

# General Proposal 4

## Instruction to the Synod Standing Committee regarding governance reform

### That the Synod

1. Instructs the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) to do all things necessary to allow the separate incorporation of any body of the church when requested to do by that body on the following conditions:
  - (a) That there be no financial detriment to the Synod as a result;
  - (b) That the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) remains the sole member of any incorporated body;
  - (c) That the SSC is satisfied that the mission and purpose of the Uniting Church in Australia is maintained and enhanced as a result of incorporation.
2. In light of the commentary contained in the Fit for Purpose – Governance Review paper; a model Trust Deed be developed by the Synod to guide the implementation of any move to incorporation; and
3. Directs the Synod Office to develop and improve any existing program designed to induct, train, and improve the skills of any person in a governance role across the Synod.

## Scope

Proposal 1 is intended to apply to any existing body or institution that already exists within the life of the church that requests a move to incorporation. It does not apply to any future company or entity yet to be created by the Synod.

Proposal 2 will be used to consistently guide the policy settings around current and future conversations around the creation of new entities of the church.

Proposal 3 is intended to apply to all existing governance bodies in the life of the Synod, whether they are seeking incorporation or not.

## Rationale

### Plenty

The Queensland Synod has embarked on a body of work under the banner Plenty, dedicated to tackling four 'Mission Priorities' and eleven Commitments which form part of the strategic ambition of the Uniting Church. The four Mission Priorities are:

- Discipleship
- Transforming Communities
- Fit-for-Purpose
- Life Together

### The Jameson Report

In late 2022 Board Matters was engaged to conduct a body of research in relation to the third Mission Priority, Fit-for-Purpose. This research was to enable decisions to be presented to Synod in October 2023 in relation to 'Governance Reform' which is an explicit Commitment under the Fit-for-Purpose Mission Priority. Board Matters were asked to capture an overview of other existing governance models and apply the criteria as part of an evaluation process, which would result in a short-list of



models for more detailed and in-depth exploration to assess application to the Uniting Church in Queensland governance requirements.

The resulting report the “Governance research Brief Report” (the Jameson report) was the product of this brief. The full report can be found here: [Jameson Report](#)

This well researched and considered report will be a foundation for a program of governance reform work for the Synod for at least the next decade. The principles contained within it should be used by the Synod to guide its continuing conversation about a fit-for-purpose model of church.

We recognise that legal and compliance challenges of the day, will impact us, but should not be used as an excuse to detract from the call of discipleship to Christian witness,

Those principles are:

- I. Staying true to our purpose and values
- II. Empowering our people
- III. Adapting for context
- IV. Being accountable to ourselves and our stakeholders
- V. Connecting the parts of the ‘body’ into a cohesive whole
- VI. Respecting the Immutable Polity and Government of the Church
- VII. Protecting and enhancing the assets and resources available for delivery of Mission

The report was circulated throughout the Synod over a period of months in the first half of 2023.

The summary of responses is **attached at A**. This summary document has been circulated throughout the Synod to allow for continued conversation around those matters that are important for the Synod at this time.

There has been no significant resistance to the idea of incorporation per se. Reservations however have been expressed that any change in our legal structure must be accompanied by the demonstrated case that the move improves the management of risk and enhances our capacity to deliver against the deep missional purposes of the church. The proposals that follow are an instruction to the Synod Standing Committee to not deviate from those principles when considering applications. In summary, we direct the SSC not to deviate from our deep calling to be the body of Christ when we consider the legal options that we can choose in which to operate in the world.

### **The Proposals**

At this Synod there are a number of issues that can be actioned in the short term that will enhance the governance capacity of the church immediately. The resolutions proposed capture some immediate steps that do not offend against the basic principles contained in the Jameson report. The approach is to give the Synod Standing Committee broad principles to guide their decision making around a number of requests for incorporation that are currently before it, to insist that there be a consistent approach to the question, via a model Trust Deed and an instruction to resource a deliberate campaign of what it means to govern complex organisations on behalf of the church.

These anticipated outcomes are to allow for continuing conversations around the best way to govern in the future; deliberately direct resources to improve the governance capacity of those on our boards, committee, and commissions; and allow for a due diligence process to be undertaken in response to the current requests for incorporation. The current requests for incorporation are from Wesley

*renewal*

Mission Queensland, Uniting Care Queensland and Uniting Education. Some schools and Uniting Early Learning have also indicated a preference for incorporation and we have purchased an off the shelf company to continue our due diligence in operating a registered Training organisation.

## Proposers

The proposer and seconder:

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