



# Uniting Tasmania

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## It's a *yes!* from us

By Rohan Pryor

**The Uniting Church supports the Yes vote on the Voice to Parliament in the Referendum to be held sometime in the next two months. The Church supports the Yes vote because the Congress (UAICC) has asked the Church to stand together in Covenant, walking together in following Christ.**

**The Assembly has produced a new resource for congregations: a two-page explainer and PowerPoint exploring what it will mean to have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, [click here](#) or contact the Tas Office for a copy.**  
(Continued P2)





### **(From P1)**

The Assembly has produced a new resource for congregations: a two-page explainer and PowerPoint exploring what it will mean to have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament, [click here](#) or contact the Tas Office for a copy.

The Assembly has also produced a number of [short videos](#) that can be shown in churches:

- Rev. Sharon Hollis's [video](#) (President of the UCA)
- Alison Overeem's [video](#) (UAICC/Congress Tasmania)

Across the Uniting Church, many people are giving considered thought to this topic, engaging in respectful and constructive dialogue and discerning how we might be informed by our faith in Jesus. Five Uniting Church members have approached the invitation of the referendum from different angles, offering clarifying, reasoned and helpful information and reflecting deeply on the reasons to support a yes vote. [Click here](#).

The Church has long been involved in ministry and mission with the First Peoples of the country we know as Australia. The historical records from the very early Methodist congregation at Wesley Church

in Hobart include outreach to aboriginal people and involvement in the early colonial settlement of lutruwita/Tasmania.

After the formation of the Uniting Church in 1977 and following a spiritual revival in northern Australia in 1985, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) was formed, commonly known as the Congress. In 1994 the Uniting Church Assembly entered into a Covenant with the Congress, which was renewed again in 2022 at the 16th Assembly meeting.

Read more about the Covenant between the UCA and the UAICC, signed in 1994 by UCA Assembly President Dr Jill Tabart and UAICC National Chairperson Pastor Bill Hollingsworth. [Click here](#).

As for me, I support the Yes vote not only because key leaders of the Uniting Church and the Congress ask us to. As a young adult in my early 20s I participated in AboutFACE 3, a faith and culture exchange program of the Uniting Church with aboriginal communities.

Along with 100+ other young Uniting Church people, we heard from Congress / First Nations leaders and learned about the history of colonial settlement and policies including "protection", assimilation and eventually participation.

**(Continued P8)**



# WHY SAY NO?

**At a time in our nation a Voice for our mob is much needed “why say no” is my take on the whole campaign - Alison Overeem**

My voice and my family's voice  
and our family matriarch's voice,  
Fanny Cochrane Smith,  
is still here, on the lands, on the sands,  
in the waterways,  
in the forever time and all days.

May all the voices be heard  
May all the voices be upheld and stirred  
weaving and unweaving across lutruwita  
weaving and unweaving across milaythina  
mana mapali (lots of country)  
Whispering in the pungkatina (bush)  
Flowing, growing and all knowing from  
the muka (water)

The voices of the Muwinina people  
Of all knowing and all being ancient  
wisdom and knowledge  
Heard  
Held  
Felt  
The broken  
The unspoken  
The silence  
The colonial violence

A yes vote is a yes to all the stories woven  
in every footprint of 65,000 plus years  
Of struggle survival resilience and tears

If we say no  
How will we as a nation grow?

We know in people's takila (heart) the call  
is these ancient storylines and songlines  
of woven voices to be held and nurtured

For recognition and a voice for self  
determination,  
this is what a yes is for this nation.

This is a yes from the heart  
To weave together a pathway for  
restorative justice,  
truth and treaty - to weave us all  
together - not divide or bring us apart

This is a call for a yes from your heart

To kani (say) Yes is the first step  
to footprints of justice that will give  
voices to the policies of a nation  
weaving the threads of first peoples  
self determination

May our hearts be woven in the yes  
for a healing of a nation  
It's time  
It's now  
It's yes I hear my old people  
I hear the voices  
We can together be the shared  
weaving voice of the tirrina (basket)  
of new hope  
Let's weave together our shared voice  
and story



*Alison Overeem*

Proud Smith from south east nations of  
lutruwita/Tasmania



## Have your say

Uniting Church ministers, lay leaders, members and participants in Uniting Church local communities are invited to be part of specific and relevant conversations about issues, opportunities and challenges in their local context for discipleship and community.

As part of the Act2 Project, a second series of focus groups will gather people in common contexts to explore how we can order our life to help these communities flourish. Your input will help shape the proposals to the next Assembly meeting, making decisions about future communities of faith in the UCA.

In the current 'Collective Discernment' phase, these Focus Groups will explore conversations around Workstream 1, Local Communities of Faith and Discipleship, and the Directions offered in Section 5 the latest Act2 report, [In Response to God's Call](#).

The Act2 team want to welcome a diversity of experiences from across the Uniting Church and invite people to register for the Focus Groups. [Register now](#) for any sessions you are interested in.

## FOCUS Groups

1. SEP 12, TUE

**Communities of faith in agency and chaplaincy contexts**

2. SEP 19, TUE

**Communities with integrated community services / justice-focussed outreach**

3. SEP 21, THU

**Communities with ministry to young people**

4. SEP 28, TUE

**Larger church communities (150+ people, multiple services, multiple locations, multiple ministry leaders)**

5. SEP 26, TUE

**Mid-sized church communities (70-120 people, full-time ministry leader)**

6. SEP 27, WED

**Inner-city communities**

7. SEP 28, THU

**Communities in regional centres**

8. SEP 28, THU

**Online communities or communities with effective online ministries**

9. OCT 3, TUE

**Faith communities and small congregations**

10. OCT 3, TUE

**Clustered communities (regional areas, shared/team ministry)**

11. OCT 4, TUE

**Culturally and linguistically diverse, intercultural and multicultural communities**

12. OCT 5, THU

**Church plans and experimental communities**



# Duncan's desk

DUNCAN MACLEOD  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER, ELM



## eLM update

Welcome to my first letter from eLM for 2023.

I began as Executive Officer with eLM in February, following on from the excellent work of Jenny Byrnes and Adrian Pyle. The first few months have been full-on.

We've launched a new disability action plan. We've welcomed Cindy Derrenbacker as Library Manager with Dalton McCaughey Library, and Nia Lavaki to the Younger Generations team. We've farewelled Chris Barnett and Sylvia Akou'ola Tongotongo. We've welcomed the Congregation of Mark the Evangelist, North Melbourne, to their new home in Yuma Auditorium at the CTM. We've reviewed the work of UC Camping and the Synod Standing Committee has made the difficult decision to wind up that part of eLM's work.

I've just returned from a week attending the Cook Islands Christian Church General Assembly in Rarotonga, where we explored partnerships around ministry and theological education. I've attended Port Phillip West Presbytery in May, and will be at Gippsland, Yarra Yarra, and Western Victoria Presbytery meetings in August.

You can contact me by [email](#) or on 0439 828 718

## Book club


**The Otira bookclub has a number of new publications available for borrowing.**

**Amy Peeler's "Women and the Gender of God" offers readers a Biblical view depicting a God beyond gender, which is particularly relevant in today's landscape. "My Body is Not A Prayer Request", by Amy Kenny, discusses how we view disability within the church, and what we may be missing out on by viewing disability as something to be 'fixed'. Finally, we have copies of Robyn Whitakers new book, "Even the Devil Quotes Scripture" arriving soon. Robyn's findings breathe new life into our understanding and use of Scripture. A free PDF discussion guide is available.**

**If you're interested in reading any of these new publications as a part of an existing or new book club, contact the Otira Book Club, at 9340 8800, or email [CTM Reception](#).**

**The only cost involved is sending back the books!  
Full booklist can be found [here](#).**





# Corruption concerns

At the end of June the Synod wrote to Premier Jeremy Rockliff to thank him for his commitment to not allow corporate lobbying to influence the decisions of the Tasmanian Government on the rules and regulations around the Salmon industry. Global food giant JBS had publicly been trying to influence the government towards its interests.

The Uniting Church letter expressed deep concern that Brazilian-based JBS has been permitted to purchase businesses in Australia with funds that were, at least in part, proceeds of crime. As such, the Synod expressed the view that we do not believe that the Commonwealth and State Governments should have dealings with JBS and should resist lobbying by JBS and its subsidiaries. The letter acknowledged that the people working for the companies in Australia – that were purchased with what was in part likely to have been proceeds of crime – have had no part in any of the criminal activity that JBS in Brazil was involved in.

JBS purchased Swift & Co in the US. Swift & Co owned Australian Meat Holdings. They are reported to have spent another \$2.05b buying food companies in Australia, including Primo Smallgoods (for \$1.45b in 2015), pork processor Rivalea (for \$175m) and salmon farmer Huon (for \$425m).

The Batista brothers, who controlled JBS, and their J&F holding company signed a plea deal on 5 June 2017 concerning the bribes to 1,829 politicians and officials. They agreed to pay a fine of 10.3b reais (\$5.4b) over 25 years. In February 2022, J&F attempted to renegotiate the fine down to 3.6b reais.

In a further 2020 plea deal with the US Department of Justice, it was revealed that the Batista's holding company, J&F Investimentos, funnelled US\$179m to offshore accounts they set up for senior politicians in Brazil to get cheap finance from a state bank that paid for JBS's investments in Australia and the US.

**(Continued P7)**



# Corruption concerns

## From P6)

The US Department of Justice stated that executives at the highest levels of J&F Investimentos S.A. used US banks and real estate to pay tens of millions of dollars in bribes to corrupt government officials in Brazil to obtain hundreds of millions of dollars in financing for the company and its affiliates.

J&F Investimentos pled guilty and agreed to pay a US\$256m fine to settle the bribery case under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. In July 2016, Wesley Batista was charged with alleged bribes from JBS SA to the former president of the Brazilian parliament, Eduardo Cunha.

In a recording he made on 7 March 2017, Joesley Batista told the then-Brazilian president, Michel Temer, he was paying bribes to two judges and a prosecutor. In response, the President appeared to encourage Batista to continue paying bribes to Eduardo Cunha to keep his silence. Joesley Batista has claimed that J&F paid US\$70m in bribes to the current Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

In June 2020, Brazil's courts lifted the ban on Joesley and Wesley managing JBS. They did not return to the board, and their father is the company CEO. As of the end of 2022, the

family was twice as wealthy as when the bribery was revealed. The Synod's understanding is that even if only part of the funds used to purchase meat processing businesses in Australia were sourced from the finance made available through the bribes that have been admitted to in Brazil, then the company would be regarded as having been purchased by proceeds of crime. Even if there has been a change in management of JBS, if the funds used to purchase the businesses in Australia were partly proceeds of crime then the funds remain proceeds of crime. A change in management does not change the status of the funds.

The Synod Justice and International Mission Cluster is advocating for reforms to ensure the Australian Government Foreign Investment Review Board must block investments into Australia where the source is proceeds of crime.

**Are you concerned about corruption in business and politics? Write polite and respectful letters to the relevant politicians including the Prime Minister. Current letter-writing action resources are available at [www.justact.org.au](http://www.justact.org.au).**

**For more information, contact Dr. Mark Zirnsak, Senior Social Justice Advocate for the Synod and for resources on social justice go to the website above.**



# Sept-Oct WHAT'S ON!

05 SEPT, 10AM  
**PASTORAL  
RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

21 SEPT, 7PM  
**GOD'S GIFT**  
(zoom details from  
Pres office)

25 – 27 SEPT  
**RENEW – MINISTRY  
WORKERS**

28, SEPT. 10AM  
**PRESBYTERY  
STANDING  
COMMITTEE**

03 OCT, 10AM  
**PASTORAL  
RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

05 OCT, 11.30AM  
**RESOURCE AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE**

12 OCT  
**LAUNCESTON  
SHOW DAY**  
(Pres office closed)

17 OCT, 7PM  
**GOD'S GIFT**  
(zoom details from  
Pres office)

21 OCT, 9.30AM  
**PRESBYTERY  
MEETING  
PENGUIN UC**

## Nov 11 & 25 SAVE THE DATE!

### LAY PREACHER HUB DAYS

An opportunity for lay preachers,  
worship leaders and interested  
people to get together for  
learning and sharing of ideas.  
Kingston Uniting Church,  
November 11 and Longford  
Uniting Church November 25.

More information to follow.

# It's a yes from us

(From P2)

As part of the program, a small group of us stayed in the Cherbourg community for a week, living on a former mission station or reserve where people from over one hundred different aboriginal communities were forcibly “settled”.

I still remember the children at Cherbourg we played with during the day, and the old community leaders trying to teach their grandchildren the value of culture and identity for the next generations. I still have striking memories of the daily risks to safety, and the looming uncertainty of the future for these children, even in the 1990s.

The Voice to Parliament will not solve all the problems of Cherbourg, or anywhere else, but hearing directly from those impacted by the decisions and policies made by government is what could have changed the history of our shared life in this country.

Now more than ever we need to hear from First Nations leaders and share in their wisdom, experience and perspectives in this land we share.

If a Voice to Parliament can help the children in Cherbourg towards a future of hope, purpose and security, and help their parents and grandparents to take another step also, then I will vote Yes.

**Rohan Pryor**

## CHECKLIST

- ☐ Check items in 2023/24 Annual Maintenance Log Book.
- ☐ Working with Vulnerable People (WVVP) registrations for all leaders are up to date.
- ☐ Review of Safe Church Policies.



## Letter from The Northlands

From Graham Booth, near Stockholm, Sweden, a wanderer on the Way, to the saints who are in Tasmania who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greetings from The Northlands. The book said, "Go north old man." So I went north.

A gateway to the far north is Stockholm Central Station. So there we all were on platform 12 waiting for the 1810 departure, a 17 hour train journey north ahead of us. More backpacks than a Paddy Pallin store.

(Continued P10)



# Letter from The Northlands

## (From P9)

How do you build community? A common purpose - to walk a trail; to head south from the far north. There's not a lot further north than Abisko, inside the Arctic Circle.

There is a significant delay, more than an hour and a half.

The walk from Abisko to Vaktokavarre is about 106km long, part of the 450km Kungsleden (King's Trail). It passes through ex-glacier country similar to central Tasmania, but on a bigger scale.

The path is usually rocky and mostly above the tree line.

Being north of the Arctic Circle and during summer time daylight is 24 hours with a dusky feel in the late and early hours as the sun passes behind mountains. Adaptation to local conditions is important in life.

The first couple of days were really too warm

for extended walking, but the weather cooled down and one of the locals quipped about the north having two winters: a white winter and a green winter.

The reindeer dislike the warm weather and its accompanying mosquitoes so they retreat uphill to the snow patches and can be seen as tiny black dots against the white.

Some of the views were breathtaking, particularly after starting to come down from the Tjaktja Pass and seeing the start of the 30km Tjaktjavagge (Tjaktja Valley).

Camping near the mountain huts requires being involved in supporting the others there; collecting buckets of drinking water and emptying the slask, (dirty water).

May your path take you to new places, north or south, even if you stay at home.  
May you be part of a supportive community with a purpose. May you pull your weight and carry your burdens and have others care for you.

## GET IN TOUCH

**Published and distributed in the week before the last Sunday of each month. Contributions received seven days before publication. Contact Graham Booth, editor, by email, phone 6331 9784 or post: 36 Paterson St, Launceston, 7250.**



## WHAT WOULD A VOICE TO PARLIAMENT MEAN TO AUSTRALIA?

Q&A with Noel Pearson and Dr Shireen Morris, hosted by UCA President Rev Sharon Hollis.

Watch [online here](#)