

The Uniting Church in Australia  
Northern Synod

# Proposals

47th Meeting  
3rd-6th April 2025

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





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## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

**Subject:** The Rev Dr Michelle Cook Lecture

**Proposal:** To establish an annual theology lecture in the Northern Synod in memory of Rev Dr Michelle Cook. The lecture will give focus to the First Peoples and/or holistic (justice-based) theology, theological education, discipleship and women in ministry.

**Scope:**

This lecture will happen each year within the Northern Synod. It will coincide with Synod in Session in the years where this occurs. For the years where there is no Synod in Session, thought will be given to maximise attendance opportunities, and the availability of visiting lecturers. When possible, it is also envisaged that visiting lecturers may be able to also lead workshops that elaborate their lecture topic.

**Rationale:** The legacy of Rev Dr Michelle Cook's ministry within the Uniting Church in Australia, and in particular the Northern Synod, is considerable. Michelle was dearly beloved by her family, friends and colleagues, and by the people she ministered to and with. Michelle was a minister of the church, a scholar and a teacher, but more importantly someone who was formed by an incarnational theology: theology that lived, not just discussed or imagined. This annual lecture series will keep that intentionality in the hearts and minds of those who attend.

**Funding:**

The Rev Dr Michelle Cook Lecture is proudly supported by James and Zane Hughes who will provide seed funding for this project. This lecture will continue to be jointly funded by the Northern Synod, and NRCC, to the amount of \$4000 p/a. This money will be used for travel and accommodation and an appropriate honorarium. Unused funds will be set aside to be used for future lectures as needed. Funding may also be used to provide scholarships for people to attend from remote areas

**Proposer 1:** Pastor James Hughes

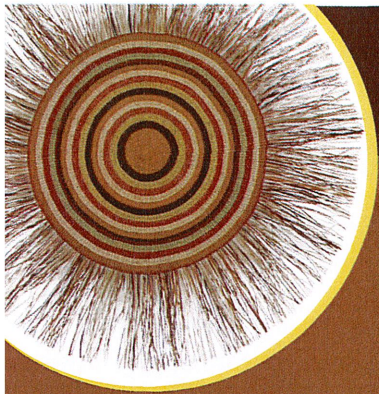
**Proposer 2:** Rev Dr Peter Hobson

Those framing proposals are asked to note the following:

1. Each proposal must be signed by two members of Synod.
2. Proposers should note that the wording of the proposal will be considered by the Synod Business Committee, which may, if necessary, refer the Proposal back for clarification or re-wording.







# Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

**Subject:** Northern Synod Governance Proposal

**Proposal:**

It is proposed that the Synod resolve:

- a. To approve the Synod Standing Committee:
  - (i) To 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 to implement organisational change that serves the Northern Synod to undertake and support the worship, witness, and service within its bounds.
  - (ii) To initiate actions resulting from reimaging the councils and committees, taking into consideration other Act2 Project-related governance change processes being deliberated within the wider Church, including The Commission for Governance, Resourcing and Administration.
- b. To request the Synod Standing Committee to work with the Assembly Standing Committee to seek advice and implement the necessary UCA Regulation exemptions, and/or alternatives, and/or alterations (Reg. 3.10), to provide for the Northern Synod to move to a three-council model of governance as described in the Governance Report February 2025 by the General Secretary.
- c. To request the Synod Standing Committee to demonstrate its 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. Synod Standing Committee will work with NRCC to develop new by-laws and covenanting documents as appropriate.
- d. To request the Synod Standing Committee to regularly report the factors including progress and modifications to the Regulations and the impact of these changes to the 47th Synod Members, and other councils of the Church within the Northern Synod.

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**Rationale:**

The purpose of this proposal is to implement organisational realignment that serves the Northern Synod to undertake and support the worship, witness, and service within its bounds as outlined in the Synod Standing Committee paper "Governance Proposal 47th Synod Meeting 2025" by Rev Janet Staines, General Secretary.

**Proposer 1:**

Rev Janet Staines General  
Secretary

**Proposer 2.**

Rev Tony Goodluck Moderator

Those framing proposals are asked to note the following:

1. Each proposal must be signed by two members of Synod.
2. Proposers should note that the wording of the proposal will be considered by the Synod Business Committee, which may, if necessary, refer the Proposal back for clarification or re-wording.





BRIEF

## General Secretary

Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod

February 2025

Governance Proposal 47<sup>th</sup> Synod Meeting 2025

SSC Paper

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present a rationale to support the Synod Standing Committee's recommendation to the 47<sup>th</sup> Synod meeting to approve the reimagining of the councils and committees of the Northern Synod and to implement organisational realignment that serves the Northern Synod to undertake and support the worship, witness, and service within its bounds.

I want to acknowledge the conversations of the Synod Standing Committee, Pilgrim Presbytery Standing Committee, NRCC Executive Council, Finance and Property Services Committee and other committees of the Northern Synod that have worked (often frustratingly) to maintain an adherence to the integrity of the UCA Constitution and Regulations in the particular and distinct context of the Northern Synod. These conversations are reflected in the decisions and actions of these committees which are evident in their meeting minutes.

I also want to acknowledge the papers "The Uniting Church in North Australia", by Mr John McLaren and Rev Vicki Aitken, submitted to the Act2 project in 2023 and "A Time for Change – The Uniting Church in Northern Australia", by Mr John McLaren and Rev Vicki Aitken, submitted to the PUNA Presbytery Meeting 4-5 October 2024 following the National 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly Meeting decision to explore a change in governance structure. Both of these papers draw attention to the "unsuitability of the current structure of the Synod / Presbytery as it applies in the vastness of the Northern Synod which stretches from Western Kimberley to Northern Arnhem Land to APY Lands in the south and everything in between."<sup>1</sup> The papers point to the failure of the current governance structure to adequately support the mission and ministry of the Northern Synod and make proposals toward ongoing functional structure and financial sustainability within the Synod. In acknowledging their contribution to this conversation, I will refer to them throughout this paper.

Act2 is a major whole-of-Church change project led by the Assembly focussed on discerning and deciding on the future of the Uniting Church. The Act2 report to the 17<sup>th</sup> Assembly, "The Gift of the Spirit" (July 2024) reflected: "As a Church we have courageously considered our life afresh. We have prayed together, listened broadly, discerned deeply and spoken honestly. Behind the processes and the numbers are the hopes, fears and yearnings of the people of God. Through exploring and testing new ideas and new ways to shape our life we have grappled with how to centre our lives on Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Since the 16th Assembly Act2's work has been organised into four workstreams:

1. Local communities of faith and discipleship
2. National identity
3. Governance and resourcing
4. Theological culture and education



The research and proposals of workstream 3 “Governance and Resourcing”, offer guidance to our reimagining in the Northern Synod.

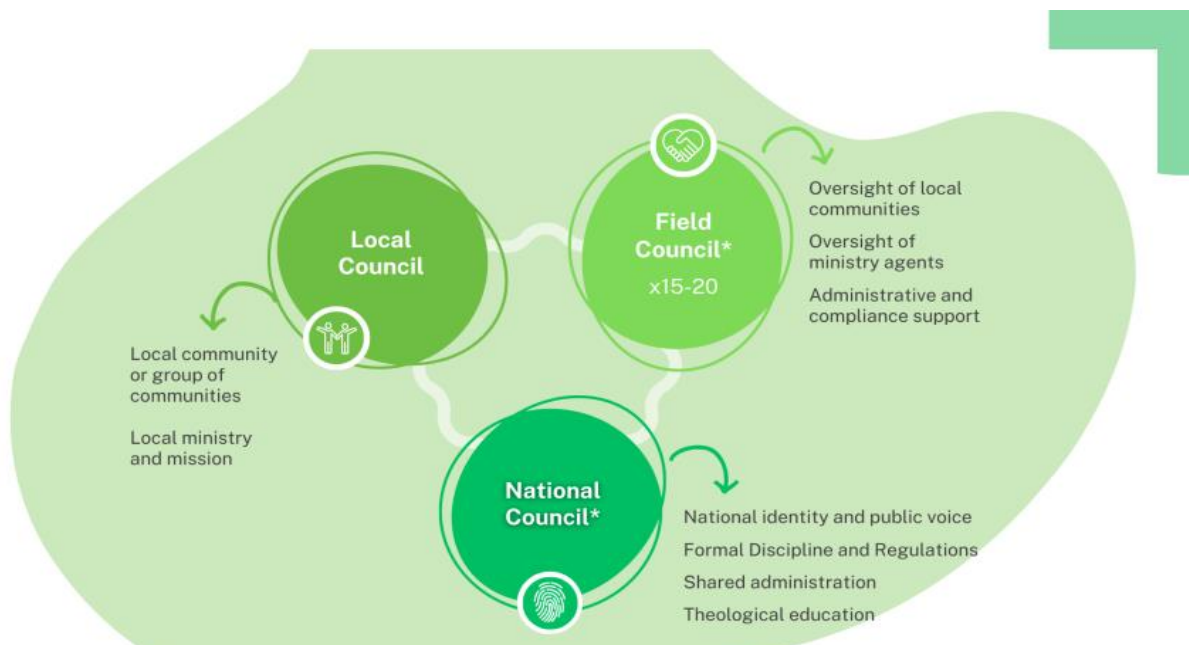
## **2. Misalignment of Governance and Resourcing**

Drawing on these and other Act2 documents I will highlight the concerns and inefficiencies in our current Uniting Church governance structure across Australia.

- a. Councils of the church need the resources, capacity and capability to fulfill their responsibilities. There is currently not sufficient resources for many Presbyteries and some Synods to fulfill their responsibilities. Any change in the governance model must address this mismatch. (Act2 report “In response to God’s Call”, p.47)
- b. We do not have a whole-of-Church resourcing model that ensures councils have the resources they need to fulfil their responsibilities. This means that there is not adequate sharing of our common wealth. Some councils are in precarious financial positions while others possess significant wealth. (Act 2 report “The Gift of the Spirit”, p.71)
- c. Many of our local communities of faith are struggling to fulfil their responsibilities due to their size, capability and demographics. Our people feel tired and stretched. The model of many volunteer-led councils, committees and processes does not match our size and energy. We need to free ourselves from these burdens so we can focus on life-giving discipleship, ministry and mission. (Act 2 report “The Gift of the Spirit”, p.71)
- d. The UCA’s federated structure places the same responsibilities on all Synods regardless of size or capacity... this model over the last forty years has not worked for many organisations (such as sport organisations which are not dissimilar to churches in that they are heavily dependent on volunteers at a grass roots/congregational level) who have had to move to a centralised national structure in order to help facilitate the capability and capacity of their various regional constituents. (McLaren & Aitken, “The Uniting Church in North Australia”, p.2)
- e. In the case of the Northern Synod, it is not feasible for a small group of people to effectively undertake the full range of functions required of a Synod and a Presbytery. (McLaren & Aitken, “The Uniting Church in North Australia”, p.2)
- f. The Northern Synod with scarce human and financial resources has now been forced to integrate many of its people and financial management systems into larger and more cost-effective systems located in other Synods. (McLaren & Aitken, “The Uniting Church in North Australia”, p.3)
- g. The current administrative structure of the Northern Synod is precariously placed – its congregants are financially stretched, frustrated by distance and time poor (due to the multiplicity of meetings). To be able to operate in a self-sufficient manner within our means, the church needs to fully embrace affordable and available technology and to rationalise what it does so that it services its core purpose within the constraints of its income. A model of the UCA that has less layers could be especially beneficial to the Northern Synod. (McLaren & Aitken, “The Uniting Church in North Australia”, p.4)

### 3. Act2 workstream “Governance and Resourcing”: option 1 from the “Gift of the Spirit” report.

In Act 2: “The Gift of the Spirit” report there is a preference to explore the implementation of a three-council model across the church. This model would address the structural inefficiencies the Northern Synod is currently experiencing.



#### Extracts from the Act2 report explaining the role of the three councils:

The Local Council has oversight of one or a group of local communities of faith. The Field Council is a council focused on both ministry and mission and supporting Local Councils to fulfill their obligations. The National Council would have responsibilities for both matters of identity and administration.

#### Local Council

This council will be responsible for the day-to-day governance and oversight of a community of faith or a group of communities of faith, including worship, the sacraments, pastoral care, local mission and administration. It would be responsible for: “Building up the Congregation in faith and love, sustaining its members in hope, and leading them into a fuller participation in Christ’s mission in the world.” (Basis of Union, paragraph 15b).

#### Field Council

This council would be responsible for:

- Oversight of local communities of faith.
- Oversight of those called to the specified ministries.
- Support Local Councils to fulfill administration, such as property, finance and compliance which is directly related to their local ministry and mission.
- This council would also be responsible for matters which were beyond the capacity and capability of Local Councils.

## **National Council**

This council would be responsible for:

- Matters of core identity.
- Public voice and advocacy.
- Amending regulations subject to the Constitution.
- Oversight of national agencies.
- Shared administration where context is less relevant and efficiencies could be achieved.
- Standards and oversight of theological education including the governance of theological colleges.
- Formal discipline procedures.
- Oversight of some schools, colleges, agencies and other institutions.

## **Extracts from the Act2 report explaining the three-council model, its opportunities and risks:**

### **Rationale**

This model seeks to address the overlapping layers within our current governance structure. This option replaces both the Synod and the Presbytery with a new Field Council, with an integrated set of responsibilities. It also seeks to consolidate to the National Council many of those administrative and compliance functions which are currently fulfilled by most Synods. It seeks to honour the Basis of Union's description that we are governed locally, regionally and nationally.

### **Opportunities**

This model seeks to provide a significantly simpler and lighter model. It anticipates resourcing through Field Councils which would be both closer to the ground than most Synods and greater than most Presbyteries. It also presents the potential for significant efficiencies through the creation of a national administrative function, reducing duplication. It would also strengthen our national identity and the relationships we hold nationally with Congress and our international partners. It would represent a decisive break from the existing governance structure and invite a complete reimagining of the shape of all our councils.

### **Risks**

This model would require regulatory changes resulting from the Assembly Standing Committee exercising Reg.3.10. to achieve the implementation of changes to the councils of the church under the existing Constitution. It would impact the PPNA Presbytery, and the Northern Synod councils and the people involved in these councils. There will be minimal impact on NRCC, which will continue to function as a Regional Council of the UAICC.

### **Implementation Considerations**

- Changes over the 18 months would be considered provisional and potentially ongoing, subject to the decisions of the National 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly meeting relating to inter-conciliar councils.
- Achieving efficiencies in administration is a goal and will require continued effort to align systems and processes well. This work has already begun in the Northern Synod.
- To manage the transition, functions and responsibilities would be consolidated over time. It is proposed that the Northern Synod commit 18 months to this task.

#### 4. Proposals.

It is proposed that the Synod resolve:

- a. To approve the Synod Standing Committee:
  - (i) To 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 to implement organisational change that serves the Northern Synod to undertake and support the worship, witness, and service within its bounds.
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- b. To request the Synod Standing Committee to work with the Assembly Standing Committee to seek advice and implement the necessary UCA Regulation exemptions, and/or alternatives, and/or alterations (Reg. 3.10), to provide for the Northern Synod to move to a three-council model of governance as described in the Governance Report February 2025 by the General Secretary.
- c. To request the Synod Standing Committee to demonstrate its 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. Synod Standing Committee will work with NRCC to develop new by-laws and covenanting documents as appropriate.
- d. To request the Synod Standing Committee to regularly report the factors including progress and modifications to the Regulations and the impact of these changes to the 47<sup>th</sup> Synod Members, and other councils of the Church within the Northern Synod.

Rev Janet Staines  
General Secretary  
Northern Synod  
1 February 2025

1. "The Uniting Church in North Australia", by Mr John McLaren and Rev Vicki Aitken, submitted to the ACT2 project in 2023.
2. "Act2: The Gift of the Spirit July 2024", Act2 report to the 17th Assembly 2024, Act2 Steering Committee.
3. "A Time for Change – The Uniting Church in Northern Australia", by Mr John McLaren and Rev Vicki Aitken, submitted to the PPNA Presbytery Meeting 4-5 October 2024 following the National Assembly Meeting's decision to explore a change in governance structure.
4. "Act2: In response to God's Call", by Rev Dr Peter Walker & Rev Dr Chris Budden, 2023.







## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

**Subject:** Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan

**Proposal:** That the Northern Synod accept the Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan and approve its implementation in the Synod.

**Rationale:** The Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan has been in existence in draft form since June 2017, prepared by Mr Dale Chesson, Property Officer.

The Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan is designed to cover all that might reasonably be foreseen in terms of disaster preparation and response by the Synod.

The Northern Territory Emergency Management Arrangements provide a framework for a coordinated approach, supporting a whole of nation, all hazards, shared responsibility of planning for, response to and recovery from a disaster.

The Disaster Management Cycle works on a constant movement through these four segments: Prevention, Prepare, Respond, Recover. This document is framed within those four headings.

The approval of this document will inform the Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Committee of the Synod Standing Committee and provide guidance to the Disaster Recovery Convenor, Property Officer and impacted Councils of the Church. This document will implement the necessary Prevention and Preparations for a disaster and subsequent Response and Recovery.

**Proposer 1** Rev Steve Orme  
Disaster Recovery Chaplain

**Proposer 2.** Rev Janet Staines General Secretary

Those framing proposals are asked to note the following:

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2. Proposers should note that the wording of the proposal will be considered by the Synod Business Committee, which may, if necessary, refer the Proposal back for clarification or re-wording.





**NORTHERN SYNOD**

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

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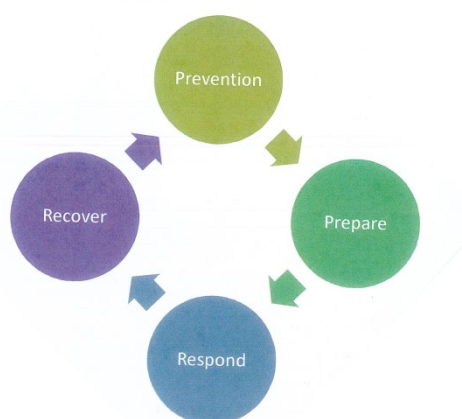
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# ***Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan***



## Emergency Management Process

Northern Territory Emergency Management Arrangements provide a framework for a coordinated approach, supporting a whole of nation, all hazards, shared responsibility of planning for, response to and recovery from a disaster.



### **Prevention**<sup>1</sup>

Seek to eliminate or reduce the impact of hazards themselves and/or to reduce the susceptibility and increase the resilience of the community subject to the impact of those hazards.

### **Prepare**

Establish arrangements and plans and provide education and information to prepare the community to deal effectively with such emergencies and disasters as may eventuate.

### **Respond**

Activate preparedness arrangements and plans to put in place effective measures to deal with emergencies and disasters if and when they do occur.

### **Recover**

Assist a community affected by an emergency or disaster in reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being.

The Disaster Management Cycle works on a constant movement through these four segments:

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<sup>1</sup> NT Emergency Plan



## **Prevention, Prepare, Respond, Recover.**

This document is framed within those four headings.

The Northern Synod Disaster Recovery Plan is designed to cover all that might reasonably be foreseen in terms of disaster preparation and response by the Synod.

### **1. Prevention/Mitigation**

At regular points beyond the response phase to a disaster, it is important to take time to:

- Connect / meet with all parties involved and gather feedback about process and progress.
- Note and discuss new discoveries and short comings in the church's response.
- Adapt the plan accordingly.
- Communicate changes in process or protocols to all parties.
- Archive wisdom well. These need to be easily found before and during the next crisis.

### **2. Prepare**

The Synod Disaster Recovery Committee consists of the Moderator, General Secretary, Synod Property Officer, NRCC Resource Worker, PPNA Chairperson or nominee. The Synod Disaster Recovery Committee is chaired by the General Secretary.

The Synod Disaster Recovery Coordinator, hereafter called the *Coordinator*, is the Synod Property Officer. In the absence of the Coordinator, the General Secretary or other member of this team will take on the role of Synod Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

Documentation to assist the Synod to prepare for a disaster includes:

- Overarching response protocol/checklist (see Appendix 1).
- Donations (see Appendix 2).
- Distribution of funds (see Appendix 3).
- Peer support.
- Conduct a Disaster Risk Assessment (Appendices 8 & 9 provide helpful information on what is needed to be considered), and
- Regional plans for each of the four areas in the Synod (Darwin, Arnhem Land, The Centre & The Kimberley – see Appendices 10 - 13).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Guidelines on these assessments can be found at

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ub5gnxnh7adcawd/Guiding%20principles%20for%20Risk%20Assessment%20and>

## Data-gathering

### *People*

- The Synod will have all congregation contacts (Minister, Church Office & Church Council Chairman, Secretary & Treasurer) up to date.
- Each congregation will establish an emergency contact person and alternate.
- Each congregation will maintain current pastoral lists including vulnerable people.
- Each congregation will devise its own local disaster response plan. This can be aided by Appendices 4, 7 and 8.<sup>3</sup>

### *Physical Assets*

- The Synod will hold a record of the physical assets that are available in each centre (including space, kitchen / toilet / shower facilities) – (See Appendix 4).
- The Synod office will have a satellite phone or equivalent to ensure communication is possible with any location in that Synod that is affected.
- Generator and fuel, along with other necessary supplies, will be located at Living Water (Humpty Doo) ahead of each cyclone season. This is to allow a temporary Synod Office to operate should the Parap office suffer significant damage due to a cyclone.

## 3. Response

### Connect and support

- Upon receiving an extreme weather or other warning, the Coordinator rings/messages those likely to be affected and completes a check list of where people and assets are.
- Upon declaration of an Emergency Situation, or a State of Emergency or a State of Disaster under the NT Emergency Management Plan, the Synod Disaster Recovery Committee convenes.
- Response to those people outside Northern Synod congregations who are in shelters, evacuation centres and recovery centres would be via the NTCC's Emergency Response Chaplaincy Service.

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[%20Disaster%20Risk%20%20%20Reducti.doc?dl=0](#)<sup>2</sup> but simply working of the Local Government Area disaster plans may be sufficient to identify local area risks and needs.

<sup>3</sup> A new resource is being developed by the National Disaster Recovery Officer to assist congregations in developing their own disaster response plan - using an audio visual, booklets and checklists to assist in this planning process. It could be available within the second half of 2017.

- After impact – Coordinator and/or Presbytery Minister/s connect with congregations and leaders affected. The Moderator may also follow up with pastoral contact.
- Coordinator liaises with National Disaster Recovery Officer (currently, Stephen Robinson on 0412 820 848, Stephenr@nswact.uca.org.au)
- Funds are made available for people in need and community projects not yet funded. (**Note:** Regarding the availability of funds from the Assembly – New appeals from the President can always be made.)

#### Determine need and supplement ministry

- Peer support (see Appendix 5) – aims to provide care, support, education and resources for ministry agents. Specific peer support from UCA people helps with the next step – planning *recovery*. Trained Peer support people may be brought in from other Synods.

#### 4. Recovery

- Coordinator will liaise with National Disaster Recovery Officer (who is often available to visit and advise / assess / support)
- The Synod Disaster Recovery Committee determines special unmet (or unforeseen) needs through meeting with affected congregations/ presbyteries.
- Continue Peer Support under the guidance of the Presbytery.
- Arrange special recovery placement/s (See appendix 6).<sup>4</sup>
- Encourage local congregations to connect with disaster recovery agencies and create cooperative local initiatives (See appendix 7).

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<sup>4</sup> The National Disaster Recovery Officer would seek to be available to assist in negotiating a special placement role and liaising with the locals and Synod in establishing the role description and issues relating to the position.

For a copy of this document and the appendices listed below, please see our website:

[Northern-Synod-Disaster-Recovery-Plan-1.pdf](#)

Appendix 1 – Northern Synod Disaster Response Protocol

Appendix 2 – Donations after Disaster

Appendix 3 – Guidelines for the Release of Disaster Funds in the  
Northern Synod (as adopted from the Synod of NSW and  
ACT)

Appendix 4 – Northern Synod Congregational Resource Register

Appendix 5 – Peer Support Person Role Description

Appendix 6 – Disaster Recovery – Terms of Long Supply (Example only)

Appendix 7 – What can congregations do after a crisis in their area?

Appendix 8 – Disaster Preparation Steps for the Northern Synod  
Congregations and Faith Groups

Appendix 9 – Disaster Preparedness Checklist for Congregations and  
Faith Groups







## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

**Subject:** Help Our Children and Youth

**Proposal:** That the Northern Synod advocate for youth justice reform that addresses the underlying causes of social inequality, structural disadvantages and systemic failures instead of punitive measures. We need to approach these issues with compassion, with clarity and with processes that provide accountability, safety and real change for our community.

**Rationale:** Most children who enter the youth justice system (including children as young as 10) come from backgrounds where they have already experienced disadvantage and trauma. Prison increases disadvantage and disconnection. Children in the youth justice system need family and community support, education, and life opportunities, not punishment that compounds disconnection and disadvantage.

Imprisonment is harmful, costly and doesn't work to make our community safer. There is an urgent need to stop using prison as our default response to both crime and disadvantage. We need a new approach that focuses on the social and health drivers of crime and addresses the over-representation of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in the criminal justice system, including the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Imprisonment leads to high rates of recidivism, reduced opportunities for employment post-release, and poorer education outcomes for children of people in prison – punishing the next generation and continuing a cycle of disadvantage.

We need evidence-based criminal justice policy in Australia that identifies effective alternatives to incarceration and enhances community safety.[1]





## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

### Rationale Continued:

The age of criminal responsibility in the NT

The age of criminal responsibility is the age at which a person can be arrested, summonsed, charged with and found guilty of criminal offences. On 1 August 2023, the NT became the first Australian jurisdiction to raise the age of criminal liability from the previous minimum age of 10, to 12. However, on 17 October 2024, the NT parliament voted to change the age of criminal liability to 10. This means that the age of criminal liability in the NT is now once again 10 years of age.

The age of criminal responsibility was raised from 10 to 12 in the NT in response to widespread pressure for the age to be raised across all of Australia. The 'raise the age' campaign gained momentum in 2016, when media attention became focused on human rights abuses in the Don Dale Detention Centre and concern grew about the large number of young children in detention. The findings of the 2017 report of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory ring out as a haunting warning:

"Children and young people like [Dylan] were incarcerated, ignored and deprived of their basic needs. They were held in conditions some of which were unspeakably bad and treated in a way that meant rehabilitation was impossible. Unsurprisingly, their mistreatment bred more wrongdoing and more significant behavioural issues." [2]

### First Nations young people in detention

Although only about 5.7% of people aged 10–17 in Australia are First Nations, 63% of the children in detention on an average day in 2023 were First Nations. This means they are 29 times as likely as a non-Indigenous child to be in detention. For children aged 10-13, this figure rises to 46 times. Most of them (81%) are awaiting sentencing. In the Northern Territory, 97% of the children in youth detention were First Nations children.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports that First Nations children consistently experience detention at a younger age than non-Indigenous children and at a higher number and rate. Evidence shows that the current approach is only resulting in an increase of recidivism and trauma. [3]

### Alternatives to Prison

Our criminal justice system is not working. Past Governments of both political persuasions have been responsible for more than doubling the Australian prison







## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

### **Rationale Continued:**

population over recent decades. The Australian imprisonment rate (per 100,000 of adult population) has surged over the last three decades, from 119.2 in 1993 to 202.3 in 2023. It is now time to critically examine the evidence which shows that jailing is failing us all.

The over-use of incarceration in the NT has historically been driven by a politicised approach to justice policy, with both major parties frequently competing to promote a 'tough on crime' agenda. Too often, decision-making about critical policy and legislative reform has focused on political rather than policy outcomes. Heated political conversations about how to respond to crime often entirely neglect the evidence about what actually works to reduce it.

The failure in the Northern Territory to commit to evidence-based policy in this area has overwhelmingly impacted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who are over-represented at every point of contact with the justice system.

Strong evidence exists throughout Australia on the efficacy of community-led approaches that address the social drivers of incarceration rates. Despite the strong evidence base, we have seen only a piecemeal approach to resourcing, expanding, and evaluating these solutions. Community-led programs in the Northern Territory are already doing considerable work in breaking cycles of disadvantage for individuals impacted by the justice system. First Nations communities, and First Nations community led organisations have been leading this work, often achieving remarkable outcomes with very limited support and resourcing.

There are multiple points of intervention that can and do make a difference, and there are many examples of programs that work. These programs are however currently operating on a scale that is too small to make a systemic difference when it comes to the reduction of recidivism and the reduction of criminal justice system contact. There is an opportunity in the Northern Territory to turn around the current over-reliance on incarceration and genuinely invest in the evidence-based alternatives that we know will make a difference.[4]





## Northern Synod 47th Meeting Proposal

### Sources:

[1] Jailing Is Failing - Justice Reform Initiative | Jailing Is Failing

[2]

<https://www.justice.org.au/lowering-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility-will-not-solve-anything/>

[3]

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2023>

[4] A Paper from the Justice Reform Initiative, Alternatives to Incarceration in the Northern Territory, May 2023.

[https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI\\_Alternatives\\_NT\\_Full\\_FINAL-2\\_copy.pdf?1684122983](https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI_Alternatives_NT_Full_FINAL-2_copy.pdf?1684122983)

**Proposer 1:** Rev Janet Staines  
General Secretary

**Proposer 2:** Rev Felicity Amery  
Moderator

Those framing proposals are asked to note the following:

1. Each proposal must be signed by two members of Synod.
2. Proposers should note that the wording of the proposal will be considered by the Synod Business Committee, which may, if necessary, refer the Proposal back for clarification or re-wording.

## SYNOD REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES – ENDORSEMENTS

### 1. Nungalinga College Board

NS By Law 5.1.1 and 5.1.1.1		
In accordance with the College Constitution		
One corporate member	Moderator or delegate	Rev Felicity Amery
Two director members (three-year term)	Appointed by Synod on the advice of NRCC.	Current members concluding in 2025 Mr Robert Maliwalnawuy Mr Harry Garrawurra

### 2. St Philips College Inc

NS By Law 5.1.2	
In accordance with the College Constitution Appointed for 3 years	
The Synod shall appoint two members to the Board	Rev Janet Staines (2025-2028) Mr Peter Jones (2024-2027)
The Synod shall appoint a Member to the St Philips College Property Trust	Mr Kevin Davis AM (2025-2028)

### 3. Somerville Community Services Inc

NS By Law 5.1.3	
In accordance with the Constitution of Somerville Foundation Limited appointed for a three-year term	Ms Emily Evans (2025-2028)

#### 4. Aboriginal Resource and Development Services (ARDS)

NS By Law 5.1.5	
The General Secretary or their nominee shall be the Corporate Member of ARDS.	Rev Janet Staines

#### 5. UnitingCare Australia

Northern Synod representative to Board of UnitingCare Australia	Mr Ian O'Reilly appointed by SSC 16/11/2024
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#### 6. Committee for Counselling & Committee for Discipline

Referred to the Synod of South Australia
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#### 7. Sexual Misconduct Committee

Referred to the Synod of South Australia
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# SYNOD COMMITTEES - ELECTIONS

## 1. Synod Standing Committee

<b>Northern Synod By Law NS 1.2.1 and 1.2.2</b> <i>No fewer lay persons than clergy</i> <i>Only members of the Synod are eligible for membership of the Standing Committee</i>		<b>Regulation 3.7.4.1</b> <b>Constitution Clause 36</b> <i>No FEWER lay members than ministerial members.</i>
<b>Ex Officio</b>	Moderator Past Moderator Moderator-elect  General Secretary Chairperson, NRCC or nominee  Chairperson, PPNA or nominee  Chairperson, FAPS Committee	Rev Felicity Amery Rev Tony Goodluck <i>(to be determined at 2026 Synod)</i> Rev Janet Staines Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra  Ps Lauren Merritt  Election required
Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia	2 persons at least one to be an ordinary (lay) person	Ps Benjamin Quilliam (2024-2027) Mr John McLaren (2024-2027)
Northern Regional Council of Congress	2 persons at least one to be an ordinary (lay) person	Ms Jane Garritju (2024) Ps Kirsty Burgu (2024)

Northern Synod representative on Assembly Standing Committee	Elected by the Assembly for three-year term	Rev Felicity Amery Ms Emily Evans
Appointed by Synod – one (1) person in accordance with national guidelines	Elected by the Synod	Election required
Co-options NS 1.2.3 (One person)	Co-options appointed by the Standing Committee <i>(maintaining the balance of youth, lay and clergy)</i>	<i>Standing Committee to co-opt as necessary</i>



## 2. Finance and Property Services Committee

NS 3.1.1; NS3.1.2		
<i>Members elected for a term of three years.</i>		
Ex Officio	General Secretary Chief Operating Officer/Property Officer	Rev Janet Staines Mr Ross Coburn
Chairperson	Elected by Synod	Election required
Up to three (3) persons	Elected by the Synod	Mr Richard Trudgen (Synod member, 2024-2027) Election required
One (1) person co-opted by the Committee	Co-opted by the Committee	
Two (2) persons appointed by NRCC	Advised by NRCC	Rev Djawanydjawany Gondarra (2024-2027) To be advised following NRCC Full Council Meeting
Two (2) persons appointed by PPNA	Advised by PPNA	Elections required
NRCC Resource Worker	<i>(receives all papers but has no vote)</i>	Rev Dr Peter Hobson

### 3. UCA Property Trust (NT)

NS 4.1.2 Five nominations, one of whom is elected by the Synod as the Chairperson of the Trust.		
Ex Officio	Moderator General Secretary Synod Property Officer	Rev Felicity Amery Rev Janet Staines Rev Janet Staines
Trustee	Chairperson	Election required
Trustees – four persons	Elected by the Synod	Elections required

### 4. Northern Territory Council of Churches

Appointed in accordance with NTCC Constitution		
Ex Officio	Moderator	Rev Felicity Amery
Three to be elected by the Synod annually	( <i>current members:</i> <i>Thresi Mauboy</i> <i>Vicki Aitken</i> <i>Emily Evans</i> )	Election required