***Report***

To: UNA members

From: Warren Talbot

Subject: Report, 2020 BGM

Date: 27 May 2020

In addition to the duties of co-secretary from June 2018 – June 2019, as a member of the UNA Executive I have focused my efforts on two areas.

1. **LGBTIQ Apology**

A proposal for the Assembly to commence a process leading to an apology to LGBTIQ Australians was tabled, but not discussed, at the July 2018 Assembly. The UNA Executive followed this up with a submission to the Assembly Standing Committee proposing that a Task Group be established. The ASC agreed to that in July 2019, and five members, three of whom are UNA members, were appointed.

Unfortunately, the Convenor has needed to resign, and the ASC is considering a new Convenor, prior to a first meeting in 2020. The Task Group is likely to give an interim report to the Assembly in 2021, with a process followed by a final report and proposals to the Assembly meeting in July 2024.

This will be a slow process, but it especially important for the church the name, own and apologise for the hurt inflicted on LGBTIQ people by the Church.

1. **Uniting Care Australia**

The 2014 Daring Conference resolved to commence a dialogue with UnitingCare Australia (the umbrella body for all Uniting Church community services). The UNA Executive was able to act on this in early 2019 and make a submission to UnitingCare Australia. There was a very positive response with plans being held for a national consultation around LGBTIQ people and aged care in 2020.

These plans have been put on hold due to responses to COVID 19, and the pressures being faced by all Uniting Care members, many of whom run nursing homes and services for people at risk. My intention to renew these connections in the second half on 2020. The overall aim continues to be the development of a nationally consistent policy on LGBTIQ+ people, couples and families by all Uniting Church linked human services.

***Report***

To: UNA members

From: Jason Masters

Subject: Report, 2020 BGM

Date: 27 May 2020

In addition to the duties of co-secretary from June 2018 – June 2019, as a member of the UNA Executive I have focused my efforts on one area.

1. **Advocacy – Religious Discrimination**

The Morrison Federal Government has drafted proposed legislation in relation to the provision of an anti-discrimination bill to protect religious people. Unfortunately, that legislation is significantly different to traditional anti-discrimination bills. It incorporates ‘protections’ of an organisation or institution, when such bills are usually around the protection of individual people, and it creates the right for religious people to discriminate and undertake activities which would otherwise be illegal.

We have provided a major submission to each of the two draft pieces of legislation and provided commentary to senior political leaders in both major parties, as well as communications to each member of the Federal Parliament (Members and Senators).

The presence of Uniting Network Australia has grown through this process, with a Senator from Western Australia seeking commentary and co-conveners being asked to speak at some rallies. I was invited to a consultation session with a NSW Federal Liberal Senator.

We have built stronger connections with Equal Voices and Equality Australia, with the latter providing further input into their submissions in addition to gaining far greater insights into the implications of the proposed legislation. They are also assisting in the development of potential strategies for the campaign that will be required when the legislation is introduced into Parliament.

The co-conveners have also had high level interaction with the President and key Assembly staff in relation to the concerns of the LGBTIQ members of the Uniting Church around the proposed legislation.

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically slowed the Government’s introduction of the bills, however it is likely that after the major economic announcements as we exit the COVID-19 crisis, the Government will re-introduce the latest version of the proposed legislation with some further amendments (which are not likely to be helpful to our community).

For the next twelve months, there will be a need for considerable advocacy on a significant scale to sway a limited number of Senators not to support the bills.

Consequently, there will be a need for additional advocacy activities as we respond to an increasing global pushback and rolled back of rights of LGBTIQ people, as illustrated on a global scale with the attack on the rights of transgender people and their access to health care. In the Australian context, this can be demonstrated by the significant campaign by Bernard Lane of The Australian and increasingly strident anti-transgender policies of organisations such as the Sydney Anglican Church.