

UnitingJustice Australia

1. 'FOR A WORLD RECONCILED'

UnitingJustice Australia (UJA) is the justice policy and advocacy unit of the Uniting Church in Australia Assembly, pursuing matters of social and economic justice, human rights, peace and the environment. It is located within the Assembly's Uniting Faith and Discipleship Team, working within the UF&D mandate and to Terms of Reference determined by the Assembly Standing Committee in 2012.

UnitingJustice exists as an expression of the Uniting Church's commitment to working for a just and peaceful world. This commitment arises from the Christian beliefs that reconciliation and renewal is God's will for the whole creation (*Basis of Union*, par. 3) and that liberation from oppression and injustice is central to the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ. This mission is inherently evangelical, an expression of the calling to share the good news of Jesus for the poor and the oppressed.

The work of UJA through the triennium was marked by two significant events – the 2013 Federal Election and 'A Destiny Together', a week of prayer and fasting for justice for First Peoples in 2014, and one major ongoing policy priority – Australia's response to asylum seekers and refugees.

This report on UJA's work over the triennium does not describe all our activities but covers work across all major program areas – justice for First Peoples, human rights, a just and sustainable society and just peace.

UnitingJustice uses a variety of strategies to advocate for social, economic and ecological justice, human rights and peace and reconciliation between peoples:

- the drafting of statements for the consideration of the Assembly or Assembly Standing Committee;
- direct lobbying of Government and parliamentarians (meetings and letters);
- submissions to federal parliamentary, departmental and national public inquiries;
- media statements;

- the production of resources for church members – information and advocacy resources to support action, education and awareness-raising and worship and theological resources;
- speeches and workshops at public forums, seminars and conferences; and
- collaborative work through ecumenical alliances and partnerships with civil society organisations.

All our work is available on the website, www.unitingjustice.org.au. We send out a monthly newsletter which can be subscribed to from the website, are active on Twitter (@UnitingJustice) and this year launched our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/UnitingJusticeAustralia>.

2. JUSTICE FOR FIRST PEOPLES

During the triennium UJA has supported the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) in its advocacy on a number of major issues including the 'Stronger Futures' legislation (the extension of the original Northern Territory Intervention) and the campaign for the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Peoples of this land in the Australia Constitution.

In June 2012, the 'Stronger Futures' legislation was passed by federal parliament. It was enacted without genuine and appropriate consultation and negotiation with the communities most affected by it. UJA, in consultation with UAICC and the Northern Synod, produced information and advocacy materials for church members, and made a joint submission with UAICC to the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights' review of the legislation in 2014. It was one of the two main issues addressed in 'A Destiny Together' (see below).

In 2010, the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, announced that a referendum would be held to amend the Australian Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and remove racially discriminatory provisions. While bipartisan commitment continues, the announcement of a date for the referendum vote has been delayed and the draft wording has not been finalised.

With the support of UAICC, the National Director represents the Uniting Church on the national NGO Steering Committee for the Recognise Campaign. In June 2013, UJA supported the President's participation in the Journey to Recognition as it moved through Adelaide and many UAICC and UCA members also participated in the South Australian leg of the national walk. UJA also worked with UAICC NSW to organise a Recognise Forum at NCYC 2014. In January 2015, UAICC and UJA made a joint submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, responding to the Committee's Interim and Progress Reports. Consistent with the Assembly resolution of 2012 (12.16.01), we recommended acknowledgement of Indigenous peoples as the 'First Peoples' and the removal of racist provisions. We also recommended constitutional recognition of the languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples as the original languages of Australia.

2.1 'A Destiny Together: Justice for First Peoples'

The 13th Assembly resolved (12.37) to call on the Church to engage in a week of prayer and fasting for justice for First Peoples, including a public vigil at Parliament House, Canberra. UJA managed this project working with UAICC, the Worship Working Group and the Canberra Presbytery and is grateful for their support. The theme 'A Destiny Together' was chosen (from paragraph 10 of the Preamble to the UCA Constitution) for the week which was held on 17-23 March 2014.

Uniting Church members, congregations and presbyteries were invited to participate in prayer and fasting and reach out to their local communities through public liturgical acts, special events and engagement with local media. Many who participated experienced it as a powerful and meaningful expression of the Covenant.

A wide range of resources were produced to support individual, congregational and small group engagement. They included information resources, especially on the two focus issues—the 'Stronger Futures' legislation and Constitutional

Recognition—theological and liturgical resources and video resources. They were made available on a special page of the Assembly website and promoted on the 'A Destiny Together' Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/adestinytogether>.

Some examples of the wide range of activities held over the week included:

- Darwin, NT – multicultural, bilingual Bible study using the ADT resources;
- Pilgrim Uniting Church, SA – prayer service and street vigil;
- Nightcliff Uniting Church, NT – open every night of the week for prayer;
- Newcastle Uniting Church, NSW – showing of the film *Utopia*; and
- Perth, WA – prayer service on the steps of WA Parliament House to coincide with the public vigil in Canberra.

On 18 March 2015, around 250 UCA members from all over the country gathered on the lawns in front of Parliament House to publicly express the Church's grief at the racism and injustice suffered by so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders and express our hope for reconciliation and justice. UAICC members came from around the country including the remote communities in Arnhem Land and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Congress leadership from every region and all synod Moderators were present. The vigil, a service of prayer and sacrament including a marking with clay (a gift of the UAICC Northern Region) and a marking with ash, was led by Rev. Rronang Garrawurra, Chair of UAICC and President, Rev. Prof. Andrew Dutney. Rronang Garrawurra made a response to the Prayer of Confession offered by the Assembly General Secretary, Rev. Terence Corkin, and the sermon was delivered by Andrew Dutney.

After the vigil, participants moved to Wesley Uniting Church, Forrest for lunch and a forum.

All the resources, photo galleries and videos of the public vigil and forum are available on the Assembly website at <https://assembly.uca.org.au/adestinytogether>.

With the assistance of Peter Jones, the General Secretary of the Northern Synod, UJA arranged a meeting with the Minister for Indigenous Affairs Senator Nigel Scullion & his Chief of Staff, Russell Patterson. Present at the meeting were Ronang Garrawurra, Andrew Dutney, Stuart Macmillan and Elenie Poulos. The conversation addressed issues including what a genuine partnership between the Government and Aboriginal people might look like, school attendance and the difficulty of the measures that successive governments have implemented to punish parents for the non-attendance of their children and the importance of bilingual education. The Minister committed to meet with Ronang Garrawurra in Darwin in the future.

The team also met with Opposition Spokesperson Shayne Neumann and former Minister Warren Snowdon and their advisers. The issues covered included the disempowering effects of the Stronger Futures legislation, Constitutional Recognition and education policy.

UJA and the Assembly Communications Unit worked to develop a media strategy including a key messages package and speaking points for interviews. Media coverage included the following:

- stories in all synod papers before and after the event – including cover stories;
- an opinion piece by Andrew Dutney published on ABC *Religion and Ethics Online*
<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/03/17/3964950.htm>;
- ABC Radio *Sunday Night* with John Cleary – pre-recorded interview with Ronang Garrawurra, Mark Guyula (translator), Stuart Macmillan and Elenie Poulos;
- *NITV News* – two-part story, including interviews and coverage of the Canberra Vigil;
- *Koori Mail* – front page, including half-page photo of UAICC Chairperson;
- Italian national radio; and
- ABC Radio *PM* – Ronang Garrawurra called for a complete inventory of the number of people being held indefinitely in Australian jails without being convicted of a

crime and the particular case of Rosie Anne Fulton.

‘A Destiny Together’ will remain one of the most significant projects ever undertaken by UJA. In the context of this Report, however, it is important to note that the management of this project, even with the employment of a Project Officer (from December to February) was a full-time task for UJA (the National Director and the Senior Policy Officer) for four months from December 2013 to the end of March 2014. Very little other work was achieved during this time and this continued to have an impact on the UJA program throughout 2014.

3. PROTECTING AND UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS

The Eleventh Assembly issued a major statement expressing our commitment to human rights. *Dignity in Humanity: Recognising Christ in every person* describes the Church’s belief in the ‘inherent and inalienable rights of all people to live free of persecution and violence, with access to all that is necessary for a decent life’. Consistent with the World Council of Churches (WCC) long history of advocacy in support of the international human rights system, the Uniting Church affirmed its commitment to the United Nation’s human rights instruments as ‘a valuable framework for assessing political, economic and social systems’ and ‘an important tool for peace’.

This is a major ongoing area of work for UJA. During the triennium some of this work has included

- advocating for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees – an end to the mandatory, prolonged and indefinite detention of asylum seekers, including children, and an end to offshore processing;
- advocating for strong and effective anti-discrimination legislation; and
- encouraging the Federal Government to take seriously its international human rights obligations (for example, by ratifying the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture), work constructively with the UN human rights system and implement our obligations in domestic policy.

UJA attends the annual Government-NGO human rights consultations and the annual UNHCR NG consultations.

3.1 **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Since July 2013 when Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced the re-opening of the detention centre on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea, and the Government's intention that asylum seekers arriving by boat would not be processed or resettled in Australia, the policies of successive governments have undermined the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Not only is Australia failing to uphold its human rights obligations, but the deliberately punitive policies are having a shocking effect on the health and wellbeing of asylum seekers, including children. Two men have died on Manus Island (one murdered in a riot and another because of inadequate medical services), and women and children on Nauru are subjected to discrimination, abuse and even rape. The Government continues to claim its policies are a success because they have 'stopped the boats' and has so far refused to acknowledge the harm being caused or the risks being faced by asylum seekers returned to the places from which they've fled without robust assessment of their claims for protection.

UnitingJustice continues to lobby for policies that are consistent with the 2002 Assembly statement, *Asylum Seeker and Refugee Policy* including

- an end to the mandatory, prolonged and indefinite detention of asylum seekers;
- an end to offshore processing;
- the appointment of an independent guardian for asylum seeker children without parents; and
- the development of a genuine regional protection framework for asylum seekers and refugees.

Over the course of the triennium, this issue has been the major area of work for UJA including:

- the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce: As Chair of Act for Peace, the National Director helped to establish the Taskforce during the second half of 2012 and was its founding chairperson. The ACRT has done some significant work, including an influential report on the issue of the guardianship of asylum

seeker children without parents (unaccompanied minors), *All the Lonely Children*;

- the Give Hope Campaign: UnitingJustice partnered with the Synod of NSW and the ACT and UnitingCare NSW.ACT in the Give Hope campaign to end the detention of children. The campaign included services of lament hosted by numerous congregations, a public vigil for the end of child detention at Circular Quay, Sydney in November 2013 to unveil a quilt made from pieces of cloth painted by over 200 NSW and ACT congregations, banners for churches, public forums and letter writing actions;
- developing and facilitating the offer the UCA made to the Federal Government in March 2014 to take all children without parents in the Christmas Island detention centre into our caring services. At the time, the children were being transferred to Nauru. This offer was refused by the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection;
- various correspondence to the Minister for Immigration and Border Protection, Senators, MPs and/or crossbenchers expressing concern about aspects of the Government's policies;
- nine submissions to parliamentary, departmental or public inquiries on proposed legislative reforms, general program and policy consultations and the conditions and effects of policies on refugees and asylum seekers;
- working with the Assembly Communications Unit on numerous media statements (20 since July 2012) and supporting the President to speak into the public space on these issues;
- the National Director providing comment and briefings to the media (print, radio and television, including appearances on ABC Radio's Sunday Nights with John Cleary, ABC Radio National's the Religion Report, ABC TV News Breakfast and The Project);
- the production of numerous information and advocacy resources for UCA members, including prayer and worship resources;
- working with civil society to develop a credible alternative to the 'stop

the boats' policies through two high level expert panels, one which resulted in the publication, *Beyond the Boats: Building an asylum and refugee policy for the long term*.

The publication includes an article written by the National Director;

- supporting the 'Love Makes a Way' movement;
- online opinion pieces written by the National Director and published in Eureka Street and 'Pearls and Irritations', a blog curated by retired diplomat and former Secretary of the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, John Menadue AO;
- an invitation from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to attend a special dialogue on Faith and Protection in Geneva in December 2012; and
- numerous speaking engagements for the National Director, within and beyond the Church, including being part of the panel which served to provide the 2013 B'Nai B'rith Human Rights address (the theme was on the rights of asylum seekers and the panel was chaired by Jenny Brockie and included Prof. Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, journalist Hugh Riminton and Rabbi Jacqueline Ninio) and a speaker on the Sydney leg of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre's 'Hot Potato' journey and campaign.

3.2 **Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation**

In 2011, the Government announced its intention to consolidate the four existing pieces of Commonwealth anti-discrimination law (covering age, disability, racial and sex discrimination) and the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986*. The aim of the consolidation project was to simplify, clarify and remove the inconsistencies across the five different pieces of legislation. UJA's final piece of work on this proposed reform was the submission to the Senate inquiry into the exposure draft legislation in December 2012. Early in 2013, this project was shelved by the Government.

In 2014, the Federal Government sought to amend the Racial Discrimination Act (especially by the removal of Section 18C) in such a way as to weaken protections against racial

vilification. UJA managed the drafting of the Assembly response to the exposure draft of the revised legislation. In the face of significant community concern, the proposed changes did not proceed.

Towards the end of 2014, the Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson, held a consultation on Rights and Responsibilities to examine the effectiveness of Commonwealth policies. UJA's submission drew attention to the need to better protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and freedom of religion. It also raised concerns about arbitrary detention, the use of so-called 'gag' clauses which restrict the advocacy activities of community organisations which receive certain government funding and the proposal to ban secondary boycotts which would prohibit people from protecting the involvement of companies in criminal activities or human rights abuses. The Commissioner's report released in March 2015 includes quotes from the submission on the issue of freedom of religion.

4. **A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY**

4.1 **Federal Election Resource 2013**

In 1977, the inaugural Assembly's *Statement to the Nation* committed the Uniting Church to engage in public life and affirmed the Church's

...eagerness to uphold basic Christian values and principles, such as the importance of every human being, the need for integrity in public life, the proclamation of truth and justice, the rights for each citizen to participate in decision-making in the community, religious liberty and personal dignity, and a concern for the welfare of the whole human race.

The Uniting Church has therefore held a long interest in matters related to democracy and participatory citizenship. Voting is one of the major responsibilities of citizenship and UJA is committed to supporting Church members to cast a prayerful, thoughtful and informed vote at election time.

In 2013, UJA managed the production of the Assembly's election briefing resource, this time with the theme A

Just Society: your faith, your voice, your vote.

A *Just Society* was developed to encourage Uniting Church members to consider their vote in terms of what we need to do, as individuals and as a nation, to ensure a just society – one that is focussed on the good of all people and the planet, now and into the future. The resource was based on the values, principles and priorities described in the Assembly statement, *An Economy of Life: Re-imagining Human Progress for a Flourishing World*. This statement invites us to imagine a different kind of society – one built on the vision of God's household and grounded in the values of the reign of God: love (of God and each other, even our enemy and especially those most vulnerable), social justice, peace, grace, mercy and forgiveness, hospitality, inclusion, connectedness and compassion. The election resource, then, was an encouragement to seek out political leadership and policies which will build up individuals and communities, uphold human dignity, treat the natural world with respect and serve the needs of the most vulnerable as a priority.

The suite of resources included a printed booklet and A5 'hot issues' briefs, and web-based resources such as in-depth issues papers, an election toolkit and prayers for use in worship. They were the result of collaboration and co-operation across the synods and Assembly agencies. The material was non-partisan and covered some of the most important areas of public policy in Australia including justice for Indigenous Australians, asylum seekers and refugees, climate change, issues relating to regional and remote Australia, human rights, issues relating to older people, our multicultural and multi-faith society, justice in international development, disability, energy affordability and gambling. The booklet and Hot Issues Briefs were distributed to Uniting Church members and congregations around the country. A number of congregations used the materials, especially the Hot Issues Briefs, as materials for group study and public forums.

The National Director took the materials to Canberra in June, ahead of the election, meeting with politicians from all

political parties to talk to them about the policy issues and priorities that the Assembly was inviting all UCA members to consider as they cast their votes.

4.2 **Climate Change**

In November 2006, the Assembly Standing Committee adopted a statement on climate change, *For the Sake of the Planet and all Its People* and resolved to encourage UCA members, groups and agencies to, among other things, model ways of living and working that minimise the production of greenhouse gas emissions and advocate for government to implement policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources.

UnitingJustice, working together with synods and other Assembly agencies, and in collaboration with environmental groups as appropriate, has long been advocating for the development of national policies which seriously and urgently address climate change. While the current Federal Government's climate change policies have been so unclear, this has been a minor area of work. In January 2014 we made a submission to a Senate inquiry into the Government's proposed Direct Action Plan. At the time of writing we were preparing a submission to the Government's Review of the National Carbon Offset Standard.

Every year, with the support of the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, UJA produces a resource to help UCA congregations and members mark World Environment Day on the 5 June. In 2014 the theme was 'Raise your voice, not the sea level', focussing on the threat climate change presents to low lying land regions, especially small islands in the Pacific.

4.3 **An Economy of Life**

UJA has continued to prioritise work arising from the statement, *An Economy of Life*. This work has included:

- the production of a decision-making guide, *Ethical Decision-making in the Key of An Economy of Life*. This resource is commended to the Church by the Assembly Standing Committee. It is the first in a series of resources based on the statement which will be released

- under the 'Living a Different Story' banner;
- a submission to the interim report of the Federal Government's welfare reform review, commonly known as the McClure Report;
 - seminar, classes and Bible study presentations by the National Director including at NCYC, NYALC, National Anglican Public Affairs Conference 2012 (keynote), Year of Luke seminar 2012 at the Centre for Theology and Ministry, Parkville, guest lectures in theological ethics at United Theological College, Sydney 2012 and 2014 and Bible studies at the Synod of Western Australia Synod meeting in 2013; and
 - continued involvement in the ANDI project to develop a wellbeing index for Australia – Elenie is a member of the ANDI Board (www.andi.org.au).

5. UNITING FOR PEACE

Uniting for Peace outlines the Uniting Church's belief that the 'ownership, use, or threatened use of nuclear, chemical and/or biological weapons is evil' and that 'genuine global security will only be achieved by working for an end to the trade in illegal weapons and the arms trade, preventing the proliferation of nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction, and requiring progressive disarmament of all nations'.

UnitingJustice has continued its work in the area of nuclear disarmament in a limited way throughout the triennium. We have continued to represent the Assembly in its membership of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and lobbied the Government for Australia to take a strong stand on nuclear disarmament at international meetings, including the Second Conference of the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Mexico in February 2014 and the UN Conference on Disarmament in January 2015.

6. WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

6.1 National Council of Churches

UnitingJustice is a keen contributor to the life and work of the NCCA. The National Director stepped down from her role as Chairperson of the Act for Peace

Commission in 2012 but has remained on the Commission. Elenie is also a member of the NCCA Social Justice Network and in 2015 returned to the role of Convenor, this time shared with Jill Ruzbacky, the other UCA Representative from the Justice and International Mission Unit of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania. Elenie was occasionally invited to represent the NCCA General Secretary at federal government consultations and forums.

6.2 World Council of Churches

In July 2014, Elenie was elected by the WCC Central Committee to serve a second term on the WCC Commission of the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA). She is the only Australian representative of the 35 Commissioners.

The CCIA serves to provide advice to and support the WCC on public policy and advocacy and program priorities and objectives on issues including social and economic justice, ecology, inter-faith relations, conflict and just peace, migrants and refugees, health and wellbeing and gender and sexuality. The CCIA mandate also allows for the Commission to speak and act on its own behalf. It is the body that holds consultative status at the UN for the WCC. At short notice Elenie was invited to chair a large part of the first meeting held in Geneva in February 2015.

Elenie was invited by the World Council of Churches, the Church of Sweden and the Christian Council of Sweden to present a paper at a global ecumenical peacebuilding consultation and workshop on advocacy for 'Just Peace' held in Sweden in December 2014. A death in the family meant that Elenie was unable to attend but her part of a joint presentation, which focused on strategies for church-based advocacy at local, national and global levels, was presented by a WCC staff person. An outcome of the consultation and workshop will be the formation of a global ecumenical peace advocacy network.

6.3 Australian Civil Society

UnitingJustice is committed to collaborating with Australian civil society organisations (including inter-faith networks, environmental groups, unions, professional organisations, community groups, issues-based networks and justice advocacy groups) which seek the

same goals for a just, peaceful and sustainable society.

It has become increasingly important, especially when lobbying for public policy change, that Australian civil society organisations are able to work together. A strong presentation from a variety of different groups can make a significant impression on Government. The Uniting Church also has an ongoing commitment to participating in Australian life as one organisation within a diverse civil society and to working to uphold and strengthen civil society. To these ends, UJA continues to represent the Assembly and the wider church on a number of NGO and civil society networks and coalitions, including the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), ICAN, the Recognise Campaign's National NGO Steering Committee, the International Detention Coalition and the Australian Coalition to End the Immigration Detention of Children. UJA has also participated in a series of civil society roundtables and forums facilitated by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) on the role of government and attended the C20 Summit (the civil society meeting ahead of the G20) in 2014.

We maintain good working relationships with national NGOs, think tanks and specialist agencies including Amnesty International Australia, UNHCR (Canberra), the ACTU, Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC), Centre for Policy Development (CPD), Australia21, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS), the Andrew and Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law (UNSW), The Australia Institute (TAI) and the Climate Institute.

7. COMMUNICATION

UJA is committed to communicating with members of the church and speaking into the public forum about the work of the Church on issues of justice and peace. Our UnitingJustice-news subscription email list has around 600 members. We contribute a regular update on our work in *National Update*, and take whatever opportunity we can to communicate through stories in synod newspapers and magazines. We are looking forward to improving the quality and quantity of our communications now that we have a staff person with some

particular responsibilities for this area of our work (see below).

UJA has become an active participant in the social media space. At the time of writing our Twitter feed (@UnitingJustice) had well over 3000 followers, mostly people and organisations beyond the confines of the UCA. The UJA Facebook page is in its early days but is already proving to be a good medium for the promotion of our work, particularly into wider UCA networks. Elenie has a blog which has demonstrated some potential and is in line for a refreshed look and more concerted effort through 2015. During 2015 the website will be updated and optimised for mobile devices.

As well as the workshops and speeches related to particular issues and program activities already noted, Elenie has had a number of opportunities to preach and speak at Uniting Church congregations and events and at public forums, including as a keynote speaker for the annual National Young Adult Leaders Conference (NYALC), the Uniting Women Conference 2014, the NSW and ACT Synod Faith and Justice Expo 2014, the NSW Studies of Religion in Focus Conference 2014. Elenie delivered the Occasional Address at a graduation ceremony at the University of Newcastle in 2013, lead the Bible Studies at the West Australian Synod Meeting in 2013 and was a Bible Study leader at the National Christian Youth Convention (NCYC) 2014.

8. STAFFING AND RESOURCING

Over most of the triennium, UJA's two staff members (the National Director and the Senior Policy Officer) continued to struggle to meet the demands of the UJA mission. UJA received a short-term boost with some extra funding at the beginning of 2012 enabling the appointment of an Administration and Policy Officer (0.6). Just after the original appointee left the role in mid-2012, the funding for that position was lost.

At the end of March 2014, we sadly bid farewell to our Senior Policy Officer, Siobhan Marren. Siobhan started with UnitingJustice in September 2011. Her passion for justice for those who are marginalised in society, especially asylum seekers and First Peoples,

shone through in all her work – supporting UCA members and congregations to work for justice, producing information and education resources, contributing to special projects and campaigns in and beyond the Church, working on the hard-edge of policy research and engagement with government and more. The resources, submissions, research notes, policy briefings, media releases and opinion pieces Siobhan prepared for us were of extraordinarily high quality. We are thankful for her tremendous contribution.

Aletia Dundas joined UJA in September 2014 as Policy Officer, bringing a passion for nonviolence, social justice and the environment. Aletia's work experience includes Pacific Project Officer at Union Abroad Aid -

APHEDA, Aboriginal concerns and community education officer at Quaker Service Australia and Peace and Disarmament program assistant at the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva. Aletia has also worked for the NCCA, served on the AFTINET Management Committee and has had experience on a number of Quaker social justice committees. She has an MA in Peace and Conflict Studies.

In thankful receipt of a bequest and with a reconfiguration of the role of policy officer, UJA has once again been able to employ a person in the role of Administration and Communications Officer (0.6). Cynthia Coghill began at UJA on 7 October 2014. Cynthia has considerable experience in administration in the corporate and community sectors and within the Uniting Church. Her last position was as the Executive Assistant to the Director of The Aurora Project, an organisation that assists Indigenous organisations with matters of Native Title, education initiatives and overseas university scholarships. Prior to this Cynthia worked as the Executive Secretary of Sydney Presbytery. She is a member of the Assembly National Disaster Relief Committee and was a member of the Business Committee for the Assembly meetings in 2006 and 2009.

The Reference Committee members for the triennium have been Rev. Janet Dawson (Chair), Rev. Glenda Blakefield (ex officio), Dr Colin Cargill, Prof. Andrew Glenn, Prof. John Langmore, Ms Louise Macdonald (resigned June

2014), Rev. Liellie McLaughlin, Prof. Graham Maddox, Rev. Dr Margaret Mayman (co-opted June 2014), Ms Pearl Wymarra (resigned April 2014), and Ms Rosemary Hudson Miller (UCA justice staff network representative). We are thankful for the support, encouragement and constructive critique we have received and the commitment, energy and expertise the Committee have generously offered to the unit.

9. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The UJA Reference Committee has identified some areas of work which we believe will continue as significant areas of public debate and policy reform, including:

- justice for First Peoples, including Constitutional recognition;
- economic justice (welfare, taxation and workplace reform)
- climate change and sustainability; and
- human rights (protections in Australia for those who vulnerable and Australian interaction with the international treaty system).

UnitingJustice will continue its commitment to work for social and ecological justice and peace. We will continue to seek change in national policy and public discourse, and to encourage the examination of core value systems. We continue to engage in this prophetic mission believing that working for justice and peace is central to faithful discipleship. UnitingJustice seeks to serve God believing that Christianity which is true to the Bible, true to the person and being of Jesus Christ and true to the fullest experiences of our humanity must be a source of great hope in our society. It can remind us that we are capable of something better and that if we work together we can build a world where nature is respected and all humanity flourishes in dignity and hope.

Rev. Janet Dawson
Chairperson

Rev. Elenie Poulos
National Director