

AGENDA 2.2.8

Reconciliation Action Plan

PROPOSED MOTION

Submitted by General Church Council

BE IT RESOLVED that the General Convention of Synod requests General Church Council (GCC) to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan that will:

- assist ongoing relationship building through listening to Aboriginal people in the LCA
- support non-Aboriginal people in the LCA to gain insight into what is important to Aboriginal people
- provide a culturally appropriate mechanism by which our church together with (inclusive of) Aboriginal people and communities within the LCA can address questions of recognition and representation, and
- develop appropriate ways to encourage and enable Aboriginal people to serve and lead in all aspects of church life in the LCA.

The General Convention of Synod authorises GCC to commit resources to facilitate the work required to prepare and deliver the plan.

The General Convention of Synod requests GCC to provide a report on the implementation of the plan to the 2021 Convention of Synod.

REASONS FOR THE MOTION

1. Background and Biblical Foundation

'Living out the reconciled life'

Reconciliation is at the heart of the Christian faith. It is a gift of God in which we are invited and privileged to participate.

We Christians believe that God has reconciled the world to himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are no longer enemies of God. By the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament, God gives people the faith in Christ and nurtures new life in them. Through faith in Christ, we are now his friends. We also believe that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18, 19). As a church we carry out this ministry by proclaiming Christ's reconciling work to all people and pleading with them to receive the friendship of God (2 Cor 5:20). As church we further witness to reconciliation by living in unity and peace with fellow Christians from various cultures and classes (Eph 4:3), and by promoting justice and peace among all people (Matt 5:9).

A Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) for the LCA will give us all a valuable tool to guide us as we continue to learn, to grow in awareness, to document specific aspects and actions of living out and walking the journey of reconciled life together.

The LCA has a long ministry history with Aboriginal people and communities in a number of places across Australia. Strong relationships and communities of faith have been established in a number of areas. We thank God for this story and the people who are part of it. An LCA RAP will aim to build on this story. Over time the LCA has sought

- to discern the best ways to ensure Aboriginal people are heard and have a voice in the church
- to assist non-Aboriginal people gain awareness into matters important to Aboriginal people

- to encourage and enable appropriate opportunities for Aboriginal people to serve and lead in the church
- to provide ways for appropriate representation and recognition of Aboriginal people and communities in the LCA and
- to speak out against racism in Australia.

The commitment of the LCA was very evident in the 1990s for example when the LCA produced the video 'Out of the Shadows' and the report 'We're All People'. The General Synods of 1997 and 2000 featured significant resolutions concerning reconciliation and a rite of reconciliation in 2000. At these General Synods the LCA spoke strongly of a commitment to reconciliation and a strong voice against racism.

At this present time in the life of the LCA we continue to seek to build upon the previous and current ministry and work being done in these areas.

At the 2015 General Convention of Synod, the LCA launched 50.500 as a mechanism to celebrate and commemorate the significant anniversaries of the LCA (50th in 2016 and the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017) and to undertake some seed projects to go into the future. One such seed project identified by Bishop John Henderson was "Hearing the Indigenous Voice". You can read about 50.500 more fully in the General Church Council report to Synod. "Hearing the Indigenous Voice" is a key 50.500 initiative both in the lead up to the 2018 Synod and into the future. Through these recent years the 50.500 committee became aware of organisations such as businesses, schools, communities and health care providers who have worked with Reconciliation Australia to craft what is known as a Reconciliation Action Plans for their organisation. The development of an LCA Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) has been identified as an opportunity to explore in 2017-20.

A RAP will provide a framework for the LCA to realise its vision for hearing, recognising and supporting Aboriginal people.

We believe a RAP will provide an excellent framework and structure to ensure that our commitment to listening, learning and actioning reconciliation within the LCA is undertaken, accountable and sustainable into the future, achieving real outcomes for a reconciled church. Through the 50.500 initiative, a small team of people formed to ask how best the LCA could hear the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at this time in the life of our church and Australian society. The New Zealand context was considered as a separate question for the people of the LCNZ. An initial project team was formed: Rev Neville Otto (50.500 Committee Chair and Secretary of the LCA), Patricia Davis (Director of Marketing and Communications, Lutheran Services) and Kerry Stains (Director of Community Services, Lutheran Services).

In 2016/2017 initial research and consultation was undertaken to understand the best approach to developing a way forward, most particularly in relation to considering whether a RAP may be helpful. The following people were consulted with during this initial time:

- Rev John Henderson, Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Australia
- Andrea Mason, Chief Executive of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council, Northern Territory Australian of the Year 2016 and Australian Business Woman of the Year 2017 and Co-Chair of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council
- Jackie Huggins, Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
- Gary Oliver, CEO of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
- Caitlin Maxwell, Program Officer of Reconciliation Australia
- Tim Stollznow, Chair of Finke River Mission Board
- Wayne Denning, CEO of Carbon Creative
- Patricia Davis, Director - Marketing and Communication of Lutheran Services

- Shona Reid, Aboriginal Lands Parliamentary Standing Committee, Legislative Council, Parliament of South Australia, LCC Board Member, Aboriginal Ministries of SA Board Member, and member of Ferryden Park Aboriginal congregation
- Marilyn Wall, National Training Coordinator for LCA Professional Standards and Ferryden Park Aboriginal congregation member
- Helen Lockwood, Director of Lutheran Community Care SA/NT
- Nick Heyne, Lutheran Community Care SA/NT
- LCA Office of the Bishop Executive Team (Rev John Henderson, Peter Schirmer, Tania Nelson) and
- LCA 50.500 Committee.

These initial discussions provided us with a combination of LCA leaders and Aboriginal voices. People expressed different views and questions including the strong encouragement to recognise the many different cultural aspects in communities.

These initial consultations played a pivotal role in informing the approach to developing the LCA plan and most specifically working with the RAP process. A RAP will provide an excellent framework for a national church long term commitment.

Following these initial consultations, the RAP Project Team expanded to include two members of the above list, Marilyn Wall and Shona Reid. Due to her resignation, Kerry Stains is no longer on the Project Team.

2. What is a RAP?

A RAP program is a framework for organisations to realise their vision for engaging well with Aboriginal people and creating good pathways and processes for people. Through the program, organisations develop a RAP—a plan that documents what an organisation commits to do. (For a fuller explanation of Reconciliation Action Plans, visit the Business page of the Synod website www.convention2018.lca.org.au (*Source: www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation-action-plans/*)

A RAP will enable the LCA to commit to implementing and measuring practical actions that build respectful relationships and create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are four different RAPs within the Reconciliation Australia Program:

- Reflect
- Innovate
- Stretch
- Elevate.

The RAP Program is trademarked by Reconciliation Australia and the LCA cannot call the LCA reconciliation plan a 'RAP' unless it is formally endorsed by Reconciliation Australia. At the same time, we will also be able to ensure the RAP focuses on who we are as church in Christ.

The term 'RAP' is recognised as the benchmark approach. Endorsement by Reconciliation Australia is critical to credibility among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will also reflect our listening to communities in the consultation process. Input and endorsement by Reconciliation Australia also provides the LCA with professional and culturally appropriate guidance and quality assurance.

Benefits for LCA

Joining the Reconciliation Australia RAP Program offers the LCA:

- access to a tried and tested program based on evidence

- a framework for action, developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations as well as government and corporate Australia, and
- membership to a dynamic, supportive and fast-growing community of RAP organisations who are paving the way.

A RAP gives the LCA the best chance of achieving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement objectives and delivering broader outcomes including:

- Growing awareness in the LCA of ministry and issues relating to Aboriginal people throughout the LCA in Australia
- Providing opportunity for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to give leadership and contribute to decisions concerning mission and ministry in the LCA
- Ensuring appropriate representation in Churchwide and local decision-making bodies such as the Conventions of Synod
- Growing the career ministry paths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- The opportunity to become an employer of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- A more dynamic, innovative and diverse workforce
- A more culturally safe and tolerant workplace, and
- Enhanced service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Our RAP Project Plan

After the initial consultations a RAP Project Plan was drafted which outlined the following Project objectives:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are an integral part of the development and implementation of the RAP
- The LCA hears and listens to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through quality, purposeful and meaningful community engagement
- LCA's communities and agencies achieve contextual insight into the key matters concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- The LCA develops insights and understanding of how it can best serve and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in its mission and ministry, and
- The LCA uses this insight and understanding to develop a Reconciliation Australia-endorsed RAP that provides a road map for positive action.

It is our understanding that no other national church has such a plan in place and so we have endeavoured to ensure that there is a process or framework to assist us to prepare a sustainable long-term plan. We are not aware of any other mechanism which provides the process support and healthy accountability that the Reconciliation Action Plan Process provides.

3. Listening in communities

In late 2017, the members of the RAP Project team commenced a period of meeting and listening with Lutheran Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal persons in traditional Lutheran areas such as the West Coast of South Australia, Central Australia and Far North Queensland. In doing so, we set out to hear people's stories in the church. We believe the people and their stories are important to inform RAP process. This is Phase 1 of the Project Plan and was funded by the initial pool of funds allocated by Synod for the 50.500 project. Phase 2 is the report of the Project Team which is part of the 50.500 report to Synod.

4. Next steps

With the support of Synod the RAP Project team will undertake Phase 3, which will curate a RAP Working Group comprising 8 to 10 people most or all of whom will be Aboriginal people. We will work with Reconciliation Australia in process whilst also paying close to attention to

the fact that we are church and this RAP will be the first national church RAP (as far as we understand).

Phase 3 is crucial, as this involves the formation and meetings of the Working Group. It is envisaged that this group will meet up to four times over a six-month period and will be supported by a part-time Project Officer. While the initial work in Phases 1 and 2 has been carried out by a volunteer project team we believe the final phases require the support of a part-time project officer.

The summary of stages 3–5 is in the Project Plan on pages 5 and 6 along with associated considerations.

We believe this work will provide a genuine tool to hear the voices of Aboriginal people, to engage in sensitive and appropriate dialogue, and to encourage and facilitate Aboriginal people in leading, guiding and serving in the LCA and in the wider Australian community into the long term.