

**NB: For ease of reading the only sections of the Constitution and Regulations in this paper are those where changes are recommended**

## Constitution

**NAME: This body shall be known as the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress**

### 1. Affirmation

The U.A.I.C.C. affirms its faith in God the Creator. It affirms that "First Peoples had already encountered the Creator God before the arrival of the colonisers; the Spirit was already in the land revealing God to the people through law, custom and ceremony. The same love and grace that was finally and fully revealed in Jesus Christ sustained the First Peoples and gave them particular insights into God's way".<sup>1</sup> It believes God is reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ. God offers this new life to all people as a gift, a gift claimed as people live out this faith in Jesus. His salvation is offered to people through faith in Jesus Christ. God's Spirit is constantly nurturing, sustaining, empowering and liberating His people and the whole creation, calling people to repentance and witness.

The people of the Congress look forward with hope to the coming of God's Kingdom in its fullness, when Christ will reign over all nations and peace, justice and well being will fill the earth.

### 2. Wholistic Evangelism

In response to the commission of Christ "to make disciples of all nations..." the Congress gives priority to holistic evangelism. This means that Congress will seek to minister in love to people in all their needs: spiritual, physical, social and cultural. Believing that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the basis for true salvation and reconciliation between people and God, Congress will endeavour to bring people into relationship with Christ through faith and baptism. Mindful too, that it must witness to the hope and reality of the Kingdom of God, Congress will share the vision of this Kingdom with people in their need: it will offer hope to hopeless and apathetic; it will seek to empower the powerless to break the chains of their oppression; it will seek to build community on the basis of justice for all people. It will affirm the importance of Aboriginal culture and spirituality, and seek to develop culturally appropriate theology and worship. It will challenge the people and governments of Australia to build a just and Inclusive community that recognizes First Peoples as sovereign peoples.

---

<sup>1</sup> Preamble to the Constitution, The Uniting Church in Australia

## Regulations

These Regulations set out the way the Congress has decided to work. They were adopted by the National Conference on the 11th December 1992. They may be amended at any time.

1. Membership
2. Congregations and parishes
3. Regional committees
4. National conference
5. Leadership and Ministry
6. Finances
7. Pastoral care and discipline

### 1. Membership

1.1 Members of Congress, (apart from honorary members) are Aboriginal and Islander people.

1.2 The Congress recognises ~~eight~~<sup>five</sup> forms of membership:

- \* Baptised members
- \* Confirmed members
- \* Affirmed members
- \* Life members
- \* Members in association
- \* Active members
- \* Honorary members
- \* Covenanting members-

1.3 Baptised members are people who have been Baptised in any Christian denomination and who have been accepted as members of their ~~Congregation~~<sup>Parish</sup> by the local ~~Church~~ Council ~~of Elders~~. (Where there is no ~~Church~~ Council ~~of Elders~~, the minister in consultation with the Regional Committee shall act.)

1.4 Confirmed members are people who have been Baptised and confirmed and who have been accepted as members of their ~~Congregation~~<sup>Parish</sup> by the local ~~Church~~ Council ~~of Elders~~. (Where there is no ~~Church~~ Council ~~of Elders~~, the minister in consultation with the Regional Committee shall act.)

B. Affirmed member of Congress is a member of the Church or a member in association who has accepted the Church Council's invitation to become an affirmed member and who the Congregation recognises as an affirmed member because of his or her active participation in the Congregation's life.;

1.5 Life members are Aboriginal/Islander people who have made a very major contribution to the life of Congress. Life members are recognised as such by the Conference. Life members may speak and vote at meetings.

Formatted: Space After: 0 pt

Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt

1.6 Members-in-association (baptised and confirmed) are members of another Christian denomination who wish to retain their membership in that denomination but who, for the time being, share in the life of the Congress.

A. Active members are baptised people [??] who commit themselves annually to being part of Congress. 'Affirmed members' are automatically be considered 'active members'. Active members can be engaged in all parts of Congress, but can only be part of presbytery, synod or Assembly if they are confirmed members of the church.

Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt, After: 0 pt

Formatted: Font: Font color: Auto, English (Australia)

1.7 All confirmed members life members, and confirmed members-in-association may vote and stand for office.

1.8 People applying for membership will receive a program of education on the Congress, which will include information on the Constitution and Regulations of Congress.

1.9 Honorary members are non-Aboriginal people who have made and important contribution to the life of the Congress. Honorary members are recognised only by a majority vote of the National Conference. Honorary members may speak but not vote at meetings.

C. Covenanting members are Second Peoples who are committed to walking with Congress, and are recognised as such by the regional committee. Covenanting members can speak but not vote, decide issues or hold office.

Formatted: Indent: Left: 0 cm

D. Membership of the Uniting Church and Congress may be held on a membership role kept by the regional council (similar to membership of Faith Communities, Regulation 3.9.2 (b)).

Formatted: Space Before: 0 pt, After: 0 pt

Formatted: Font: Font color: Auto, English (Australia)

1.10 Adherents are people who worship regularly and share in the life of a congregation, but are not baptised or confirmed members or members-in-association. Adherents may attend and speak at meetings, but may not vote or stand for office.

## 2. Congregations ~~and Parishes~~

2.1 The Regional Committee may recognise groups of worshipping, serving members as a ~~Congregation~~~~Parish~~.

2.2 A ~~Congregation~~~~Parish~~ will have an elected ~~Church~~~~Parish~~ Council who will be responsible for the administration, property and finance of the Parish.

2.3 The ~~Church~~~~Parish~~ Council shall elect its own Chairperson.

2.4 A ~~Congregation~~~~Parish~~ will have a Council of Elders who will, with the minister, exercise pastoral oversight.

2.5 A ~~Congregation~~Parish will, with the support of the Regional Committee, be responsible for funding its own work and will keep accurate books of account. The ~~Church~~Parish Council will receive monthly financial reports. The books will be audited each year by an accredited auditor approved by the Regional Committee and a copy of the report is to be sent to the Regional Committee.

~~2.6 A Parish may have one, or more than one Congregations.~~

### 3. Regional Committees

3.1 The National Conference will set the boundaries for Regional Committees.

3.2 Where a Regional Committee is also a Presbytery of the Uniting Church, within the Congress it will be referred to as a Regional Committee.

3.3 Responsibilities of Regional Committees

Regional Committees will have the following responsibilities:

The pastoral oversight of all Parishes and Ministers within their bounds;

Creating or disbanding Parishes and changing their boundaries;

Dealing with matters referred to them by the Parishes;

Establishing other ministries including, but not limited to, cultural or community development work.

Appointing and supervising the Development Team;

Carrying out the work of the Portfolio Areas(s) referred to them by the National Conference;

Appointing one woman (and alternate) to be the spokesperson on women's issues;

Helping the Uniting Church to struggle with the issue of the Covenant program;

Adopting Guidelines for their own wellbeing;

Receiving reports from the Parishes and agencies;

Fulfilling such responsibilities of Presbyteries as have been referred to them.

4.2 Meetings of the National Conference

The National Conference normally shall ~~meet~~meet at least once every three years and a special meeting may be convened at any time by the Standing Committee for urgent business every eighteen months in different parts of Australia on a rotation basis.

#### 4.4 National Committee Standing Committee

The National Committee will carry out the responsibilities of the National Conference in between meetings of the Conference.

4.5 The National Committee shall consist of seventeen persons: The seven Chairpersons of Regional Committees; Seven elders, one appointed by each Regional Committee; Two women's representatives; A youth representative.

4.4.1 National Conference shall appoint a Standing Committee, to be known as the National Executive.

4.4.2 The membership shall be:

- i. Office-bearers;
- ii. Chairpersons of Regions;
- iii. The Chair of the National Council of Elders;
- iv. A Woman's representative;
- v. Two youth representatives;
- vi. 6 people appointed by the Conference from among the members.

4.4.3 The National Executive shall deal with all business referred to it by the National Conference, and will carry all other responsibilities of National Conference between meetings, except for those things that the Conference or these Regulations determine it cannot deal with.

4.4.4 The National Executive will ensure that all Conference resolutions are implemented;

4.4.5 The National Executive will determine the annual budget, and will be responsible to ensure that funds are expended in the light of that budget.

4.4.6 The National Executive shall meet at least annually face-to-face, but may meet more often if it so determines. It will meet at least four times a year, either face-to-face or by other means.

4.4.7 In the event that an office bearer resigns the National Executive may appoint a new person to be in the office until the next meeting of Conference.

4.4.8 In the event that the senior National Staff person resigns, the National Executive may make an interim appointment until the next Conference. The National Executive may dismiss the Senior National staff person, providing that representatives from at least 3 regions and 3 of the elected people concur.

4.4.9 National Executive may appoint and dismiss all other staff.

4.4.10 National Executive may appoint working groups and task groups, and will appoint the membership of the MEB.

4.4.11 The National Executive will fill the position of National Chairperson/ President during long periods of illness or other long term leave.

4.4.12 The National Committee cannot overturn a policy decision of the National Conference.

4.4.13 Regional Chairpersons will report fully on all business of the National Conference and National Executive to their Regional Committee at the next meeting of the Regional Committee.

~~4.6 The role of the National Committee is to do such things as it is asked to do by the National Conference and may include:~~

~~Deciding the national budget;~~

~~Relating to the Assembly and its Committees;~~

~~Relating to Aboriginal and Islander organisations;~~

~~Relating to overseas churches;~~

~~Relating to Councils of Churches;~~

~~Raising funds;~~

~~Ensuring Conference resolutions are implemented;~~

~~Assisting the Regional Committees as requested;~~

~~Making urgent decisions on behalf of the Conference in between meetings of the Conference.~~

~~4.7 The National Committee cannot overturn a policy decision of the National Conference. SEE 4.4.12 above~~

~~4.8 National Executive~~

~~The members of the National Executive shall be:~~

~~The Chairpersons of the Regional Committees;~~

~~The Women's Conference Co-ordinator;~~

~~The Chairperson of the National Council of Elders.~~

~~4.9 State Chairpersons will report fully on 'all business of the National Conference, National Committee and National Executive to their Regional Committee at the next meeting of the Regional Committee.~~

#### 4.10 Officers

The officers of the Congress shall be:

Chairperson;  
Deputy Chairperson;  
~~Administrator. Treasurer~~

The officers, ~~other than Administrator,~~ shall serve ~~for three years~~ such terms as the National Conference determines.

#### 4.11 National Chairperson

The role of the National Chairperson is:

To chair the National Conference, the National Committee and the National Executive meetings. The Chairperson may invite Chairpersons of Regional Committees to chair sessions of the Conference on a rotation basis;

To serve as the official spokesperson for the Congress;

To represent the Congress as directed by the National Conference, the National Committee or the National Executive; (This responsibility may be delegated to others.)

With the Chairperson of the National Council of Elders, to provide pastoral support for Regional Chairpersons and ministers of the Congress, and to assist in dealing with difficulties experienced by these people;

To help to develop Regional Committees and to conduct Consultations.

Other responsibilities as determined by the National Conference.

If the Chairperson is unable to chair a meeting this responsibility shall fall to the Deputy Chairperson. If they are unable to chair the meeting, the Chairperson of the region in which the meeting is occurring, or their nominee, will chair the meeting.

The regional Chairperson will represent the National Chairperson if they cannot attend an event in the region, and would usually attend such gatherings with the Chairperson when they are available.

The National Conference will determine if the role of the Chairperson is to be voluntary or paid (part or full-time), and the length that the person may serve in that role.

The National Chairperson shall be appointed by the National Conference in a manner determined by the Standing Committee.

#### 4.12 Staff

The National Standing Committee will determine staffing requirements to meet the strategic directions and plans of Congress, and will report this decision to the National Conference.

#### 4.12 National Administrator

The position of National Administrator is normally a full time 3-year settlement.

4.13 The skills and qualities required of the National Administrator shall include:

Well-versed in the Christian ethos;  
Proven management ability;  
To be of a personable nature;  
Highly motivated;  
Good communication ability;  
Expertise in planning and development;  
Understanding of principles of financial management;  
Decisive in decision-making;  
Supportive of staff and committee people.

4.14 The responsibilities of the National Administrator are:

To prepare and distribute materials for meetings: agendas, reports and policy suggestions;

To visit the regions for encouragement and discussion about Congress work and in this way to support and promote growth of Congress;

To provide support for the portfolio groups;

To develop an appropriate national administrative structure;

To relate to the Uniting Church on behalf of the Congress nationally and to communicate the decisions of the Congress to the whole church;

To work with the Director for Mission and the Secretaries of the mission committees of the Commission for Mission;

To help the Regional Committees work through problems;

To conduct workshops and seminars;

~~To attend to the minutes and correspondence of the National Conference, the National Committee and the National Executive and to ensure that the decisions are carried out;~~

~~To help the Congress in its planning;~~

~~In consultation with Regional Committees, to build up relationships between the Congress and other Aboriginal and Islander organisations and Government agencies at all levels;~~

~~To report to each Conference;~~

~~To attend to any other matters referred to him/her by the National Conference, National Committee or National Executive.~~

~~4.15 The National Administrator is accountable to the National Conference and the National Committee through the Chairperson.~~

~~4.16 The process of considering the appointment or re-appointment of a person to the position of National Administrator shall be as laid down in the minutes of the National Executive of 4-7 November 1992.~~

#### 4.17 Vacancies

When staff positions, ~~other than the National Administrator,~~ are due to become vacant, the following procedure shall be followed:

The position is advertised nationally;

The applications are received and discussed by the National ~~Committee~~ Standing Committee or a body it appoints to act on its behalf;

A selection committee is appointed, who shall make a recommendation to the National Committee;

The National Committee may encourage persons to apply;

The appointment shall be made by the National Committee.

[The 2015 Conference recognized that while the Regulations mention the Chairperson of the National Council of Elders, there was no job description or way of appointing a appointing the Chairperson. It agreed on a process and asked for Regulations. This new set of clauses is offered for approval. It has an odd number at present but this will; be fixed as the Regulations are tidied up after this Conference.]

#### 4.30A Chairperson of National Council of Elders

i. The primary role of the Chairperson is to Chair meetings of the National Council of Elders, support and encourage the Elders, offer wise counsel to the

Chairperson/ President and Executive Administrator/ Resource Person, and attend National Executive.

ii. The retiring National Chairperson becomes Chairperson of the National Council of Elders, and would remain in that role until the National Chairperson steps down from that role and in turn becomes Chairperson of the national Council of Elders.

iii. This is a voluntary role.

*Adopted by the National Conference on the 11th December, 1992*

*Amended January 2018*