Cook. This shook us all terribly. We continue to grieve. We miss Michelle so much. We miss her energy, her leadership, her friendship. We miss her capacity to get things done, the way she worked cross-culturally and her deep and abiding love for all people. Michelle was a living example of everything good about our church. This year's theme for our Synod meeting, **'Woven Into a Tapestry of Love'**, was chosen by Michelle. In using this theme we are honouring her vision and love for us all; and we are honouring the work that God has done over the past few years and continues to do. We are, indeed, being woven into a Tapestry of Love, in the deep valleys and on the high escarpment. All praise to God.

My Moderator's theme for the past 3½ years was **Living Our Story; Sharing our Stories**. It has been a great privilege to move around the Synod and listen to people's stories, as well as share some of my own stories and to reflect on the stories of Jesus. I have visited with our people in Milngimbi, Galiwin'ku, Yirrkala, Gangan, Nhulunbuy, Jabiru, Minjilang, Warruwi, Manayingkarirra, Humpty Doo, Palmerston, Casuarina, Karama, Nightcliff,

Darwin, Broome, Derby, Mowanjum, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, Apatula (Finke), Pukatja, Umuwa, Amata, Kalka, Pipalyatjara, Irrunytju and Yalara. Thank you all for your warm welcome and for trusting me with your stories of life, stories of struggle, stories of hope and stories of new life.



NEW LIFE



Please, give us new life!
Make your people happy to be yours.

LORD, save us
and show us your love.

Psalm 85: 6-7 (ERV)



In October 2022, some of you will remember, I preached a sermon at the Synod meeting titled, “Sorting Out Our Problems is EASY.” I remember some people laughed out loud at me. You remember? Well, I went on to say that EASY stood for:

- E EVALUATE our situation
- A ADJUST our thinking;
- S SET some goals (with 2 numbers and a name); and
- Y YIELD to God

We took this seriously as a Synod Standing Committee and worked strategically to evaluate our situation and identify the problems. The NRCC and PPNA Presbytery Councils also responded to the challenge. A lot of

work had been done on evaluating the situation and getting the facts. We then looked for solutions, prayed, listened and allowed the possibilities of God's grace and provision to break through. We set measurable goals. Some hard decisions were made, strategies employed and actions taken towards those goals. And through it all we sought the leading of God's Holy Spirit and we yielded to God. I want to commend the members of the Synod Standing Committee and thank them for their prayerful, diligent, faithful work. We have a very good Synod Standing Committee. In fact it has not been easy at all. Over this time we have had 7 different General Secretaries, and a significant turnover of staff in Synod and Presbytery roles. We now have a fit for purpose operations team who support our congregations and communities and ensure we meet Government legislation requirements: right people, right roles; right jobs getting done; and right processes. Thank you to all those in Congregations, Presbyteries and Synod who have shared the responsibility of this important work.

One of the most significant relationships in a Synod is the relationship between the General Secretary (CEO of Operations) and the Moderator (Spiritual Leader and Chairperson of the Synod). I want to express my thanks to each of the Interim General Secretaries since 2021, who have worked so well for the people of the Northern Synod, strategically and intentionally. Thank you to Rev Dr Andrew Williams; to Mr Stuart McMillan; to Rev Dr Michelle Cook (5 weeks as Interim); to Rev Heather den Houting; to Rev Dr Adam McIntosh, and to Rev Linda Hanson (Gen Sec delegate). They all made significant contributions to our recovery. We owe each of them, and our current General Secretary, Rev Janet Staines, a debt of gratitude. I am humbled to have walked beside each of these heroes, in the wilderness.

October 2020, when I was elected Moderator-elect, I was asked to work to rebuild the trust across the Synod and to 'change the culture'. Hah. Is that all? The degree to which I have been able to do that is not for me to say. What I can say is that by co-operation and collaboration, through the efforts of many people across the Synod, we have been able to identify issues, make decisions about what we would do and then carry out those decisions. See . . . EASY.

In recent months I have done some training in the Foundations of Transitional Ministry. This is a recent development in Australia to help congregations who

are facing big changes and are willing to do the hard work to transition and transform. The point is made that **CHANGE** is the things that happen to us (a Minister leaves, a loved-one dies, the financial reserves run down, a cyclone hits, etc); **TRANSITION** is the process of managing change (how we deal with relationships, emotions, processes, decision-making and so on); and **TRANSFORMATION** is the new way of being that emerges through the transition. For transformation to be positive and lasting, good transition is needed. The story of Moses and the Israelites is a great analogy for this. The wilderness experience was necessary as a part of the transition to their new reality ahead. Change; Transition; Transformation. The Uniting Church in Australia is in a time of change. How well we manage the transition will determine the quality of the transformed church that will emerge over the next few years. I hope I can be a part of supporting that transition in some way as I move into retirement.

The Northern Synod will continue to manage the transition well, I am sure. We are well placed to engage with the Act 2 processes which are about healthy transition on a national scene. Our new Moderator will be part-time and this means they won't have the privilege that I had to visit and sit with people. It's a new chapter. The Moderator will work with the General Secretary and other leaders to guide the processes of transition. We are in good hands and God's Holy Spirit is our guide.

Margie and I will soon be heading off on Annual Leave and Long-service Leave. We will worship on Good Friday with Congress mob in Port Augusta, and other friends and family on Easter day in Adelaide. The week after that, we will pick up a Motorhome in Adelaide and head around Australia for 4 months, towing a trailer converted into Margie's mobile art studio. Later in the year I will formally retire and we will relocate to Adelaide, where most of our Balanda family live.

What might retirement look like? Well, Margie is an active Artist and will continue to paint and bring joy to people's lives. Does a Minister ever really retire? I will continue as a Director on the Nungalinga Board and as a member of the Northern Synod Standing Committee as the Ex-Moderator. So, I will be travelling back to Darwin, for the foreseeable future, might be for little bit long time. I will also be available for Intentional Interim Ministry work

and for short term Supply work. Who knows what that might mean. We are trusting it all to God.

God has continued to lead the faithful people of the Northern Synod over the past four years and the future is unfolding as it should. I have my own list of disappointments in the things I did not do, or did not do as well as I would have liked. Nevertheless, I have given you my best effort through thick and thin. I thank you all for the privilege of serving in this capacity, and for walking faithfully with me through the wilderness. I give thanks for God's ongoing faithfulness to us in the Northern Synod. The fingerprints of the Master-weaver are upon us all.

We love the people and places of the Northern Synod. We will return from time-to-time; we will continue to be connected; and we are happy to trust God in all things.

Grace and Peace.
The best is yet to come,

Rev Tony Goodluck
Nangarridj
Ex-Moderator, Northern Synod



1.1. Prayer for the Middle East

October 1st 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With a heavy heart, our National President, Rev Charissa Suli, has reached out regarding the tragic events unfolding in Lebanon. Around Australia this week (29th September to 5th October), Rev Carissa invites every congregation, agency, faith community, school, family and member of the Uniting Church to join in a week of Prayer for Peace in the Middle East.

Her Pastoral Statement is attached, with suggested **'Prayer Starters'** for each day of this week.

I also attach some information regarding a **Lebanon Emergency Appeal** from the Bankstown District of the Uniting Church (NSW and ACT). Please give this your consideration and support if you are able.

Here is my prayer:

- P Peace, oh peace, Where are you and why are you so hard to find?
E Elusive and slipping away like water between our fingers.
A Anger and ego; past wrongs and grudges; pain and distain overwhelm.
C Call to our leaders we pray Dear One of Wisdom and Peace.
E Enter their hearts and minds that they might make decisions for peace.
- F For we are one people, are we not? We all belong to you, gracious and loving One.
O Open hearts and minds to find ways to cease hostilities, in the Middle East and at home
R Remind us Lord that we are all your children; and help us to live together with kindness.
- A A ceasefire would be a start. Simply no more bombs and bullets would be a beginning.
L Lebanon, Gaza, Israel and the other nations of the region, we hold you in our hearts
L Longing for the peace that is possible. May it be sooner, rather than later.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus. Amen, Amen and Amen. May it be so.

Grace and Peace.
The best is yet to come,

Rev Tony Goodluck
Nangarridj
Moderator, Northern Synod



1.2. Response to the Petition to Ban Gender Affirming Care in the Northern Territory

28th October 2024

Northern Synod Uniting Church in Australia Statement: Response to the Petition to ban Gender Affirming Care in the Northern Territory

The Uniting Church in Australia prides itself on our diversity, and our commitment to inclusion. Trans and gender diverse people are valued members of our community, deserving of dignity, compassion and respect. Our commitment to imagining a society built on the foundations of compassion and respect warmly extends to all trans and gender diverse Australians. We are united in solidarity to condemn the dispiriting rise of anti-trans rhetoric and re-assert our commitment to confronting injustice, disrupting entrenched disadvantage and standing alongside the trans and gender diverse community.

In the Northern Synod we believe that everyone, including those that are trans, non-binary or gender diverse, are made in the image of God and deserve to receive the best health care available, including gender affirming care. In the biblical story of the lost sheep, Jesus leaves the 99 and goes in search for the 1, because every person is valuable and loved by God. Maintaining and building good quality gender affirming care is part of being a caring community and aligns with Jesus' principles that every person deserves love and care from their community.

We ask that the NT Government listen to the LGBTQIA+ community and consider the wider substantive research on quality gender affirming care as they consider this petition.

Grace & Peace,

Rev Tony Goodluck
Moderator of the Northern Synod



1.3. Public Statement_2025_Rev Haloti Kailahi

3/03/2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you to inform you of the conclusion of the Discipline process for Rev Haloti Kailahi. Rev Kailahi has repaid the necessary funds and completed all the requirements asked of him in the Discipline process; and so his suspension as a Minister in the Uniting Church has now ended.

The Victoria/Tasmania Synod has conducted the Complaints and Disciplinary process on behalf of the Northern Synod. Therefore, the public statements (attached) have been made by the Moderator of the Vic/Tas Synod.

The attached Public Statements are being forwarded to you in order to provide transparency and clarity regarding the ending of the suspension of Rev Kailahi and conditions that apply for any possible future placements of Rev Kailahi.

Please read the statements carefully. This is being sent to Ministers and Chairpersons of Church Councils for your information.

I would suggest that this is not circulated more widely than to Ministers and Church Councils; and to anyone who directly asks to see a copy. As Public Statements they can be shared with anyone who asks to see them. Please deal with this information in a sensitive and respectful manner.

We hold Rev Haloti and his family in our prayers.

Grace and Peace.

The best is yet to come,

Rev Tony Goodluck
Nangarridj
Moderator, Northern Synod



1.4. Moderator's Statement concerning the Committee for Discipline Proceedings concerning Rev Haloti Kailahi

Summary

In 2021 complaints were made against Rev Haloti Kailahi who was then General Secretary of the Northern Synod. The complaints included that Rev Kailahi had:

- used Church funds for himself
- accepted payments that he did not declare to the Church and
- not acted as a Minister should when seeking a leadership position at Assembly because he had not done what he was asked to do by the Committee for Counselling because of complaints made against him in 2020.

These 2021 complaints were upheld by the Committee for Discipline held in November 2022 and as a result Rev Kailahi is suspended from being a Minister until November 2024. He will be under professional supervision until November 2024 and Rev Kailahi must pay back money to the Church.

The complaints

In 2021 complaints were made against Rev Haloti Kailahi, then General Secretary of the Northern Synod. Those complaints were dealt with pursuant to the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations (**Regulations**). The complaints concerned alleged breaches of the Regulations and the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice for Ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia.

In particular it was alleged that Rev Kailahi:

- a) misused funds of the Northern Synod for his personal benefit while he was engaged by the Northern Synod in the position of General Secretary; and
- b) received undeclared income from his role as Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation (**ARDS**) while he was engaged and paid by the Northern Synod in the full-time position of General Secretary; and
- c) failed to show due observance of the discipline of the Church, failed to recognise the seriousness of the pastoral relationship and the considerable influence and power a Minister exercises and failed to carry out his ministry in a professional and accountable manner, by

refusing to withdraw his name from the ballot for President-elect of the Assembly while he was in the process of fulfilling recommendations of the Committee for Counselling.

Rev Kailahi was under review the by the Committee for Counselling due to complaints made earlier by Northern Synod staff in 2020 about his performance of his duties as General Secretary.

These are referred to below as the **Breaches**.

The process

The Standing Committee of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania accepted a request from the Northern Synod for the transfer of powers under the Regulations in order to manage the Committee for Discipline process given that there were, or could have been seen to be, conflict of interests in the Northern Synod had the Northern Synod conducted the Committee for Discipline.

A Committee for Discipline (**Committee**) was appointed to hear and determine the complaints and a hearing took place on 21-22 November 2022 in Melbourne before a three-member panel. Rev Kailahi and his representative appeared in person at this hearing.

The determination

The Committee found that the Breaches described above were upheld.

A fourth breach was alleged but was found not to be made out.

The Committee imposed the following restorative conditions on Rev Kailahi.

These are that Rev Kailahi:

- Is suspended from the exercise of all functions of a Minister for the period of 2 years starting from 22 November 2022;
- Attend monthly meetings with a Professional Supervisor to be appointed by the Northern Synod Standing Committee (the **Supervisor**);
- Undertake therapeutic or pastoral counselling recommended by the Supervisor and participate in courses of training recommended by the Supervisor;
- Make restitution to the Church of approximately \$32,000 of funds by

November 2024;

- Resolve, to the satisfaction of the Supervisor, the recommendations for action required by the Committee for Counselling concerning the 2020 complaints which remain unactioned;
- Be listed on the roll of confirmed members of the congregation in which Rev Kailahi chooses to be actively involved given it was unclear as to which congregation Rev Kailahi was currently participating;
- Accept the validity of the complaints underlying the three breaches described above;
- Be open and honest about his status as a suspended Minister and not mislead members of the Uniting Church in Australia as to his status; and
- As part of any future placement, Rev Kailahi:
 - a) must not undertake any role involving financial management beyond the administration of his own Minister's Benefit Account;
 - b) meet monthly with a supervisor appointed by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery in which he is then in placement; and
 - c) must not accrue annual leave exceeding 6 weeks' total at any time.

In conclusion

Please keep Rev Kailahi and all of the Northern Synod in your prayers, asking that the Spirit may guide us all for the sake of the gospel of Christ.

Grace and peace,

David Fotheringham

Moderator Synod of Victoria and Tasmania (acting under the referral from the Northern Synod)

A Statement made pursuant to Regulation 5.7.4(w) of the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations. Date: 9 December 2022.

1.5. Cover Letter to Update to Public Statement

Re: Update to Public Statement concerning Rev Haloti Kailahi

On 9 December 2022 I wrote to you with a Public Statement regarding the findings upheld against Rev Haloti Kailahi by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Committee for Discipline. As the period of suspension of Rev Kailahi has now ended, I am writing with an update to the Public Statement.

This update is an addition to, and is intended to form part of, the public statement made according to Regulation 5.7.4(w) of the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations (2018 edition) on 9 December 2022. I consider it appropriate that this statement is made in order to provide transparency around the ending of the suspension of Rev Kailahi, and the conditions which are ongoing for any future placements of Rev Kailahi.

This is a public statement. As such, the initial addressees of the document may use the attached statement in communications with others as they consider appropriate.

The original Public Statement is also attached for your convenience.

Grace and peace,

Rev David Fotheringham
Moderator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

1.6. Update to Public Statement

Update to the Moderator's Public Statement about the Committee for Discipline Proceedings concerning Rev Haloti Kailahi

Summary

This is an update to the Public Statement made on 9 December 2022 regarding findings upheld against Rev Haloti Kailahi by the Committee for Discipline in November 2022.

The Committee for Discipline suspended Rev Kailahi from performing the roles of a Minister for two years and imposed a number of requirements on him, including steps which he needed to take before his suspension ended.

The purpose of this update is to confirm that in December 2024, the suspension of Rev Haloti Kailahi from performing the roles of a Minister ended. He is now able to perform the roles of a Minister again subject to 3 ongoing conditions detailed below.

The Discipline and Restoration Process

The disciplinary process was managed by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, at the request of the Northern Synod, in order to avoid any conflicts of interest.

The Public Statement of 9 December 2022 describes the complaints and findings in detail. The Committee for Discipline suspended Rev Kailahi from performing the roles of a Minister for two years and required Rev Kailahi to:

1. pay approximately \$32,000 back to the Northern Synod;
2. complete actions that had been asked by the Committee for Counselling regarding complaints that had been made in 2020 (before complaints were passed onto the Committee for Discipline);
3. have regular meetings with a Professional Supervisor;
4. do courses or counselling as recommended by the Professional Supervisor;
5. enrol as a member of a Congregation;
6. accept that the complaints which had been upheld were valid; and
7. be honest about his suspension from performing the roles of a Minister.

The Committee for Discipline also required that for any future Placements as a Minister, Rev Kailahi must:

1. not undertake any role involving financial management beyond the administration of his own Minister's Benefit Account;
2. meet monthly with a supervisor appointed by the Pastoral Relations Committee of the Presbytery in which he is then in placement; and
3. not accrue annual leave exceeding 6 weeks' total at any time.

Those 3 conditions are ongoing.

As part of completing the actions that had been asked by the Committee for Counselling, Rev Kailahi offered a written apology to the Northern Synod Standing Committee. Rev Kailahi also wrote apologies to several other people and organisations.

In December 2024 the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Standing Committee received confirmation that Rev Kailahi had repaid the necessary funds and completed all requirements asked of him to the satisfaction of his Professional Supervisor. The Standing Committee resolved to end Rev Kailahi's suspension and to designate him as "awaiting placement" from 1 January 2025 subject to the 3 ongoing conditions listed above.

Conclusion

Rev Haloti Kailahi is now able to perform the roles of a Minister again, subject to the 3 ongoing conditions.

May God, who guides us in restoration and hope, enable us all to live and serve with integrity, wisdom, and blessing.

Grace and peace,

Rev David Fotheringham

Moderator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

(acting under the referral from the Northern Synod)

This is an addition to and intended to form part of the public statement made according to Regulation 5.7.4(w) of the Uniting Church in Australia Regulations (2018 edition) on 9 December 2022.

Date: 5 February 2025

1.7. Letter re: Removing Vilification Laws and Reinstating 37a

To the Honourable Lia Finocchiao
Chief Minister
Northern Territory Parliament
Darwin NT

14th March 2025

Dear Lia,

The Uniting Church in Australia prides itself on our diversity, and our commitment to inclusion.

We affirm that every person is created in the image of God and is worthy of love and respect.

With this in mind we are concerned regarding the Northern Territory Government's recent announcement proposing to repeal vilification protections. This seems at odds with a Government who claims to be for ALL Territorians. Respectfully we ask that you pause and listen to the voices of the grass roots community before repealing Section 20A of the Vilification Provision.

The Uniting Church in Australia has long taken a role in the advocacy for justice and policy reform, encouraging moral, social and ethical integrity. We have been a strong advocate for First Nations justice issues including sovereignty and the Statement from the Heart, in relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. We are a multicultural church, valuing the rich cultural and linguistic diversity of our members. We advocate for many important social, political and economic reforms including climate justice and issues relating to equality and dignity of all people.

The Uniting Church in Australia, Northern Synod urges the Government to reaffirm its commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of ALL Territorians. We do **not** support your plan to overturn existing protections for vulnerable Territorians and ask that you reconsider this action and think about the impact on the marginalised.

Another matter of concern is the proposed reinstatement of 37a

I attach, for your information, previous correspondence (Nov 2022) from myself as Moderator of the Uniting Church, Northern Synod to our Ministry Agents across the region of the Northern Territory, Kimberley and APY Lands, regarding anti-discrimination legislation. This, along with our submission sent to the then NT Government regarding the Anti-discrimination Amendment Bill, clearly articulate the Uniting Church's position. We support the rights of every person to exercise the freedom of religion but believe these rights must be carefully balanced against the other rights people hold, to be free from discrimination. Nationally, our provision of education and community services do not seek exemption from anti-discrimination legislation.

Please do **not** reinstate Section 37a. I am informed that the Commission has received only two complaints about the removal of 37a, notably not from schools or educational institutions, but from individuals. This would seem to indicate that the removal of this exemption in January 2023 has had no negative impact for faith-based schools and institutions. But it has protected vulnerable Territorians.

Section 35 allows for faith institutions to discriminate on roles where faith is pertinent to the role, e.g. a Theology teacher in a Christian training college. However 37a would allow discrimination regarding cleaning, hospitality, administration staff and all other roles. We strongly advocate that people should be able to apply for and carry out these roles within an organisation, based on their capacity to do the job well and without discrimination pertaining to personal attributes that do not affect their capacity to do the job, such as religious beliefs, gender issues, disabilities that do not affect the work, or ethnicity.

In particular, we are concerned that current protections in place for the marginalised LGBTIQ+ Christian sub-community, to be employed and not discriminated against in their work place because of sexuality or gender, will be erased with the reinstatement of Section 37a. This would be a slippery slope in the wrong direction.

Respectfully, we ask that you **do not reinstate the anti-discrimination exemption** for faith-based institutions to discriminate on who they can employ (37a).

We also respectfully ask that you **do not remove the vilification law**, which offers protection to vulnerable people and already marginalised Territorians(20A).

Thank you for the work you are doing on behalf of all of us.

Grace and Peace.

Rev Tony Goodluck
Nangarridj
Moderator, Northern Synod



2. General Secretary's Report incorporating Synod Standing Committee Report

The last 12 months have flown by with many issues resolved and pressures subsided thanks to the hard work and support of many people. I have had the benefit of being on the other side of the difficult decisions, walking a clearing path before us. It was a good decision to call a new general secretary after this difficult season, rather than during, as I have been able to begin my ministry with freshness and a strong sense of hope. I am grateful for your welcome and support as I settle into this role.

Our Financial Situation

Over the past 18 months the Synod Standing Committee, Finance & Property Committee and Synod Executive have worked hard to address our financial debt using the strategy of maximising our property usage and disposing of unused assets. The details of these sales can be found in the Property Report. Thank you to Ross Coburn who was contracted to achieve this work and used his skills, knowledge and local networks to serve the interests of the church. Thank you to Congregations who worked with Ross on the ground and willingly released resources. Thank you to NRCC for your willingness to share your resources.

The 2025 Synod operational Budget has significantly reduced expenditure and we continue to work towards achieving a balanced budget in 2026. We believe this can be achieved by reducing our operational expenses and increasing the profitability of our retail property over the next three years.

Synod Standing Committee

The Standing Committee has met six times since the 46th Synod Meeting, face-to-face and by videoconferencing. Minutes of these meetings are available on request.

The Standing Committee Members from 46th Synod Meeting April 2024:

Moderator & Chairperson Rev Tony Goodluck

Moderator Elect Rev Dr Michelle Cook (April 2024-October 2024)

General Secretary Rev Dr Adam McIntosh (November 2023-May 2024)

General Secretary Delegate Rev Linda Hanson (January 2024-May 2024)

General Secretary Rev Janet Staines (June 2024-present)

NRCC Chairperson Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra

PPNA Chairperson Pastor Lauren Merritt
Finance & Property Services Chairperson Mr Matthew Kennon
NRCC appointed Member Ms Jane Garruitju
NRCC appointed Member Ms Kirsty Burgu
PPNA appointed Member Mr John McLaren
PPNA appointed Member Mr Benjamin Quilliam
Synod appointed Member Rev Felicity Amery

Standing Associate Members:

NRCC Resource Worker Mr David Forsyth
NRCC Resource Worker Rev Dr Peter Hobson
Minutes Secretary Ms Heidi McKelvie
Executive Officer Mr Ross Coburn
Chief Operating Officer Mr Reg Gulley (October 2023-May 2024)
Executive Officer Finance Mr Reg Gulley (June 2024-December 2024)
Director of Finance Ms Fiona McManus (until August 2024)
Director of Finance Mr Richard Telfer (August 2024 – present)

The Standing Committee has been working towards embracing a new season in the Synod's life, focussing on ways to support the Synod to grow and flourish. The past years have taken a toll on the leadership of the Synod as we have been confronted with some difficult realities. It is now time to give thanks to God for sustaining us, equipping us and guiding us to a new place. Stabilising leadership, finances and governance practices and supporting ministry in our

congregations and ministry locations will be the focus of the Synod office in the next year. A Strategic plan has been included with this report to guide the next Standing Committee in these priorities.



Thank you to the Synod Office Staff who contribute to the daily operations of the Synod:

Executive Officer Mr Ross Coburn
Chief Operating Officer Mr Reg Gulley (October 2023-May 2024)

Executive Officer Finance Mr Reg Gulley (June 2024-December 2024)
Director of Finance Ms Fiona McManus (until August 2024)
Director of Finance Mr Richard Telfer (August 2024 – present)
Accountant Bookkeeper Mr Shane Allen
Executive Assistant Ms Heidi McKelvie
Redress Officer & Archives Mrs Judy Orme
Accounts Payable Officer Mr Franco Villanueva
Coordinate Project Officer Ms Louise Macdonald
Receptionist Ms Kiran Awasthi (March-May 2025)

Governance Matters

At this Synod Meeting we will talk about how to be ‘Fit for Purpose’ by developing a governance structure to adequately support the mission and ministry of the Northern Synod. During the next 18 months we will seek to reimagine the councils and committees of the Synod based on the work of the Act2 Project to create a more slimmed down governance structure that simplifies our responsibilities and reduces the workload on a few. This work will be done with the support of the National Assembly and other Synods to whom the Synod outsources administrative functions who have the capacity to support us.

As we move forward, we will make plans that are achievable with the resources we have. We will be honest and transparent in evaluating and communicating our realities. We will seek to be faithful to the practices of the Uniting Church while adapting to our unique context. We will aim to work towards implementing best practice in all we do. We will do our best to support local mission and ministry. We will celebrate the goodness of God in our achievements.

We continue to trust that God will provide all that we need to do what God has called us to do for “In every age Christ the Good Shepherd calls his faithful servants to preach the gospel, celebrate the sacraments of the new covenant and build up his people in faith and love.”

Rev Janet Staines
General Secretary

NORTHERN SYNOD STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

We follow Jesus, walking together in the reconciling love of God, through the power of the Holy Spirit

MISSION

To make known and share God's abundant love, transforming people and communities in Jesus' way

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Shaping the priorities of the Synod Standing Committee

DISCIPLESHIP

Goal: Increase growth opportunities in discipleship, formation and leadership.

Strategy: Provide opportunities for leaders to engage in professional development, networking and peer monitoring.

SERVING OUR COMMUNITIES

Goal: Develop a governance structure appropriate for the Mission and Ministry of the Northern Synod.

Strategy: Reimagine the councils and committees of the Northern Synod based on the work of the Act2 Project using the option 1 model which envisages three councils instead of four and initiate actions taking into consideration the Act2 governance change process within the National church.

Strategy: Embed financial disciplines and accountability into the policies and operations of Synod including equipping leaders and staff to understand their role in sustaining the Synod.

Strategy: Develop a long-term Property Management and Development Plan to enable the resourcing of Northern Synod operations

FIT FOR PURPOSE

WORKING TOGETHER

Goal: Strengthening the Covenant with Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC).

Strategy: Demonstrate the Synod's commitment to the UCA Covenant with NRCC, including NRCC's pathway towards self-determination in relation to ministry and mission, discipleship and leadership, property, resources and finances, and its unique witness to First Peoples.

Goal: Support Congregations and Communities of Faith

Strategy: Establish a Resource Worker for Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia (PPNA) to support ministry and increase NRCC Support Worker presence across the region.

2.2. Redress

National Redress Scheme

The Commonwealth Government established the National Redress Scheme in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The National Redress Scheme was established for people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse before 1 July 2018, when the National Redress Scheme started. It recognises the suffering endured because of this abuse and holds institutions accountable for this abuse.

The Uniting Church Northern Synod participates in the National Redress Scheme and is supported through UCA Redress Ltd. Applications for redress directed to Northern Synod institutions come from people who may have experienced abuse while in residential care, who may have attended our schools, who may have been part of our Sunday Schools or young peoples' groups.

Where an institution is found to be responsible for the abuse, a monetary offer is made. This offer is capped at a maximum of \$150,000. The applicant may also accept the offer of a Direct Personal Response (DPR). In the Northern Synod, the Moderator is authorised to deliver the DPR.

The Synod contributes financially to the work of UCA Redress Ltd by paying a share of the operating costs of this national support office.

Civil Cases

The Synod also receives claims for redress through civil action brought through commercial law firms. These claims, in some instances, may be covered by insurance. Where a matter is not covered by insurance, the Synod and its institutions may face a substantial financial commitment.

The Synod is aware of its commitments to provide redress where it or its institutions are found responsible for claims of abuse and makes provision in its budget to ensure funds are available as required.

Mrs Judy Orme
Redress Officer and Archivist

2.3 Moderator Elect Paper

1. Introduction

Rev Dr Michelle Cook was elected Moderator Elect at 46th Meeting of the Synod 4-7 April 2024. The relevant Minute from the meeting reads:

7.1 APPOINTMENT OF MODERATOR-ELECT

24.04.07 (i) The Synod elects Rev Dr Michelle Cook as Moderator-Elect to be installed as Moderator at 47th Meeting of the Synod in April 2025. (Minutes of 46th Synod 2024, p10-11)

The passing of Rev Dr Michelle Cook in September 2024 has left us with a deep sadness that our future will not become what we hoped or planned. We will continue to grieve Michelle's loss as a friend, colleague and our Moderator Elect.

The Northern Synod currently does not have a Moderator Elect to Install at the Opening Service of Worship at the 47th Meeting of the Synod 3-6 April 2025. This paper points to the relevant UCA Regulations and Northern Synod By-Laws; and arrangements and a proposal to guide the Synod Standing Committee in discerning a way forward in the lead up to the 47th Synod meeting and for the ensuing 18months from the commencement of the 2025 Synod meeting.

2. Relevant UCA Regulations and Northern Synod By-Laws

Reg 3.6.3.1 Election of the Moderator

- (a) The Moderator shall be elected by the Synod in accordance with such rules and procedures for such term as the Synod may determine.
- (b) The Synod may elect a Moderator, and designate that person as Moderator-elect, at a meeting of the Synod prior to the one at which the person will take office.
- (c) When, by reason of death, illness, absence or other cause, the Moderator is unable to fulfil the duties of the office, the ex-Moderator or a person appointed by the Standing Committee shall act and shall have all the powers and authorities of a Moderator until such time as the Moderator resumes responsibilities or a new Moderator is elected.

Reg 3.6.3.2 Duties of the Moderator

The duties of the Moderator shall include:

- (a) giving general and pastoral leadership to the Ministers and people within the bounds;
- (b) assisting and encouraging the expression and fulfilment of the mission and witness of the Church;
- (c) counselling and advising, as may be necessary and helpful, to ensure that the life of the Church expresses the faith, policies, standards and procedures to which it is committed;
- (d) presiding over the meetings of the Synod, its Standing Committee and such other of its boards and committees as may be required by the by-laws of the Synod;
- (e) filling, in respect of appointments normally made by the Synod and, in consultation with the Standing Committee and other bodies concerned, such vacancies as may arise between meetings of the Synod and for the filling of which other provision has not been made;
- (f) giving an interpretation where necessary of any doubtful or disputed decision of the Synod, such interpretation to be authoritative until confirmed or varied by the next meeting of the Synod or of the Standing Committee;
- (g) speaking on public issues on behalf of the Synod;
- (h) representing the Church as may be desirable on public occasions and in inter-church councils;
- (i) administering the discipline of the Church as may be required by any Regulation, by-law or rule;
- (j) enquiring, when the Moderator considers it expedient so to do, into any grievance, complaint or other circumstance which, in the opinion of the Moderator, adversely affects the good name of the Church or the order and peace of its Congregations or the progress of the work of God and seeking a remedy for such situations; in so doing the Moderator shall consult with one or more past Moderators and the chairperson of any Presbytery concerned.

Northern Synod By-Laws

NS1.3.2 Moderator Search Process

- i. The Synod shall agree on the Rules (Mandate) for a Moderator Search Committee and appoint a Convenor for the said committee.
- ii. The Synod Standing Committee will appoint other members of the Moderator Search Committee.

NS1.3.3 Nominations

- i. Nominations for the position of Moderator by Members of the Synod, Congregations or Presbyteries shall be in writing, and signed by two members of Synod, the Church Council, or Presbytery Standing Committee, with the consent of the nominee, and shall be received by the Convenor of the Moderator Search Committee, one (1) month before the Synod Meeting and forwarded to Synod General Secretary. All nominations to be accompanied by nominee biographical information in Plain English of no more than one hundred words.
- ii. Nominations shall be declared closed at the opening of the Synod meeting and a ballot held at a time determined by the Synod.
- iii. No persons shall be declared elected unless they receive at least one half of the votes cast plus one (+1).

3. Proposed arrangements to guide the Synod Standing Committee in discerning a way forward for the 18 months from the commencement of the 2025 47th Synod meeting.

Rev Tony Goodluck will conclude his term as Moderator at the Opening Worship Service of the 47th Meeting of the Synod 3-6 April 2025. The Synod does not have time to convene a Moderator search process before the 47th Synod Meeting. The current Synod Standing Committee will be dissolved when the 47th Meeting of the Synod begins. Therefore, there will not be a Moderator “to fulfil the duties of the office” until the actual Synod meeting begins, when the current Synod Standing Committee will now longer have the authority to make an Acting Moderator appointment.

Reg 3.6.3.1(c) refers to the absence of the Moderator and does not refer to the absence of the Moderator Elect. Moderator Elect 47th Synod Meeting 2025 Northern Synod Standing Committee Paper 1 February 2025 General Secretary Rev Janet Staines

Given the situation outlined in the above paragraph, the proposal below provides a potential way forward for electing an Acting Moderator to assume office at the 47th Synod meeting.

In light of the duties of a Moderator as provided above, it is envisaged that the arrangements for the role and main responsibilities of the Acting Moderator from 3 April 2025 to the 48th Synod meeting would be:

- a) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator position be a part-time position. The 46th Synod Meeting 2024 agreed to Rev Dr Michelle Cook remaining in placement at Nungalinga College at 0.8FTE and fulfilling the Moderator role at 0.2FTE. A Memorandum of Understanding was made with Nungalinga College on 23rd September outlining the performance of duties at Nungalinga College and the NS Moderator. Therefore, it is proposed that the Acting Moderator perform their duties within a 0.2FTE placement.
- b) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator be appointed for 18months until the next Synod Meeting to offer guidance and stable leadership during a time of change.
- c) It is proposed that the Synod Standing Committee develop a Memorandum of Understanding with Congregations/Agencies/Employers impacted by the 0.2FTE of the Acting Moderator, outlining the expectations and use of time given to the Acting Moderator role. It is anticipated that this will be reviewed every 3-6 months.
- d) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator work closely with the Synod Standing Committee to fulfill the regulatory duties of the Moderator and appropriately delegate pastoral oversight to the PPNA Chair, NRCC Resource Worker and General Secretary, especially when travel or long-term pastoral care is required.
- e) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator work closely with the Synod Standing Committee over the next 18 months to develop a governance structure that is fit for purpose for the Northern Synod, delegating regulatory responsibilities and overseeing regulatory processes during the transition.
- f) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator would chair the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 and the Synod Standing Committee Meetings for 18months until the 48th Synod Meeting.
- g) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator carefully consider the demands of public events and inter-church councils to stay within the bounds of 0.2FTE and appropriately delegate representation to other experienced Ministry Agents or Members of Synod.
- h) It is proposed that the Acting Moderator will not be exempt from

nominating for Moderator at the 48th Synod Meeting 2026.

4. Proposed process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee regarding appointing an Acting Moderator.

a) Synod Standing Committee Meeting 21-22 February 2025

The Synod Standing Committee consider the General Secretary's proposal for an Acting Moderator and proposed process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee. A decision regarding the process and timeline needs to be made at this meeting.

b) Communicate to 47th Synod Meeting Members

The General Secretary communicates to the 47th Synod Meeting Members that the Standing Committee is working on a response to the current situation, which requires the approval of the Assembly Standing Committee who will meet on 14-16 March. The process cannot be made public until after the Assembly Standing Committee meeting on the 14-16 March. Moderator Elect 47th Synod Meeting 2025 Northern Synod Standing Committee Paper 1 February 2025 General Secretary Rev Janet Staines

c) Synod Standing Committee Meeting 6th or 7th March 2025 tbc

The Synod Standing Committee discerns the appointment of a person to be the Acting Moderator assuming approval from the Assembly Standing Committee in March.

d) Communicate the process and appointment of the Acting Moderator to the 47th Synod Meeting Members

The General Secretary communicates the process and appointment proposed by the Synod Standing Committee and approved by the Assembly Standing Committee after the 14-16 March. Notification will be communicated to the Synod Members at least 14 days prior to the meeting.

e) The Acting Moderator chairs the 47th Synod Meeting 2025

At the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 the new Acting Moderator will receive the Scarf of office and prayer at the Opening Service of Worship. The Acting Moderator will chair the 47th Synod Meeting. The Synod Standing Committee will monitor the time and expectations of the Acting Moderator over the ensuing 18 months and make adjustments to the arrangement as required and agreed upon with the Acting Moderator.

f) Moderator Search Committee

A Convenor for the Moderator Search Committee will be appointed at the 47th Synod Meeting 2025 as per Northern Synod By-Laws.

5. Proposals.

It is proposed that the Standing Committee resolve:

- a) To approve the process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator, as outlined in sect.4 of the Moderator Elect 2025 paper by the Northern Synod General Secretary.
- b) To request the Assembly Standing Committee to grant an exemption from the Regulations to allow the Northern Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator to be installed at the 47th Synod Meeting to be held on 3-6 April 2025 and to serve until 48th Meeting.

2.4. Moderator Elect Process

1. Introduction

At its 22nd February 2025 meeting the Synod Standing Committee resolved to:

- a) To approve the process and timeline for Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator, as outlined in sect.4 of the Moderator Elect 2025 paper by the Northern Synod General Secretary.
- b) To request the Assembly Standing Committee to grant an exemption from the Regulations to allow the Northern Synod Standing Committee to appoint an Acting Moderator to be installed at the 47th Synod Meeting to be held on 3-6 April 2025 and to serve until 48th Meeting.

2. Competencies for an Acting Moderator

Given the above arrangements for the role and main responsibilities of the Acting Moderator the Synod Standing Committee would be seeking the following competencies:

- a) An ability to give an account of their vocation to ministry and mission and their readiness to exercise public ministry.
- b) A demonstrated ability to live under a shared discipline.
- c) An ability to work with and to celebrate the diversity within the church.

- d) A commitment to the UCA covenant with First Peoples and working with NRCC towards self-determination.
- e) A trusting relationship with God that is marked by humility and reverence.
- f) An awareness of self and relationship; listening skills and pastoral understanding.
- g) A developed understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the various office holders within the life of the church and the ability to work closely with the National church.
- h) The ability to exercise leadership as appropriate.
- i) A developed understanding of the UCA regulations and constitution and how the UCA polity is demonstrated in each of the Councils of the church.

3. Discernment Process for the Synod Standing Committee

- a) Synod Standing Committee members consider and approach prospective members of the Northern Synod who are able to commit to 18 months in the role of the Acting Moderator and who demonstrate the above competencies, completing the attached form.
- b) The nomination forms are emailed to the General Secretary by the 5th March who will email all the nomination forms to the Synod Standing Committee at the end of day 5th March.
- c) The Synod Standing Committee prayerfully considers the nominations in preparation for the Synod Standing Committee meeting on Saturday the 8th March.
- d) At the Synod Standing Committee meeting on the 8th March, all nominations are discussed and an anonymous ballot is cast for each nominee.
- e) The General Secretary, PPNA chair and NRCC chair meet with the preferred nominee to contribute to the discernment of the Synod Standing Committee by reporting back to the Synod Standing Committee by email.
- f) All nominations remain confidential and the name of the appointed Acting Moderator at the 8th March meeting remain confidential until the name is made public by the General Secretary, after the Assembly Standing Committee meeting on 14-16 March 2025

3. Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC)

Introduction

The Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC) is a regional committee of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and also a Presbytery of the Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. NRCC members come from more than 28 Aboriginal congregations and faith communities throughout the Northern Synod, across four different ministry areas: East Arnhem, West Arnhem, West Kimberley (Western Australia), and the Anangu region (from Aputula across to the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara Lands of South Australia and into Western Australia). The NRCC Full Council traditionally meets in the lead up to the Northern Synod in Session, with members elected from its congregations and faith communities. Area Ministry Councils provide general oversight for the work of the congregations and faith communities in their region. Area Councils also elect members for the NRCC Executive that meets at least twice each year and is responsible for governance, property and finance, and strategic planning for the ministry and mission of the NRCC.

Significant Events:

Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM passed away on June 18, 2024. Rev Dr Gondarra was an eminent Aboriginal and Uniting Church leader, and a prophetic voice to the nation. His passing will have an impact on the ministry and mission of NRCC for years to come.

NRCC welcomed its new Resource Worker, Rev Dr Peter Hobson. Peter has visited each of the four Ministry Areas and a large number of the NRCC congregations and communities. The Resource Worker's major focus is to lead NRCC staff to support the work of First Peoples towards self-determination in their ministry and mission.

Anangu region (APY Lands)

The Anangu Ministry Area consists of congregations and faith communities from across the Anangu, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands including Amata, Alice Springs, Aputula, Fregon, Indulkana, Pipalyatjara/Kalka, Mimili, and Pukatja. NRCC is responsible for various properties throughout the APY Lands in different townships including accommodation and Bible translation centre in Pukatja.

We have two Bush Chaplains working in APY Lands – Jill Doolan (East) and Yanima Bryant (West). NRCC has recently appointed a part-time Support Worker (David Young) to work predominantly with Yanima (Pukatja west to Wingellina).

In September there was a memorial service for Pastor Graham Kulyuru from Pukatja. People came from all over the Synod to honour this remarkable Anangu leader.

The Anangu Area Ministry Council met in October 2024, for the first time since 2021. New NRCC Executive members were elected, and stories were shared about the importance of the Bible translation work.

East Arnhem

The East Arnhem Area consists of congregations and faith communities from Barrkira, Gangan Homelands, Dhalinbuy, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunyajarra, Lajarra/Gumurr-Rawarraṅ, Milingimbi, Raminginṅ, Yirrkala, and other homeland communities.

The East Arnhem Area Ministry Council (EAAMC) met at Galiwin'ku in November 2024, after a long hiatus. The EAAMC proposed three names to be considered as candidates for ordination to the NRCC Executive: Djawut Goṅḍarra, Yurranydjil Dhurrkay and Marrpalawuy Marika. Stephen Malwarriwuy Dhamarraṅḍji was also asked to be considered for the ministry of Pastor.

The NRCC Educator, Pastor Yurranydjil Dhurrkay, has concluded her placement after 10 years of faithful service in the role. Yurranydjil has been a wonderful blessing to NRCC, and will continue to serve the church as a valued leader and disciple of Jesus.

West Arnhem

The West Arnhem Area consists of congregations and faith communities from Maningrida, Minjilang, Waruwi, and other homeland communities.

The West Arnhem Area Ministry is supported by a full-time Support Worker/Bush Chaplain, James Hughes. This has been a supply position for the last 12 months and is currently being reviewed. We hope to advertise for

a permanent full-time position and fill this placement in the second half of the year.

On Christmas Day 2024, Rev David Mirrwana passed away. Rev Mirrwana was a servant of the church for many decades, a significant Congress leader, and beloved by all who knew him – from the salt-water country down into the desert. He will be sorely missed. His memorial service will be held at Maningrida on June 23, 2025. There will be more details to come as the planning process develops.

NRCC staff will meet with Maningrida church leaders at the end of February to discuss how the congregation transitions its leadership and ministry for the future.

The Jabiru congregation is taking a request to join NRCC to the NRCC Full Council in March 2025.

The NRCC Executive plans to hold one of its meetings at Maningrida later this year.

West Kimberley

West Kimberley Ministry Area is focussed on Mowanjum congregation in Western Australia.

There is a lot of work needed to build up the congregation for mission and ministry to their community. Kirsty Burgu is a faithful leader to her community, but she needs more support. The NRCC Resource Worker will visit later this year to meet with local leaders to discuss how we can grow and strengthen this important ministry into the future.

Darwin

Darwin Ministry seeks to minister to First Peoples across the Darwin Metropolitan area, including hospital and prison ministry and connecting with Nungalinga staff and students.

Sunday morning worship and fellowship has recommenced at Nungalinga College. Numbers are presently small but there is hope that the ministry will grow as the Semester begins. This service will provide opportunities for

students to use their gifts and offer care and support for one another. Rev Djawanydjawany Gōṇḍarra is providing leadership to this ministry and is supported by the NRCC Resource Worker. It is hoped that this service may also be able to support chaplain ministry to the hospital and prison.

Nungalinya College

Nungalinya College is a ministry training college for First Peoples, formally supported by the Uniting Church in Australia, in partnership with the Anglican, Catholic churches.

Nungalinya College farewelled Principal Dr Ben van Gelderen and family on Friday Dec 15, 2024, and the new principal Dr Yane Damanik is already in place and her commencement service will be held at Nungalinya on February 21.

NRCC has three Nungalinya staff placements: two Theology Teachers and a Student Dean. The Uniting Church had 116 students studying at Nungalinya in 2024 (increased from 92 in 2023) out of a total of 385 students attending the college. In 2024, the UCA represented the biggest student cohort (Catholic: 81; Anglican 77; Lutheran 69; others 42).

The tragic passing of Rev Dr Michelle Cook has had a huge impact on all of us. She will be sorely missed as a beloved sister in Christ, a friend and colleague, and as a teacher and mentor to many. NRCC has advertised for a new Theology Teacher at the college and we hope to have someone in placement to begin July 1, 2025.

NRCC Executive

Chairperson: Rev Djawanydjawany Gōṇḍarra

Deputy Chairperson: Jamie Nyangu

East Arnhem: Convenor (tba), Member (tba), Alternate (tba),

West Arnhem: Convenor (Jimmy Pascoe), Member (Rosemary Urabadi), Alternate (tba).

West Kimberley: Convenor (Kirsty Burgu)

APY: Convenor (Benyi Stewart), Member (Tjulyata Tjilya), Alternate (Marlene Boko)

Darwin: (tba)

UAICC Representative: Jill Doolan

The NRCC Executive met in August and November 2024.

A key point summary of the executive meetings includes the following:

- Jamie Nyaningu was elected Deputy Chairperson
- The 2025 Budget was approved.
- Strategic plans relating to ministry, mission and property were approved.
- Area Ministry Councils will meet at least once each year.
- David Mirrawana was approved for ordination.
- Djawut Gondarra, Yurranydjil Dhurrkay and Marrpalawuy Marika were accepted as candidates for ordained ministry.
- Stephen Malwarriwuy Dhamarrandji and Marlene Boko were accepted as candidates for the ministry of Pastor.

It was also resolved to have an NRCC Executive meeting at Maningrida in 2025.

NRCC Staff

Resource Worker: Rev Dr Peter Hobson

Administration Manager: David Forsyth

Administration Officer: Sebasti Ward

Administration Support Officer: Rosie Scott

Research Support Worker: Howard Amery

Nungalinya Staff

Theology Teacher: vacant

Theology Teacher: Rev Dr Amos Leana

Uniting Church Dean of Students: Doreen Leana

(Coordinate Resource Worker: Louise Macdonald)

Bush Chaplains / Support Workers

APY Lands (East): Jill Doolan (Bush Chaplain); Support Worker (vacant)

APY Lands (West): Yanima Bryant (Bush Chaplain); David Young (Support Worker)

Darwin: N/A

East Arnhem: Vacant

West Arnhem: James Hughes (Support Worker/Bush Chaplain)

West Kimberley: vacant

NRCC staff continue to work hard to support NRCC members as together we work towards self-determination for First Peoples and their mission and ministry.

Howard Amery has begun working for NRCC as a Research Support Person. Howard will work on special projects as needed, and be available to the wider church to assist with matters of language and culture. Howard is teaching a Yolŋu culture and language class at Uniting House on Tuesday mornings from 9am-10am (also available online).

The General Secretary and NRCC Resource Worker attended an APY language and culture course in Adelaide in January. It was a wonderful course and is highly recommended. It is hoped that other NRCC leaders may be able to attend in future years.

Yurranydjil Dhurrkay has concluded her role as Yolŋu and Arrakpi Educator. She has given wonderful service to NRCC for more than ten years in this role. Yurranydjil will continue to serve NRCC as she candidates for ordination, and also offers leadership with her important Bible translation work.

National Congress

The Purpose for UAICC is for first peoples to be autonomous and live freely in decision-making as we minister with First Peoples and engage all peoples in theological, culturally-safe and holistic ways.

The priorities and plans for Congress include the following:

- **Partnerships:** Build trust-centred respectful relationships at local, state and national level to support the spiritual and economic growth of First Peoples.
- **Self Determination:** To be respected in our decision-making capabilities.
- **Youth:** To pay particular attention to the spiritual formation of young people.
- **Congregations and Faith Communities:** Live out our right to worship in ways that reflect the deep spiritual connections we have to God's creation.
- **Leaders of the Future:** Equip faith leaders to minister and administer throughout the life of our church communities.

National Executive of UAICC met in November 2025. We were unable to have any NRCC Members present at the meeting, but our Administration Manager was able to attend. NRCC submitted a proposal for UAICC funding for one of the Nungalinya teaching positions. This was agreed to

by the UAICC Executive and a commitment has been made for the next three years.

Property

The NRCC Property Strategy calls for a comprehensive property audit. We have property assets across three different state jurisdictions. Within the Northern Territory we are seeking legal advice about our responsibilities and liabilities in relation to Section 18 and Section 19 of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976). The situation in Derby (WA) and APY Lands (SA) is quite different. We are also currently forming a Property Committee with NRCC members making informed decisions in relation to property management and strategic decision making. Many thanks to Ross Coburn and David Forsyth for their considerable experience and insight in relation to these matters.

Finance

The 2025 NRCC Budget was approved by the NRCC Executive in November 2024.

Our budgeted income is approximately \$1.955M (but could be as high as \$2.255M or as low as \$1.755M). Our main income sources come from rental income from Darwin properties, Frontier Services, and interest on investments.

Our budget prioritises ministry and mission, staff, travel, meetings, and property – while making appropriate contributions in relation to our shared tenancy of Uniting House.

We are still working on processes that will give staff (and congregations) greater transparency in relation to operational accounts.

Many thanks to Shane and Richard for the work they are doing to help us.
(see financial report for more detail)

Mission / Risk

As I write this report the Coordinate Translation workshop is underway with significant contributions from NRCC members. It is wonderful to see our congregation leaders energised by the work of translation.

NRCC Members attended the UCA Polity course at Nungalinya College, Feb 3-7. This was mandatory for NRCC ministry candidates and was a great opportunity for teaching and learning and fellowship. We hope to take different versions of this course to homelands so that our leaders can teach our members on country and in their heart language.

Our greatest risks moving forward relate to our property portfolio and our leadership capacity. Our properties need much work. Some of our properties have contested stories. Some of our properties may provide a source of income. Some of our properties are a health and safety risk. Needless to say, our property portfolio will look very different in five years time.

In the last twelve months significant NRCC leaders have passed away, leaving a considerable vacuum in relation to skills and experience. But this is also an opportunity to grow new leaders for the future. NRCC will be focussing on leadership training and formation over the next five years.

Rev Dr Peter Hobson
NRCC Support Worker

4. Coordinate

The Gupapuyngu and Pitjatjantjarra projects continue to flourish and we pray that others will be invigorated by workshops that have happened and are being planned.

In late July 2024 there was a gathering of some of the Elcho translators at Dharrwar homeland that gave opportunity for translators to think strategically about the future of their projects. Two outcomes for this gathering were firstly to recognise the need for each project to have a Yolŋu person driving the work rather than relying on one Yolŋu person to drive all the projects. Secondly, recognising that Dharrwar could be a good location for regular translation work.

The National Bible Translation Collaboration met in Melbourne in September, providing more opportunities for learning, resource sharing and communication with our partnering organisations. This collaboration is now

known as SAIL (Scripture for Australian Indigenous Languages) and will launch logo and website in February 2025. Much of the reinvigoration of Bible translation work in Australia is the result of strengthened partnerships through this group.

At Nungalinya, the Certificate 2 in Indigenous translation continues as Father Mark Woloszyn settles into his role as the translation coordinator. The first block for the Bininj Kunwok language groups happened in September 2024 and we congratulate Sandra Makurlngu on her role as this co-teacher for this block, along with her appointment to the Board of the Bininj Kunwok Regional Language and Culture Resource Centre. The second Yolŋu block happened in October 2024 with Hannah Harper as the lead teacher. In 2025 The Yolŋu cohort will complete their final block and I will join Fr Mark and Sandra as a co teacher for the Bininj Kunwok second block.

In November last year there was a new translators workshop held at Nungalinya and run by AuSIL. It was spectacularly well attended. A huge work load for those running it but very well received by those participating. It was an opportunity for beginner translators to experience the translation process from selecting a passage to producing a Scripture Engagement product. This followed the Yolŋu cohort of the Certificate 2 in translation at Nungalinya so these students were able to put their training into practice.

Our biannual newsletter was in the post in time to take advantage of the pre Christmas generosity. Our print run is now 550 with about 250 names on our mailing list. We have a number of groups and churches that still want multiple copies to distribute.

In January the first week of the annual T-TRIM cross cultural competency workshop was held. With 28 participants attending for the first three days of Working and living in Community and then 14 continued on for the Health day and the Security day. It has been the first year that the security day has been offered and it was very successful, so we look forward to see how that will evolve over time.

The translation centre in Maningrida continues to be used by translators, linguists and Nungalinya.

As this report is written we are preparing for an experienced translator workshop to be held at Nungalinga from 10th to 21st of February. There will be 24 translators, 22 of whom are working languages spoken in NRCC areas, so this is very much a Coordinate workshop. The theme will be 'The Names of God' which was an idea that grew out of the November workshop where translators realised they could not only use the work for Father in their translations. Everyone is getting excited as this is the first experienced translators workshop since 2019 when we held a workshop in Gove.

The Governance structure that SSC ratified at the last meeting will be presented to translators in a planning session in the second week of the workshop. In preparation for this Yurranydjil will be telling the Turtle Hunting story which is a very useful story for thinking through partnership and decision making process within the translation journey.

Louise Macdonald
Coordinate Resource Worker

5. Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia (PPNA)

'I want you woven into a tapestry of love' from Colossians 2:2 in The Message version of the Bible is the theme that Rev Dr Michelle Cook chose for this Synod meeting. We have all been affected by her death and members of the PPNA Standing Committee and the whole of PPNA, miss her greatly. She was brilliant at connecting us, inspiring us, leading us. Her energy and enthusiasm drove endless achievements, and her brilliant brain contained so much knowledge and wisdom. But it was her heart of love for everyone, first and second peoples, that helped to continually weave us together, PPNA and NRCC, the Northern Synod. And so, as we who remain must carry on, we do so with her memory and legacy woven into our hearts forever. Thank you, Michelle.

And because we are woven together 'every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith'. Galatians 6:10 The Message.

Even though we come from different congregations, faith communities, and agencies, it is when we come together as a Presbytery and a Synod that we are reminded of our connectivity, like threads of a tapestry, each relying on the others to hold us together and how we must work for the benefit of all. This is critically important as we face many challenges and changes. At our PPNA meeting in October, we asked our members to consider, ‘What will I do to help people in my ministry context prepare for change?’ and ‘What will I do to help transitions go smoothly?’ These questions remain relevant as we navigate 2025 and beyond.

PPNA Joys and Concerns since our last gathering in October 2024.

- Ministers’ and Pastors’ retreat 7th – 9th October with Rev Dr Sunny Chen as guest speaker
- Presbytery Standing Committee meetings 6th Oct, 11th Nov, 24th Feb
- PPNA has no income, but enough funds left for 2025 and hopefully to see us through any transition times.
- There is potential for a small amount interest income if congregations agree to share their interest earned, in the spirit of working together.
- PPNA Congregations are working through their money stories in co-operation with Synod office staff and much progress has been made. There is still a way to go, but we are grateful to all staff and treasurers for the positive progress made.
- Rev Dr Peter Hobson inducted as NRCC Resource worker 19th November 2024
- Rev Deacon Felicity Amery moved from part-time to full-time at Nightcliff Uniting from 1st January 2025
- Rev Viliami Mila inducted to Casuarina Uniting Church on Friday 31st January 2025. A six month check in will be scheduled for the end of July
- Pastor Amy Lasslett inducted to Tennant Creek Uniting Church on Sunday 9th Feb 2025 and engaged as ARRCs Pulkapulkka Kari Aged Care Tennant Creek Chaplain from 1st March 2025. A six month check in will be scheduled for August
- Mr Peter Jones will resign from FAPS, the Property Committee and as PPNA Treasurer effective at this meeting and we thank him for all his years of dedicated to service to our presbytery and Synod.

- Rev Tony Goodluck finishes his term as Moderator at this meeting. Rev Tony set the Synod record for most amount of General Secretary changes during his time and has been the steady rudder guiding us along the bumpy seas. Rev Tony has conducted his role with grace, humility, quiet passion and dedication. We thank Tony for sharing his story with us and pray God's blessings upon his long service leave and next chapters. In Tony's words, 'The best is yet to come'.
- The JNC at Alice Springs UC continues the search for a part time Community Engagement Pastor.
- There are 5 people doing Periods of Discernment. They attended Heritage, Polity and Theology of UC training in Feb.
- 2 Vitality of Calls were conducted
- A safe church information session was conducted
- PSC Chair and PPRC Chair along with the Moderator and General Secretary will attend Discipline Regulations Training in March as there have been some changes implemented by Assembly
- Two discipline matters have been resolved and finalised and one is being investigated
- At our October meeting we were buoyed to hear many good news ministry stories from around our presbytery
- We give thanks for the Placements & Pastoral Relations Committee Chairperson, Benj Quilliam and members of the committee for the ongoing work they do for PPNA. There are many moving parts and Benj has had to become a master juggler. Please pray for this committee often.
- We also give our thanks to Heidi McKelvie who gives so much of her time and talent to support both the PPRC and PSC. These committees would be lost without her support
- And lastly, we give our thanks to our new General Secretary, Rev Janet Staines, who hit the ground running the moment she arrived and has barely taken a breath since. Thank you, Janet, for committing to the Northern Synod and leading and guiding us through some tough decisions and giving us stability and hope for a better future.

In times of change we need to step into and embrace certain uncertainty. If we 'walk by faith and not by sight' (2 Cor 5:7) that doesn't mean we walk into the future with blind faith, but we walk with confidence in God and each other. What keeps us hoping and keeps us persevering is knowing that God will

enable and empower us as we cooperate and collaborate with the help of the Spirit and each other. Woven together we walk into the future.

Lauren Merritt
Presbytery Chairperson

6. Northern Synod Placements Committee

Since last Synod Meetings (4 April 2024), to 17 March, 2025

Membership and Attendance (NOTE: not all were members for the whole year):

	Attended	Apology	Absent
Benjamin Quilliam (Chair)	8		
Hazel Trudgen	7	1	
Gail Cresswell (co-opted*)	7		
Susana Saffu (Resigned October)	2	3	
Rev Carol Bennett (co-opted*)	2	1	
Heidi McKelvie (minute taker)	7		
Rev Linda Hansen (Gen Sec delegate, finished May)	1		1
David Forsyth (NRCC co-opted, on leave*)	1	2	
Joanna Keighley	5	3	
Rev Maratja Dhamarrandji (NRCC)		4	4
Rev Peter Hobson (NRCC co-opted, started June)*	5		
Rev Janet Staines (Started June)	6	1	
Lauren Merritt (corresponding member, PPNA Chair)	2	2	
Rev Tony Goodluck (corresponding member, Moderator)		1	

*Note: according to the Regulations the Synod Standing Committee elects additional members to the Placements Committee (Reg 3.7.4.2(iv))

Introduction

Thanks to the members of the Committee for their commitment to the business of the Committee, despite sickness and short timelines. I (Benjamin) spent quite a bit of time getting my head around everything as I

had never been on a Placements Committee before. We were in a holding pattern until Janet got started, and then things started rolling along quite nicely! Rev Janet has brought her extensive experience, including as a former Presbytery Minister, to good use. Compliance and record-keeping needed a lot of work. We are starting to get on top of it thanks to Janet drafting a whole lot of new policies and handbooks for the Synod. The Synod digital filing system has made things challenging at times. We will hopefully see some movement on filling NRCC placements this year.

Placements Filled or Varied

1. NRCC Resource Worker: Rev Peter Hobson commenced Placement 1 June 2024 (full-time)
2. Synod General Secretary: Rev Janet Staines commenced placement 1 June 2024 (full-time)
3. Congregational Minister, Tennant Creek Uniting Church: Pastor Amy Lasslett commenced February 2025 (0.4FTE)
4. Congregational Minister, Casuarina Uniting Church: Rev Viliami Mila commenced January 2025 (full-time) – Inter-Synod transfer.
5. Congregational Minister, Nightcliff Uniting Church: Rev Felicity Amery has moved from 0.8FTE to Full-time, as of 1 January 2025.
6. Moderator: Rev Tony Goodluck's Terms of Placement were varied to fit with the timeline of his finishing as Moderator.
7. Chaplain, ARRCs Pulkapulka Kari Aged Care Tennant Creek: Pastor Amy Lasslett commenced as a 0.2FTE chaplain in March 2025.
8. Changes in Terms of Placement for Rev Felicity Amery at Nightcliff Uniting Church.
9. Moderator placement will be filled by Rev Felicity Amery at 0.2FTE, appointed by Synod Standing Committee as a type of Supply, following exemptions by Assembly Standing Committee.

Placements Vacant

1. In October we approved a position description for a Community Minister in ASUC (0.5FTE). This is in addition to Rev Emily Hayes, Congregational Minister. (PPNA placement – 1 name provided so far)
2. PPNA Resource Worker? Currently no funding for this, not being pursued at this point.
3. AARCS Director of Mission position (Synod placement) (0.2FTE) – Difficult to fill as an 0.2FTE position

4. Tennant Barkley Remote Area, Frontier Services Bush Chaplain. Currently under review.
5. There are several PPNA placements that are always being filled by supply ministry. Some of these need supply only at certain times of the year, some have part-time supply arrangements.
6. Lecturer, Nungalinga: In process

Other Work

1. An NRCC Position Description template was approved that can be used by the NRCC exec to develop placements it sees as relevant. NRCC exec decisions are to be reported back to Placements. The hope is that this will speed up the process of filling NRCC vacancies and reduce unnecessary complexity. It also honours NRCC's self-determination.
2. List/roll of ministers – Work In Progress (this is a responsibility of PPNA, NRCC and Placements). This includes compliance with things such as Ochre Cards and National Police Checks.
3. Acting Moderator was the work of Synod Standing Committee, as it is filling a vacancy. However, Placements Committee was briefed on the process followed.

Inter-Synod Transfers

1. Rev Viliami Mila came to us from the Queensland Synod
2. Rev Fiona Winn (retired) came to us from the VIC/TAS Synod and is living in Nhulunbuy

Possibilities for other Placements

Frontier Services: East Arnhem, Kimberley, Mowanjum, Yulara, Katherine (including Emergency Response Chaplaincy), Tennant Creek. Frontier Services has scope to fund more Bush Chaplains.

Agencies: Janet is looking to extend the chaplaincy network in our agencies. There are exciting possibilities

NRCC: Support workers for APY Lands, West Kimberley, East Arnhem (0.5FTE each?)

Benjamin Quilliam

Pastoral Relations Committee Chair

pprc@ns.uca.org.au

7. U.C.A. Property Trust (N.T.)

The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (N.T.) exists as a corporation, being the legal entity of the Northern Synod. The Trust is needed because legally, the Northern Synod was established by an Act of the Northern Territory Parliament in 1977. All the other Uniting Church Synods also have their own Property Trust.

As the legal body of the Synod, the Trust deals with property and other contracts where use of the Synod seal as the legal stamp of the Synod is required.

The Trust's members are the Moderator, Synod General Secretary, Synod Property Officer and five other people appointed by the Synod. The Trust has met as needed, usually on the same day as meetings of the FAPS Committee, to carry out matters referred to it by the General Secretary or the Property Officer.

Usually these matters are to give effect to property decisions, eg to sell a property, made by the Synod Standing Committee. A list of properties sold over the past 18 months is contained in the report to Synod from the Synod Property Officer.

As Chair of the Property Trust I wish to thank Trust members Rev. Tony Goodluck, Rev. Janet Staines, Matthew Kennon, John McLaren, Richard Trudgen and Eric Neil and Property Officer Ross Coburn for their service since the last Synod meeting.

Peter Jones

Chairperson, The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (N.T.)

8. Property Sales and Finance Update

In July 2023 it was identified there existed both a significant debt (\$6.45M) and a number of underutilised assets that was reflecting poorly on the financial position of the UCA Northern Synod. It was determined that a debt reduction and disposal of assets strategy be established to maximise property usage and values and to extinguish the debt.

The FAPS Committee and the Executive Team developed the strategy and the below reflects details of Property Trust matters that have been transacted over the past 18 months to achieve total debt reduction and disposal of underutilised or future negative cashflow producing assets. Monthly loan repayments to UC Invest continued until all debt was paid off.

1. **4 Coolibah Street** – The property was vacant and sold for \$1,000,000 with settlement occurring on 17 November 2023. Net proceeds from sale were \$970,268 which was then used to payout the Searcy Street Loan with UC Invest (\$795,000) with the balance allocated off the remaining loan which was utilised to purchase Todd Mall Alice Springs properties.
2. **2 Railway Street** – The Northern Synod's home office which was owned 50/50 Synod and NRCC – sold for \$2,100,000 with settlement occurring 20 April 2024. Net proceeds from the sale were \$2,039,701 with \$1,019,850 paid to NRCC for investment and \$1,019,850 (Synod's share) allocated to pay off the UC Invest Todd Mall Loan.
3. **56 Loch Street Derby** – Old dilapidated Church with no local congregation - This properties title, because located in Western Australia, is under the WA Property Trust and with their approval the property was placed on the market. The sale price was \$100,000 which, after expenses to sell and 10% paid to the WA Property Trust were deducted, a net amount of \$80,604 on settlement (9 May 2024) was received by the Northern Synod and allocated into general funds.
4. **30 First Street Katherine** – Old Church property occupied by two small Not-For-Profit (NFP) organisations - sold for \$1,100,000 with settlement occurring 14 September 2024. Net proceeds from the sale were \$1,065,635 which was then used to further offset the Todd Mall UC Invest loan. Ongoing leases for the two NFP's were implement with the buyer prior to sale.

5. **68 Gsell Street** – The property was vacant and sold for \$710,000 with a net settlement received 29 July 2024 of \$642,272. This amount was then paid down against the UC Invest Todd Mall loan.
6. **Searcy Street** – Retail asset identified for demolition – the property either had to be demolished (quoted cost of \$2.3M) or a significant amount of money spent on it (between \$6M to \$12M) to make it fully compliant for occupation again. In both circumstances we did not have the cashflow to do either of these options – The property sold for \$2,000,000 on 24 July 24 with settlement occurring on 14 October 2024. The net settlement amount of \$1,947,321 was then paid off the UC Invest Todd Mall Loan (Balance remaining \$648,000).
7. **40 Robinson Street** – Investment Property in Broome - This properties title, because located in Western Australia, is under the WA Property Trust and with their approval the property was placed on the market. The sale price was \$1.5M with net proceeds of \$1,453,108 firstly allocated against the balance of the UC Invest debt and then the balance placed in an interest-bearing account
8. **2 Railway Street Office Lease** – after a 6 months' rent-free period a 3-year lease was negotiated with the new owner and a lease was signed at \$11,000/mth plus \$1,336.20/mth outgoings. This renewal provides us a Office location for at a reasonable price and delays any relocation costs that would have been incurred.

Ross Coburn,
Property and Finance Manager, Northern Synod

9. Northern Synod Finance and Property Services (FAPS)

Since the 46th Synod Meeting the FAPS Committee met eleven times.

Members

Mr Matthew Kennon (Chairperson, 2022-2025)

Rev Tony Goodluck (Moderator, ex-officio)

Rev Janet Staines (General Secretary, ex-officio)

Mr Peter Jones (PPNA member, 2022-2025)

Mr Eric Neil (Synod member, 2022-2025)

Mr John McLaren (PPNA member, 2022-2025)

Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra (NRCC member, 2024-2027)

Mr Richard Trudgen (Synod member, 2024-2027)

Participants Standing Associated

Mr Richard Telfer (Director of Finance)

Mr Ross Coburn (Executive Officer Property)

Rev Dr Peter Hobson (NRCC Support)

Ms Heidi McKelvie (Minutes Secretary)

Thank you to Chairperson Mr Matthew Kennon who has led the committee since 2022 and will not be renominating for the role of Chair. Thank you to Mr Peter Jones who has served on the Committee for many years.

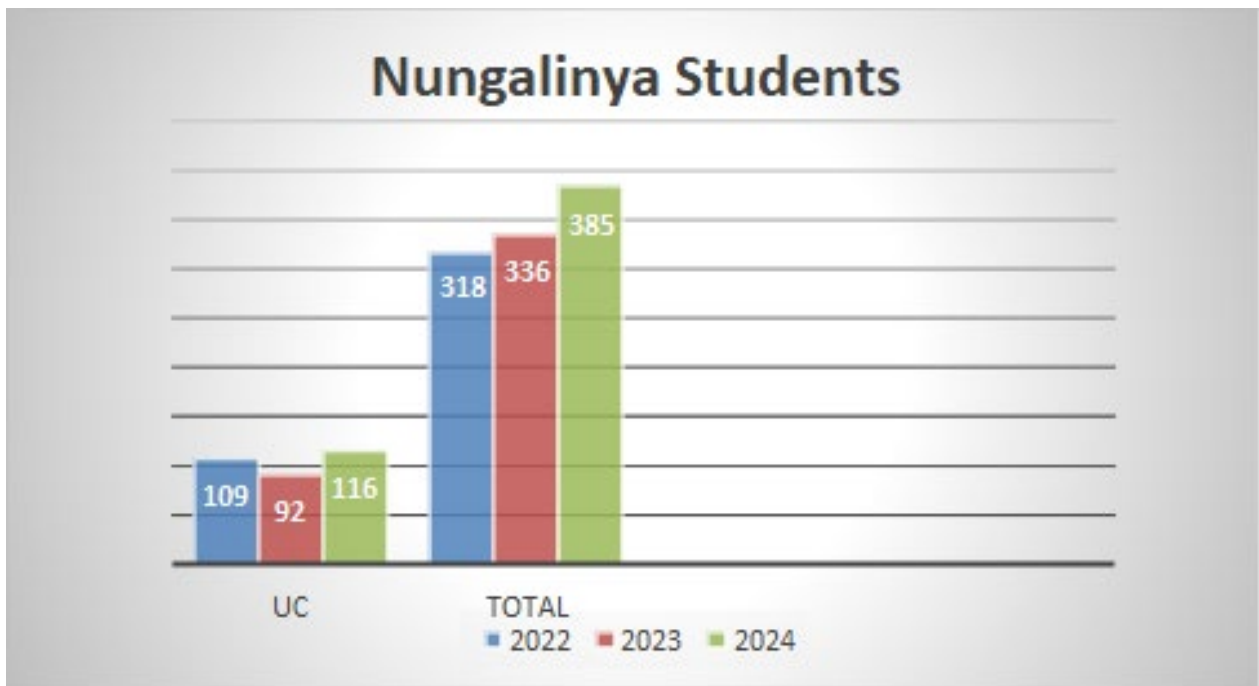
10. Nungalinya College



Gunga'yunmirr / Working together By Sal Moes- Nungalinya Art Teacher

Looking back... 2024

We thank God for the growth the college experienced in various areas last year. The strong growth in student enrolments was encouraging (Please see the chart below) . Alongside this, the increase in Indigenous Trainers in all classes has provided much-needed support and created a more dynamic and enriching learning environment. The Nungalinya site has also experienced some good renewal. The upgrades on the dining hall, the completion of two new classrooms and a new laundry were some of the improvements that helped the college operate more smoothly. In addition, the three (3) Bible Gardens and the Bush Tucker which incorporated Nungalinya artist work have also made a big impression of staff, students and visitors in a lovely way. We began the new 'Children's Ministry' and 'Making Disciples' courses for church leaders. Many wonderful graduation nights happened, celebrating student's hard work. Sadly, this year we were deeply saddened by the loss of our dear sister and much-loved teacher, Rev Michelle Cook. Her passing has profoundly impacted both staff and students in many ways. The year ended with us farewelling and thanking Ben van Gelderen for his wonderful work over the past six years as the Nungalinya principal.



Looking Ahead...2025

We began this year with a reflection on Ecclesiastes 3 which reminds us to enjoy life in every season because God is always good and in control. In one of our PD sessions, we took time to reflect and discuss the vision and mission of Nunglinya. The metaphor of rowing the boat together in sync was a helpful reminder of our commitment to work in unity and harmony for the task that lies ahead of us. One of the keys focus of this academic year is to engage more deeply with and implement Both Ways approach to teaching and learning. A key strategy for achieving this is by incorporating arts into all of our courses, providing more opportunities for Indigenous staff and integrating Indigenous ways of teaching and learning into our practices. We will continue to offer the 'Foundation Studies' and 'Ministry & Theology' courses. The 'Faith and Family Wellbeing,' 'Bible Translation,' Children and Youth Ministry courses continue this year.



**Photo: Rikili Garrawura,
UC Art teacher**

Nungalinya is a special place. Students travel from varied places to learn, grow, and fellowship with others from many different communities, while also having opportunities to rest and

refresh before returning to their home communities. Many past and present students have expressed how important Nungalinya is for their spiritual growth and wellbeing.

The Northern Synod and Nungalinya has a long historical partnership since its beginning which continues today. As we continue to work together for the ministry of the Gospel in the lives of our students, we are reminded do so as “faithful stewards of God’s grace” (1 Peter 4:10).

Yours in Christ,

Yane Damanik,
Principal

11. Somerville Community Services

Somerville has had a very busy year both in the Top End and Central Australia.

Long-term CEO Lawson Broad has relocated to Sydney and we kindly thank Lawson for all that he has done for Somerville over the past 7 years.

For me as someone who started childcare with Somerville in Rapid Creek in 1979 it’s been an absolute privilege to join the organisation as CEO. From my previous role as NT Chief Minister and as long-term Territorian I have an intrinsic understanding of all levels of government and the unique operating environment here in the NT. I previously oversaw the historic transition of disability services in the NT to the NDIS and I’ve always advocated for the rights of a person with a disability.

The services and support of Somerville make a difference to Territorians by helping them live the life they want to live with individualised, person-centred care.

Our people here at Somerville do a wonderful job, ensuring the care and support to some of the most vulnerable in the community. We recently signed a new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and have now implemented that for

our staff. We provide services in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs. We create a peaceful and supportive environment

NDIS pricing continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing NDIS providers. Already marginal funding that is no longer keeping pace with inflation along with the increasing cost of delivering services is a challenge. Despite this, Somerville maintains a financially sustainable position. We continue to welcome new participants into our services across all regions.

The team at Somerville work hard in the delivery of Supported Independent Living Services and the development and management of Specialist Disability Accommodation. We have strong relationships across the sector and will continue to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities, influence policy and lead sector development related to the NDIS framework.

We recently farewell with a state funeral the Hon Austin Asche AC KC, our former Somerville patron. “We give thanks for the life of our wonderful, long serving patron, he always made Somerville a priority, with his friendship, loyalty, wisdom, good humour, and thorough dedication.” These were the words from Somerville board member Chris Tudor in the official funeral order tribute. We have been keeping Austin’s family especially his daughter Wendy, who is a board member in our thoughts, and we are grateful for everything he has done for the organization.

We are grateful for the support of the Uniting Church particularly the Northern Synod. Somerville is a member of UnitingCare and as organisation we benefit from this collaboration by being part of a large professional network. We look forward to working together and sharing Somerville Sunday later in the year.

Natasha Fyles

Chief Executive Officer, Somerville

12. Aboriginal Resource and Development Services Aboriginal Corporation (ARDS)

When the ARDS djägamirr team (managers) meet and do our planning, we usually start by thinking about three things:

1. Djämamirr (workers);
2. Djäma (work); and
3. Rrupiya (money).

Our first concern is our people – they must be strong, confident and skilled in order to do good work. Then we think carefully about the right way to do our work and how that work will help Yolŋu families and communities. Then we think about managing our money carefully so that our djämamirr and djäma stays strong. All three of these things must be strong and in balance for us to be a healthy organisation that properly serves Yolŋu families.

This year, I'm pleased that we continue to grow in each of these key areas. Accross the organisation, we see people becoming more skilled and confident in their work. We continue to attract high-quality applicants when we advertise, which I see as a sign of ARDS' good reputation for high quality work and being a good place to work.

We had a few changes at our djägamirr level, with Dikuḷ Baker starting as Djägamirr for the Language and Resources team, after Bulkanhawuy's decision to step back from day-to-day management. Gawura and Bulkanhawuy put significant thought into selecting the next generation of leadership for the language team. Dikuḷ has now been joined by Salome Harris and I'm excited to see the many ways that the ARDS Language Centre will contribute to strong and vibrant Yolŋu languages under Dikuḷ and Salome's leadership. We also had a small restructure this year, with the Radio team and Creative Media team combining into a single team, under the ongoing strong and capable leadership of Sylvia Nulpinditj and Will Porter.

The continued growth of the Community Development team means that we're creating more autonomous teams with special areas of focus. We now have a dedicated Law and Justice team, and a Families and Healing team. I want to thank all the staff who have put time and effort into building these teams.

One area of concern for us at the staffing level, and one that is shared by many Yolŋu organisations, is the health of many senior ŋalapal (elders), who have provided crucial leadership and deep knowledge over many decades. This year we have seen a number of key senior staff need to reduce their workloads for health reasons. This has reinforced for us the importance of our work in making sure that Yolŋu dhäruk (languages) and Rom (law) are being passed on to the next generation. Not only do we work to achieve this in homelands and communities, we need to actively create space for this sharing of knowledge between young and old ARDS staff in our day-to-day work.

At the djäma level, I want to highlight the high quality and significant work that has happened in Gapuwiyak, focusing around Yolŋu parenting and increased local control over looking after children, including in difficult Child Protection issues. As part of that work Melody Dale and Wutpurŋu Wunuŋmurra led a team that engaged in deep discussions across families around parenting and impacts of Child Protection services. The report they wrote is insightful and goes to a depth that few reports are able to capture. I recommend it to anyone doing work related to parenting and families.

The local decision-making agreements that occurred in both Raminginiŋ and Gapuwiyak are a testament to the amazing outcomes that can be achieved when Yolŋu decision-making processes and structures are given the time and space to plan and reach consensus, with minimal interference from Balanda agendas. I look forward to these stories of strength spreading and creating more confidence in local leaders' ability to set their own agenda with government.

At the rrupiya level, we continue to see an increase in our overall revenue and ability to find suitable grants to match the work we do. I want to highlight the good work of the Radio and Creative Media team in working hard to broaden their income base, which has put the team in a much stronger position for the next few years. Securing long-term multi-year funding for some of our core areas of work does continue to be a challenge. We continue to face the reality that we don't receive core organisational funding and our income is made up of dozens of individual grants and fee-for-service initiatives. Managing all these funding sources requires significant internal time and attention.

This year was another strong financial year for us, with a surplus that helps contribute towards our long-term strategic financial goals. One factor that has helped us achieve this result is the increased confidence and ability of our project leaders and djägamirr to manage individual budgets. We're able to increase financial decision-making for people doing day-to-day on-the-ground work, which results in even more precise and innovative use of funds and assets. I see our collective increase in skills in this area as a sign that our internal capacity building efforts are giving us the results we hoped for.

Again, I thank all ARDS staff for their commitment and for working in skilled and ethical ways. You should be proud of the things you have done individually, and the positive impacts we're having as a broader team.

At the board level, I again extend my thanks and respect to the board. The board continues to provide stable and consistent leadership. We've started a process of solidifying our long-term strategic goals and core values and ways of working, which I hope to share with you all in next year's report.

Bilin'.

Ben Grimes (Wämut)

Chief Executive Officer, ARDS

Full ARDS annual report available at www.ards.com.au/reports



13. St Philip's College

It is a privilege to report on another year at St Philip's College. Consistent with our values to strive to be our best, to seek to find the truth and to care from the HEART with Honesty, Engagement, Acceptance, Respect and Trust, the Senior Leadership Team under Principal/CEO Leslie Tilbrook have worked constructively with the Board to focus on student and staff wellbeing, enhance the College culture and establish an inclusive environment in which young people can grow and thrive. This is a continuing journey and despite the documented but disquieting situation in and around Alice Springs, significant progress has been made, supported by appreciation of our sense of place and our Christian ethos.

For the 2024 school year, St Philip's College had an enrolment of 518 students: 277 female and 241 male; 86 indigenous and 432 non-indigenous and including many students with multicultural backgrounds. As a day school with boarding facilities currently housing 34 boarders, St Philip's offers a range of opportunities for students, with academic and VET streams, performing arts, sports, outdoor education and through our membership of the Round Square network. The College operates on a calendar year basis consistent with the school year: revenue in 2024 was \$18.3M from school fees and government funding while expenditure was \$17.7M, thereby generating a modest surplus of \$590K, bolstered by unexpected government grants.

While there was a smaller Year 12 graduating cohort (55 in total), their academic results were impressive with Ramona Dooley being named the NT's top Indigenous student for 2024, 98% achieving pass marks and 7 students receiving SACE scores >90 and students doing Modified SACE attained a 100% completion rate.

Performances of the College musical and the senior play were as usual popular and well received with the broader community. In sports, several College students competed successfully not only in local events, but also in the Northern Territory and nationally. Round Square activities included special assemblies, events and projects; exchanges; conferences and the annual service trip to Ti Tree community. Outdoor Education and the camps will always be a fundamental feature of the program at St Philip's and during

the year two cohorts from the Hutchins School in Tasmania experienced outback camps St Philip's style as one of our complementary educational offerings.

In response to a number of factors the REVS Program has been developed to engage and challenge our multi-cultural and diverse student body. Religions of the World, our own Christian values and celebrations with a focus on discovering personal Spirituality covers the R and S in the acronym. Exploring the Ethics and Values component play a significant role in helping our students unravel a complicated world, how to respond and deal with the growing problem of mental health issues.

Religious Education is delivered across a broader area in the school. Assemblies always offer a corporate worship component with House Services with weekly Chapel playing a major role in student understanding of the foundations of our College, culture and significant seasons in the Christian Calendar.

Students are encouraged to participate in delivering prayers, songs, readings on every possible occasion and many take pride in and enjoy the opportunity to share their faith or simply their gifts of music while House Chapel Services offers a smaller and more intimate congregation which has helped build individuals' confidence.

Our new Year 7 students are taken to the Chapel during their early REVS classes for a lesson in College History, the role of the Rev Dr Fred McKay and subsequent "giants" in the development of our beautiful College. We believe that an understanding of our history plays a hugely important role in the strength of our ongoing culture. Our College Prayer written by Deaconess Frances McKechnie, the first Chaplain, our School Song and weekly Blessing Song written by past Head Chris Tudor, all help to remind staff and students of our Christian heritage and the immense value of a culture that they carry with them beyond their years at school.

One of the highlights of the year was the opening in June of the Discovery Centre by Professor Veena Sahajwalla from UNSW, who shared a compelling vision for materials recycling and environmental sustainability. The Discovery Centre is not just a new facility albeit innovative in design, rather it is an enabler of various teaching and learning approaches, more

suited to the needs of students. While there were initial challenges, the College successfully pivoted the Year 8 program to an integrated model of experiential and curriculum-oriented lessons, and it was pleasing to receive positive feedback from parents and students. The deliberate positioning of the Discovery Centre adjacent to the Swag Chapel and the Sustainability Centre with its numerous projects, once again reflects our connection to place and commitment to our values. We also recognise and thank our generous supporters and donors who helped make this possible. The College was also successful in receiving a grant from the Federal Government to enhance the capacity and facility of the Boarding House which will complement upgrades which were already in progress. The Campus Master Plan is currently under review to ensure that the College continues to provide optimal learning conditions for students and staff.

From a Board perspective, St Philip's is fortunate to have such a skills-based and diligent Board with effective committees chaired by directors, with other Board representatives, executives/staff members and in some cases external subject matter experts. The directors provide insights and invaluable contributions to the governance of the College, guidance to Leslie and her SLT and are dedicated to the ethos of St Philip's. Under the Constitution the Board comprises up to nine members, two of whom are Northern Synod appointees. Terms are for three years with directors eligible for re-election for three terms (up to nine years). There are also three Guardian members, ex-Chair Libby Prell, ex-Principal Chris Tudor AM and ex-Synod General Secretary Dr Kevin Davis AM.

During 2024, we were disappointed to lose Lyndon Frearson, who had made such a significant contribution in a number of areas, when his family relocated from Alice Springs. Conversely, we were delighted that Cath Vero and Sally Trigg, both locally based experienced professional women, were elected to the Board at the Annual General Meeting, then Simon Duke, again an Alice Springs resident and executive, was appointed to a casual vacancy mid-year. I am also pleased to advise that Dr Jessa Rogers, a Wiradjuri researcher, educator and board director is re-joining the Board in 2025. At the AGM in May 2025, two long-standing directors have indicated their intention to retire, and plans are underway to seek suitable replacements, one with strong educational background.

It was my pleasure to participate in the final assembly of 2024 and announce the re-appointment of Leslie Tilbrook as Principal / CEO of St Philip's for another three years. Leslie took on this role in difficult circumstances two years ago and has grown significantly, and with her leadership team charted a path of consolidating around wellbeing and culture to reinforce the College's values from the HEART.

Bruce McKay
Board member and Chairperson

14. Frontier Services

Frontier Services is a national agency of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), established to offer service and ministry in the name of Christ to remote Australia through compassionate care, justice and nurture of the spirit.

Frontier Services is Australia's oldest bush charity, supporting people in rural and remote Australia since 1912.

We rely almost totally on donations from our supporters across Australia to fund our work.

Program

We continue to have two programs to support people in rural and remote Australia.

Bush Chaplains

Bush Chaplains are ministers and pastors within the Uniting Church, in placements with Synods, Presbyteries and regional Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) bodies. Their role is to provide practical, pastoral and spiritual care to their communities within their Remote Area Ministries.

Frontier Services provides funding for 16 Bush Chaplains, with several new placements being planned.

We currently support 4 bush Chaplains in the Northern Synod. Two of the Chaplains are part of a three-way partnership which includes the Northern Regional Council of Congress (NRCC).

- West Arnhem – James Hughes (Interim)
- Centralian – Benjamin Quilliam
- Aputula / Finke – Jill Doolan (NRCC)
- Kalka – Yanima Bryant (NRCC)

Conversations have taken place, and will continue, to explore future possibilities for Frontier Services to support additional ministry in the Synod.

Outback Links

Outback Links is our national program that connects volunteers with people in the bush needing practical help. Our network spans the country and brings together a community of passionate volunteers who are dedicated to helping others and embracing meaningful experiences in remote Australia.

We do not have active volunteers in the Northern Synod at present.

Acknowledging Rev Dr Michelle Cook

Frontier Services noted with great sadness the passing of Rev Dr Michelle Cook. Michelle had been a Bush Chaplain with Frontier Services some years ago, based in Far North Queensland.

Her role in Nungalinga College has played a significant part in the training and formation of our three First Nations Chaplains.

Michelle's husband, James Hughes, is the interim Chaplain in West Arnhem. We continue to offer our prayers and support to James and family.

Highlights of the last year

In the past year, Frontier Services' presence has continued to grow, expanding into new regions and meeting the unique needs of more outback communities.

We have seen some changes but general stability across our Bush Chaplains, and a renewed focus on our Outback Links program that is slowly rebuilding following the COVID pandemic.

A highlight this year has been the appointment of two First Nations Bush Chaplains in central Australia, Jill Doolan and Yanima Bryant. In their ministries, they are helping to care for community members from the very old to the very young, being a trusted presence for people through the challenges of life in outback Australia. They join Pastor Julia Lennon.

We were also delighted that James Hughes took up the role as Bush Chaplain in West Arnhem, taking over from Lindsay Parkhill following his retirement. He is in an interim capacity at the moment and a review and planning next steps in this region is being planned.

Benjamin Quilliam continues in his wonderful ministry in central Australia. We are grateful for his commitment and creativity in the role.

Challenges

Raising all our funds is challenging. Most of our supporters are UCA members and are an aging group. Costs of living have also impacted people's ability to donate to charities.

Frontier Services is looking to other sources of funding including grants from Trusts and Foundations, a very competitive space.

It is vitally important for Frontier Services staff to have regular communication with our Bush Chaplains and with the Northern Synod and the NRCC so that we have a strong message and program to present to potential donors and funding bodies. This communication is not always as strong as we would hope, but Frontier Services recognises the challenges that have been faced here in the Northern Synod and appreciate the efforts being put in place going forward.

Thanks

Frontier Services expresses thanks to the congregations and community groups who regularly support our work, and also our philanthropic and corporate partners. We do not take this support for granted.

Frontier Services also thanks the staff and members of the Northern Synod and NRCC for their willingness to work with us in these remote area ministries.

Request

Frontier Services asks that members of the Northern Synod continue to pray for their Bush Chaplains and for the wider work of the agency, and to offer support and encouragement wherever you are able to ensure this work can continue and thrive.

Rob Floyd

National Director, Frontier Services

15 Australian Regional & Remote Community Services (ARRCS)

The year in review – 2024

2024 has been a year of many achievements. The Strategic Plan was reviewed and renewed, and the new Plan (2025-2027) finalised as the year closed out.

Financials

Thanks to the assistance of the Commonwealth Government in supporting Alice Springs sites, ARRCS has been able to remain financially viable. In fact late in the year the ARRCS Board approved the purchase of a 32 Unit apartment building in Alice Springs to house our Pacific Islander workforce. Occupancy across all sites increased over 2024 to an all-time high of 95.9%.

Workforce

Positive recruitment into Alice Springs saw the number of Agency Registered Nurses fall from 90% Agency to 10% Agency over the course of the year. This has improved the financial outlook for Alice Springs.

February 2024 saw the recruitment of 12 First Nations Trainees, and while this number reduced to 8 remaining at the end of the year, we are confident that all will complete their traineeships within the specified time-frame. We are actively recruiting for another group of similar numbers to commence in 2025.

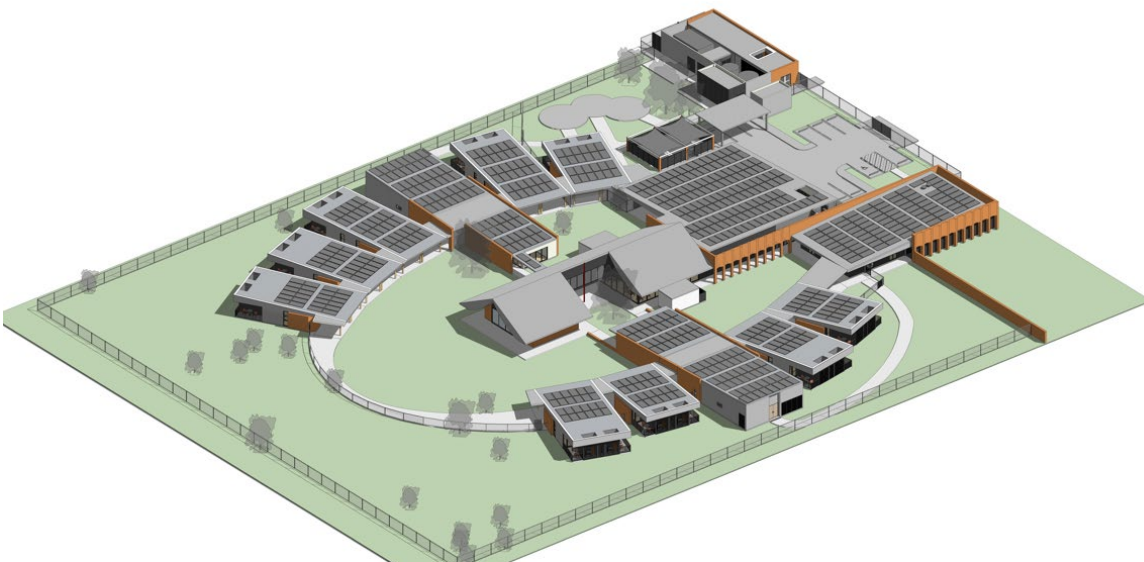
Workers from the Pacific Islands continued to bolster our workforce, with an additional 30 workers from Timor Leste and Samoa billeted to Alice Springs to reduce the dependency on Agency PCAs at those sites.

Capital

Juninga Aged Care in Darwin received a much-needed refurbishment, including bedrooms and bathrooms, shared spaces and staff amenities. While it has retained its charm, the place is now lighter and brighter than before, with furniture coverings selected by the residents much brighter than would otherwise have been the case.



The Docker River Aged Care Facility re-build commenced in Alice Springs in October 2024 with the intention that the modules will be trucked to site and rendered with rammed earth.



16 UnitingCare Australia

Background

UnitingCare Australia, which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023, is the national body for the Uniting Church's Community services network (UnitingCare Network) and an agency of the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. We give voice to the Uniting Church commitment to social justice through advocacy and by strengthening community service provision. Services include aged care, disability, mental health, children, youth and family, homelessness and housing, disaster and emergency relief, health care and employment.

UnitingCare Australia's foundation of faith and deep connection to the UnitingCare Network's lived experience allows it to shape and influence national policy. Its success has been built upon respect and authenticity, of relationships and quiet diplomacy, often out of the public eye. A key mechanism to support UnitingCare Australia activities are the 24 networks, working groups and communities of practice consisting of representatives from across the UnitingCare Network.

The UnitingCare Network comprises 19 organisations representing all states and territories, including Somerville Community Services and the Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARCCS) which both provide services in the Northern Territory and Juniper that provides services in the western part of the Northern Synod.

Our new Northern Synod representative on UnitingCare Australia's Board is Ian O'Reilly since the end of 2024. Chaired by Heather Watson, the UnitingCare Australia Board has four strategic objectives and three strategic priorities in its current Strategy:

Objectives: Impact, Identity, Relationships, Resources & Capability

Priorities: Justice for First Peoples, Ageing to our Full Potential, Economic Equality and Inclusion

Key Achievements - 2024

In 2024 UnitingCare Australia lodged 10 submissions, produced 13 media releases and had 74 meetings with federal politicians. We also facilitated over 200 meetings of our 24 network groups which include First Peoples Network,

Disability Community of Practice, Advocacy and Government Relations Network, Aged Care CEO Network, Safeguarding Community of Practice and an LGBTIQ+ Community of Practice.

In April we held a Gathering in Adelaide with First and Second Peoples from across the UnitingCare Network, the Congress and the Church on Kaurna Land in Adelaide to consider the intentions of truth, treaty and the relationship with the communities in which we live and work. A First Peoples consultant has been engaged to develop a workplan that carries forward the initiatives identified at the Gathering.

We were instrumental in shaping the aged care reform agenda, and working alongside sector partners to achieve positive change. Our focus was ensuring that all older Australians have access to quality care, regardless of means or geography.

In March we launched our third Child Social Exclusion Index Report, a collaboration with the University of Canberra. The Report found that children in almost 400 Australian communities are the most socially excluded in the nation.

UnitingCare Network organisations have been delivering the pilot of the Escaping Violence Payment (EVP) program since 2021, supporting people to leave violent intimate partner relationships. Following UnitingCare Australia's successful advocating, the EVP program to become permanent, with the Government announcing the ongoing Leaving Violence Program in their 2024 Budget.

In September our Leaders Forum in Canberra to discuss shared issues, celebrate achievements and explore new opportunities. Hosting CEO Advocacy Day was an opportunity for Network CEOs to meet with politicians to advocate for policy change across our key priority areas.

Looking forward

UnitingCare Australia has lodged its Pre-Budget Submission for the 2025/26 Budget with Federal Treasury. The submission has informed the development of our 2025 Election Campaign: "A stronger, fairer Australia for all. Together we can." We are seeking support from all political parties and

candidates for the two key proposals in the campaign: ensuring a strong and adequate safety net; and strengthened community support services.

Representatives from UnitingCare Australia sit on a number of government advisory committees and we will build on, or create new, relationships with key politicians in order to advocate for the most vulnerable.

As an Assembly agency, we attended the 17th Assembly in Parramatta and continue to engage in the Act2 process going forward with positions for the UnitingCare Network on each of the two Commissions - Theology, Formation & Leadership and Governance, Resourcing & Administration.

Our Board is commencing the development of our future Strategic Plan which will be informed by the UnitingCare Network as well as the political and economic environment.

Ms Claerwen Little
National Director

REPORTS TIMETABLE

Report	Presenter	Day/Session/Time
Aboriginal Resources and Development Services (ARDS)	Sylvia Nulpinditj & Gawura Wanambi	Friday, Session 5 4pm-5:30pm
Auditors 2023 and 2024	Mr Richard Telfer	Saturday, Session 6 9am-10:30am
Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (AARCS)	Written only	Friday, Session 5. 4pm-5:30pm
Budget 2025	Mr Richard Telfer	Saturday, Session 7 11am-1pm
Coordinate Project	Ms Louise Macdonald	Friday, Session 4 2pm-3:30pm
Ex-Moderator's	Rev Tony Goodluck	Friday, Session 3 11am-1pm
Finance & Property Services (FAPS)	Mr Matthew Kennon	Saturday, Session 6 9am-10:30am
Financial Reports 2024	Mr Richard Telfer	Saturday, Session 6 9am-10:30am
Frontier Services	Mr Rob Floyd	Saturday, Session 9 4pm-5:30pm
General Secretary's	Rev Janet Staines	Friday, Session 3 11am-1pm
National Assembly	Mr Andrew Johnson	Saturday, Session 9 4pm-5:30pm
NRCC Presbytery	Rev Dr Peter Hobson	Friday, Session 4 2pm-3:30pm
Nungalinya College	Dr Yane Damanik	Friday, Session 4 2pm-3:30pm
Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia	Ps Lauren Merritt	Sunday, Session 10 11am-1pm
Property	Mr Ross Coburn	Saturday Session 7 11am-1pm

Report	Presenter	Day/Session/Time
Property Trust	Mr Peter Jones	Saturday Session 7 11am-1pm
Somerville Community Services	Ms Natasha Fyles	Friday, Session 5. 4pm-5:30pm
St Philips College	Ps Sarah Pollitt	Friday, Session 5. 4pm-5:30pm
Synod Placements Committee	Ps Benjamin Quilliam	Sunday, Session 10 11am-1pm
Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC)	Verbal only	Friday, Session 4 2pm-3:30pm
UnitingCare Australia	Ms Claerwen Little	Friday, Session 5. 4pm-5:30pm

RETIREMENT, FAREWELL, MEMORIAL MINUTES

1. Rev Tony Goodluck

Rev Tony Goodluck answered the call of God to come with Margie his wife and daughter Jess (for a short time), to serve as the Uniting Church Dean of Students at Nungalinya College. It was for Tony almost a full circle, having partly grown up at Minjilang on Croker Island where his beloved Dad Rev Bunyi Jack Goodluck had been the Superintendent for the Methodist Overseas Missions. Tony with his family then moved from Minjilang to Darwin and Nungalinya College where his dad was an educator.

Tony served at Nungalinya from 2017 until just before his installation as Moderator of the Northern Synod in October 2021. He was much loved by the Nungalinya students, increasing the enrolment of Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress students significantly during his time there. This, especially for NRCC, strengthened the breadth of leaderships across the communities and homelands.

I write this testimonial during Lent and I'm reflecting on the Eastern Orthodox understanding of Lent as a time of '*bright sadness*'. It is fair to say this is a reflection of the ministry Tony stepped into as our Moderator. The period of time when the decision in relation to Moderator-elect was made included the COVID epidemic in Australia, which hindered operations and ministry within the Northern Synod as it did even more significantly elsewhere. The delay and difficulties encountered in the appointment was a real test of call for Tony and the Synod.

Tony's extended time as Moderator has been marked by his pastoral warmth, and his desire to be with the people of God throughout the Northern Synod. His love for First Nations Peoples has seen extensive visits to the APY Lands, Kimberley and Arnhemland. He has spent time in most PPNA congregations throughout the Synod, making himself available for preaching and support in many ways.

Nungalinya College continued to be a focus of ministry for Tony when he took up a role on the Board on behalf of the Synod. This together with his willingness to participate in teaching, celebrations and more generally loving and supporting the student body has been a feature of his ministry.

This was all part of the 'bright' times in ministry. Some of the 'sadness' has been the administrative, financial and governance issues the Synod has faced during this time. It was a costly time for many including Tony and we recognise and thank him for his ministry to us during this difficult and protracted period. His leadership has enabled us to experience the reality of being still and knowing God's presence with us.

A deep sadness for Tony and us all was the tragic and untimely passing of the Rev Dr Michelle Cook, Moderator-elect. I'm sure the memorial minute for Michelle will express our deep gratitude for her ministry and more fully express our love.

The 'brightness' shines through and is seen in the new life that the Synod is now embracing. There is still much to be resolved, however Tony leaves the role of Moderator with the Synod in a much better place, he has loved us and guided us by the Spirit and the light of God's presence into this new day. Thanks be to God.

Stuart McMillan
11th March 2025

2. Pastor David Crawford

The Presbytery and the Palmerston congregation give thanks for the dedicated service of Pastor David Crawford. Since March 2021, David, while employed on a 0.3 basis, has given generously of his time as the Palmerston Uniting Church Pastor. He has provided spiritual leadership through leading worship and the sacraments, provided pastoral support to members of the congregation as required, conducted services at Terrace Gardens, been active in our church activities including the Op Shop and supported our Pitantjatjara and Yolngu families.

David has also served on the Presbytery Standing Committee, the Presbytery Formation Committee and as an Emergency Response Chaplain. David is sincerely thanked for his leadership role in the Pilgrim Presbytery and we wish him God's richest blessings as he continues as a valued member of the Palmerston congregation.

3. Rev Dr Michelle Cook

Rev Dr Michelle Cook encapsulated all that is good about the Uniting Church. She was able to articulate it in her writing and lived it in her being and doing. Michelle loved the Uniting Church, and the Uniting Church loved Michelle. This was evident in the outpouring of love, prayer and grief after Michelle's hospitalisation and passing on Saturday 2nd November 2024.

Rev Dr Michelle Cook began her placement as Theology Teacher at Nungalinga College in the Northern Synod in January 2019. It was here she experienced joy teaching theology and standing alongside our First Nations sisters and brothers, expressing her creativity, intelligence, compassion, wisdom and care. She was deeply committed to First Nations theological perspectives and insights and to shared learning. She enriched the ministries of many First Nations Christians and proclaimed the Gospel with passion and clarity.

Michelle was committed to learning language and respected aboriginal culture. She strongly advocated for First People in the wider Uniting Church, always challenging the national church to be faithful to our covenant and to remember the promises we have made. A person of great integrity, she was not afraid to speak plainly of the truths we would need to face as we move towards justice and healing.

Michelle was an active member of the Nightcliff Congregation and demonstrated her commitment to the local expression of the body of Christ through her service to the congregation's ministry. She was a bright theologian and a passionate preacher believing theology needs to be lived and not just talked about.

Michelle was appointed as Chair of the Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia (PPNA) at the Presbytery meeting held on 8th October 2020 and served in this role until March 2024. She took on many roles during that time, including Pastoral Relations Chair, Synod Placements Chair, Member of Synod Standing Committee and General Secretary for a time. She demonstrated fortitude and resilience in all she did, leading with diligence and foresight.

Alongside her own vocation, Michelle offered significant leadership to the national church. She was a member of six Assemblies and served two terms on the Assembly Standing Committee. At the 46th Northern Synod Meeting in April 2024 Michelle was nominated Moderator Elect, a role that she was very excited about and looked forward to with anticipation.

Michelle's influence reached far beyond her leadership roles. She was not just a colleague but a friend and mentor to many, a faithful disciple of Christ and child of God. We give thanks for Michelle's life. Her dedication and faith, her encouragement and friendship continue to influence us deeply.

4. The Hon Grant Tambling AM

20 June 1943 – 24 January 2025

Grant was born in Wondai, Queensland and was raised in Darwin. He attended Darwin High School and Adelaide Boy's High School, returning to Darwin before moving to Sydney for work. After some time he returned to Darwin with his wife Sandy.

Most of Grant's working life in Darwin was in politics. He was a member of the Darwin City Council then became a member of the Legislative Assembly of the NT before self-Government. In 1980 he became the NT Representative in the House of Representatives. He then became a Senator in the Australian Parliament. From November 2003 until 7th August 2007 he became the Administrator of Norfolk Island.

All the time he was in Darwin he was an active member of the Darwin Memorial Uniting Church. He went to Sunday School where Ted Milliken was his teacher. He was active in the church. He held most positions including Chairman of Council. Grant was an active lay preacher and led many services.

In the last few years Parkinson's Disease badly affected Grant. He was very restricted in his movements and was barely able to talk, yet his mind was alert. We held a few Communion Services with him towards the end. Grant knew every word of the responses and you could see his mouth moving to the words.

The last few years meant Grant was totally dependent on support services. Most of this support came from his devoted and loving wife Sandy. I want to pay my respect to Sandy for her constant dedicated and loving care to Grant. Grant leaves behind two children and three grandchildren.

Kevin Davis
Chairman of DMUC Congregation

5. Rev Noel Kentish

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Rev Dr Noel Kentish. Noel passed away peacefully in his sleep on the evening of Saturday 22nd February 2025. He was 89 years old.

Noel made a positive impact on the lives of many people who had the privilege of meeting him. Noel was the son of Methodist missionaries Rev Len and Vi Kentish on Warruwi. His father Len was the local coastguard lookout and during World War II was the only prisoner taken by enemy forces in Australian waters. The story is recorded in Noels 2016 book 'Eagle and Lamb', which is dedicated to the first peoples of Arnhem Land, particularly of Goulburn Island and to the memory of his parents.

Noel was a humble man with a gentle, strong spirit and great faith. Arrarkpi influence on his life was profound. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and will be in our hearts forever

We give thanks to God for the life of Rev Dr Noel Kentish. We extend our sympathies and hold Noel's immediate family – Coral, Fiona, Trystan and Greg and the wider Kentish clan.

Rev Tony Goodluck

6. Rev Gowan Armstrong

Gowan was 97 years old and will be best remembered in the Top End for his decade as Methodist Minister at Manayingkarirra from 1962. In 1966 the first baptism of Aboriginal Christians at Manayingkarirra took place in that large government settlement, where more than nine languages were spoken on a daily basis. Gowan also helped local people to develop an enterprise with traditional art and craft into a big business. In 1972 Gowan moved to Darwin, where he was the Registrar and Teacher for a budding Nungalinya College. Cyclone Tracy on Christmas eve 1974, blew the college apart and the homeless Armstrong family subsequently moved south to Adelaide.

Gowan was a great encourager and he remained a steadfast friend of Congress people, supporting the work of TACL (Training Aboriginal Christian Leaders), an arm of Nungalinya College in South Australia, from 1991 until he was 96 yrs old in 2023; a member of the SA Covenanting Committee; and through personal friendships. Gowan was committed to Ecumenism over the course of his ministry.

We thank God for Gowan. Well done, old man. Our lives are all the better for knowing you. Gunmolamola.

Rev Tony Goodluck

7. Rev John (Jack) William Goodluck

Rev Jack Goodluck has passed away on Sunday 11th August 2024, at the age of 96 years. Jack began ministry by entering Otira, the Methodist Home Missionaries Training College, Melbourne, in 1949. Jack was appointed to Croker Island as Superintendent of Child Care from 1964-66. He arrived in an institution which over-controlled the children and imposed rigid discipline. He worked to liberate the children, seeking to encourage them to discover their value as persons. He also sought to liberate the staff as he encouraged their love and openness with the children. These changes were radical and long lasting, however not without pain and uncertainty.

When the children left Croker Island they often struggled to adapt and were sent to institutions such as Essington House in Darwin and the juvenile remand centre. Concern over the implications for these children, Jack undertook studies, through La Trobe University, on parentally deprived adolescents. Two other important contributions were made in the North, the first was leadership within the emerging Department of Christian Education in Darwin. Then, following the new directions outlined in 'Free to Decide,' Jack ran the workshops designed to prepare staff for the handover of townships in Arnhem Land into Aboriginal control.

At Nungalinga College from 1976-80 Jack continued this work as he developed community development courses. Jack was a key person in establishing Nungalinga College, a combined churches ministry and theology college in Darwin. In retirement Jack and Peg were still on the go. Jack has worked in the Pitjantjatjara Lands developing training material for Anangu Health Mayatjas (managers) with Nyanampa health. He developed a national curriculum for Aboriginal people seeking management skills.

Jack Goodluck's ministry has always been creative, he has always asked the tough questions and sought to act on principle regardless of personal cost. We give thanks to God for Jack and his responsiveness and persistence in following God's call upon his life.

8. NRCC Memorial Minutes

Rev Dr Djinyini Gondarra

Rev David Mirwana

Rev Dick Milurrurr

Pastor Graham Kulyuru

Pastor Wany'tjun Dhurrkay

Memorial Minutes for First Peoples need to be guided by traditional cultural protocols, ensuring that the right people are consulted, and the appropriate processes are followed.

Because of this, the NRCC Memorial Minutes were still be finalised at the time of printing this report.

Full Memorial Minutes will be presented at Synod in Session, and added to the meeting minutes.