



July 2012

REPORT TO THE THIRTEENTH ASSEMBLY

1. INTRODUCTION: FOR A WORLD RECONCILED

UnitingJustice Australia (UJA) is the justice unit of the National Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA), 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.

It engages in advocacy and education and works collaboratively to communicate the Church's vision for a reconciled world. It provides resources for the Church as it considers its position on issues of national and international importance and public policy.

UnitingJustice Australia exists as an expression of the Uniting Church's commitment to working toward a just and peaceful world. This commitment arises from the Christian belief that liberation from oppression and injustice is central to the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ. This mission is inherently evangelical – it is an expression of the calling to share the good news of Jesus for the poor and the oppressed – and while it is part of the mission of the whole church, UJA has a particular responsibility for this area of service within the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia. Its tasks include the following:

- identify systems and structures in society which cause and perpetuate injustice, violence and oppression;
- identify critical issues of national and international significance;
- conduct analysis and develop considered responses on these issues;
- actively participate and advocate in public discussion;
- strengthen the Church's prophetic voice and action in the world;
- provide advice to Assembly, Assembly Standing Committee, the President and the General Secretary on justice issues of national and international significance;
- educate, inform and resource the Church, so that members, groups, councils and agencies can effectively engage in actions for justice and peace;
- support the Uniting Church justice staff network across the synods, encouraging collaboration on issues of national significance; and
- identify issues of (systemic/institutional) injustice within the Church and seek remedies.

Priorities are set and identified through resolutions of the Assembly and the Assembly Standing Committee, the advice of the UJA Reference Committee, long-term strategic planning and analysis, urgent political and social issues and issues arising out of ecumenical co-operation.

In all we do, UJA aims to

- ground its work in the gospel;
- build upon the tradition of the Uniting Church in Australia;
- ground its work in the Church's relationships of solidarity with those most affected by injustice;
- be concerned with the needs of the whole creation;
- conduct its work on the basis of rigorous, contemporary research and analysis;
- work in co-operation with synods and other Assembly agencies, ecumenically and in partnership with other civil society organisations; and
- contribute positively to Australian civil society including representing the Uniting Church National Assembly as appropriate in the public forum.



1.1 UJA and the Twelfth Assembly

At the Twelfth Assembly, UnitingJustice Australia offered a major new statement to the Assembly for its consideration. This statement, *An Economy of Life: Reimagining human progress for a flourishing world*, and its associated resolutions were adopted by consensus and set a new priority for the work and programs of UJA. While giving life to the values and principles of this statement and its resolutions is the task of the whole Assembly, UJA, as lead agency, has a particular responsibility in this, including reporting to this Assembly on the progress which has been made. Over the triennium we have, among other activities,

- produced the statement and resolutions as a booklet and distributed it across the Church and to federal parliamentarians and civil society networks;
- developed an 'Economy of Life' logo;
- focused the Federal Election 2010 resources, *Building An Economy of Life*, on the themes and principles of the statement;
- progressed the resolution 09.21.02(d) by facilitating the UCA as a key organisational supporter of the project to develop a 'wellbeing index' for Australia, currently known as ANDI (the Australian National Development Index) including the participation of the National Director on the ANDI National Organising Committee;
- delivered the Bible Studies for the 2011 meeting of the Northern Synod based on the Economy of Life statement;
- presented a series of workshops based on the statement for the 2011 Tasmanian Presbytery School of Ministry;
- ensured that the Economy of Life principles, priorities and resolutions are articulated in relevant submissions and public statements – they have become a new lens through which we can refocus ongoing work; and
- developed a new website, www.adifferentstory.com.au, to be launched during this Thirteenth Assembly meeting.

2. UJA PROGRAMS

UnitingJustice is committed to using the most appropriate strategies to make a positive difference in the world. Work on major issues makes use of a range of strategies including:

- the drafting of statements for the consideration of the Assembly or Assembly Standing Committee (ASC);
- direct lobbying of Government and parliamentarians (meetings and letters);
- submissions to parliamentary, federal departmental and public inquiries;
- media statements;
- the production of resources for church members, including position and discussion papers, pamphlets, booklets and kits, and web-based resources such as information and action sheets;
- speeches and workshops at rallies, seminars and conferences;
- collaborative work through ecumenical alliances and partnerships with civil society organisations.

Over the course of the triennium the major areas of work have been human rights (in particular the rights of asylum seekers), justice for Indigenous Australians and the development of public policies to address climate change.

The following report on program activities does not describe all our activities but covers work across all major program areas.

2.1 Upholding Human Rights

The Eleventh Assembly adopted 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 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'.

The Assembly was a strong advocate for the development of a Human Rights Act for Australia after ASC adopted a resolution to this effect in March 2008. Our support for such legislation was based on deeply held concerns that successive federal governments were legislating and implementing policies that failed to uphold the rights of vulnerable groups, for example, the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the Intervention), which implemented several discriminatory measures and failed to ensure the right of Indigenous people to participate in decisions which affect them; the indefinite, mandatory detention of asylum seekers, including children and far-reaching anti-terrorism laws, which threatened freedom of association and speech, and raised serious concerns about the powers given to law enforcement authorities to detain people without charge and obtain control orders.

Representing the Assembly, UJA was a founding member of the Australian Human Rights Group (AHRG), a network of civil society organisations which came together out of such shared concerns to advocate for a Human Rights Act. The National Director was a member of the Steering Group (from 2008 to 2011 when the AHRG determined to end its activity). As a result of our participation in the AHRG, the President was invited to address a cross-party parliamentary forum on the Assembly's position. The National Director engaged in lobbying on this issue directly and in partnership with other organisations, meeting with federal MPs and senators, including the Attorney-General, and with the Attorney-General's advisers and senior departmental officers. The Assembly issued a number of press releases with both the President and the National Director speaking to the media. The National Director also delivered a number of speeches and presentations on this issue within the

Church and at public forums. We also produced a variety of resources for Church members including a toolkit to help people engage with the national consultation.

The Assembly is very well regarded in the public forum for our committed and thoughtful engagement in domestic human rights issues. In May 2011 we were invited to attend a roundtable meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, and we meet occasionally with her Regional Representative in the Pacific, Matilda Bogner.

We have continued our advocacy for improved Government engagement with the international treaty system including the submission of comments to the Attorney-General's Department as it prepared Australia's reports to the UN on the progress made in upholding our obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and our first report to the UN under the terms of the Universal Periodic Review, covering all treaties to which we are a party.

UJA applied for and received our first Federal Government grant from the Attorney-General's Department under the Australian Human Rights Framework Education Grants program, for the development of a human rights education kit for church members (our project has been affirmed by the Department and the Australian Human Rights Commission as a model project and we continue to work on its development).

The current Government, as a result of commitments made in response to the report and recommendations of the National Human Rights Consultation, announced that it would develop a National Human Rights Action Plan and that it would explore the consolidation of Commonwealth anti-discrimination legislation. UJA has contributed to both these initiatives through meetings with Government, submissions to inquiries, and attendance at Government-NGO roundtables and consultations. Work on both these areas of Government policy will continue over the next year.

2.1.1 Refugees and Asylum Seekers

With the release of the Rudd Government's *New Directions in Detention* policy, there was a brief moment when it appeared that a significant commitment would be made to better uphold Australia's commitment to the rights of asylum seekers under the Refugee Convention. This was a short-lived hope and it was not long before we saw a return to the damaging policies of long-term detention in remote places.

Christmas Island was and continues to be a major concern. The detention centre is overcrowded and its remote location means that vulnerable asylum seekers are not receiving the care they required. In 2010 UCA President, the Rev. Alistair Macrae, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth, the Most Reverend Roger Herft, and Ms Rosemary Hudson Miller, the Associate General Secretary of the WA Synod, travelled to Christmas Island for a first-hand look at the conditions. On their return, the UJA National Director accompanied the President to meet with (then) Immigration Minister Chris Evans to discuss our concerns and begin conversations about a combined Anglican-Uniting Church chaplaincy for the Christmas Island detention centre. In December 2011, the Rev. Christine Senini took up this placement for a six-month term. The President has launched an appeal to raise money to continue this vitally important ministry.

UJA has maintained a good working relationship with successive Ministers for Immigration and their offices over the last three years, first Senator the Hon. Chris Evans and currently the Hon. Chris Bowen MP. We were among a small number invited to a series of confidential Ministerial briefings as the agreement with Malaysia for the 'refugee swap' was being developed. We have also represented the Uniting Church at a series of consultations with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, organised by the Minister's Advisory Council for Immigration Services and Status Resolution (CISSR), during the development of the Government's plan to move people out of detention and into the community while their refugee claims are processed. The aim has been

to release children and vulnerable families and long-term detainees as a matter of urgency. With the program being managed by the Red Cross, high-level care ('community detention') in provided accommodation is being delivered by many church and community agencies, including UnitingCare agencies around the country. The National Director of UnitingCare Australia is a member of the residence determination reference group advising the Government on the development and implementation of the overall service model. UnitingCare Australia and UJA continue to work closely together on this issue. A welcome shift in policy resulted from the failure of the Government to implement its Malaysia 'refugee swap deal' with less vulnerable asylum seekers now being granted Bridging Visas with the right to work and access to healthcare. This is consistent with refugee determination systems in all other developed western democracies which deal with many, many more asylum seekers each year than ever arrive in Australia. We are concerned, however, that the program is taking so long to implement and that the Government remains committed to introduce legislation for offshore processing as soon as it can.

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

- an end to the mandatory, prolonged and indefinite detention of asylum seekers, including children, especially in remote places such as Curtin, Scherger (near Weipa) and Christmas Island;
- against the re-introduction of offshore processing; and
- the further development of community processing for all asylum seekers, not just those who arrive by air.

The one area of good news was that after years of advocacy by church and non-government organisations, including UJA and other UCA agencies, groups and individuals, Australia now has Complementary Protection enshrined in law. A system of complementary protection is designed to offer protection to people who are at risk of

persecution, but whose circumstances differ to those described in the Refugee Convention. Such situations include honour killings and those at risk of female genital mutilation. Prior to the passage of the legislation all protection claims had to be run through the system designed only for claims against the Refugee Convention thus often causing years of delay for those who had a need for protection covered by our other international treaty obligations. Unfortunately people who are stateless are not covered by this legislation and some face the prospect of indefinite mandatory detention.

2.1.2 Justice for Indigenous Australians

It has been a priority over the course of the triennium for UJA to support the work of the Northern Synod as it has responded to the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the 'Intervention', now called 'Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory'). The Intervention was implemented without genuine consultation with Indigenous communities and it has continued in this vein. Intervention programs such as income management are punitive and racially discriminatory, undermine people's rights and fail to address the substantive issues of racism, disadvantage and dispossession.

UnitingJustice helped to facilitate UCA participation in the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples, Prof. James S. Anaya in August 2009, focussing our interventions on the Church's concerns with the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

Most recently, in consultation with the Northern Synod, UJA made a submission to the parliamentary inquiry into the 'Stronger Futures' legislative package to extend the Intervention. The Senior Policy Officer was invited by the Northern Synod to support the General Secretary, Peter Jones as he gave evidence to the Committee hearing in Darwin and to observe the hearing in Maningrida.

During the 2010 federal election campaign, the Labor Party promised to begin a national conversation about amending the Australian Constitution to acknowledge the Indigenous

Australians as the first peoples of this land and remove the provisions that allow for laws which discriminate on the basis of race. Working with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), UnitingJustice is facilitating the Assembly's involvement in the national conversation which began in 2011 with the appointment of an Expert Panel to run a national consultation on constitutional reform. The National Director represents the Assembly on the Steering Group of a national NGO network brought together by ANTaR and Oxfam to share information and work collaboratively for a positive outcome. This network organised a number of Roundtable meetings with the members of the Expert Panel during the consultation period and the Uniting Church was represented at these by Rev. Chris Budden and the National Director. An Assembly delegation met with the Social Justice Commissioner, Mr Mick Gooda to share the Church's story of amending the Preamble to our Constitution and the Assembly and UAICC made a joint submission to the Consultation. This will continue to be a significant area of work as the Government decides whether to proceed with a referendum.

2.2 A Just and Sustainable Economy

2.2.1 Action to Address 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, among other things, advocate for government to take strong and decisive action to address the harmful effects of climate change, especially through developing policies that significantly reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and increase our use of non-nuclear renewable energy sources.

An Economy of Life expressed this concern about climate change in the broader context of a globalised economy which directs our attention and our resources on continual economic growth at the expense of both the wellbeing of people and the future health of our planet.

UnitingJustice, working together with synods and other Assembly agencies, and in collaboration with environmental groups as appropriate, has been advocating for the development of national policies which seriously and urgently address climate change. Through submissions to government inquiries, media releases, letters to and meetings with parliamentarians we have advocated for the setting of significant targets for cuts to our greenhouse gas emissions, strong commitments to the development of clean and renewable energy and sufficient support for low-income and disadvantaged households in the face of increased energy prices. In collaboration with Uniting World, we have continued to work in solidarity with our church and ecumenical partners in the Pacific to bring the dire situation of many low-lying Pacific nations to the attention of the Government and the community.

The development of legislation to put a price on carbon was one of the major public policy debates over the last few years. UJA made numerous submissions to departmental and parliamentary consultations and inquiries on the development of policy and legislation. We were invited by the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency to represent the UCA (together with UnitingCare Australia) on its Stakeholder Liaison Group. UJA and UnitingCare worked closely on the UCA contribution to this important public debate. We were also invited to attend the stakeholder lock-up for a first look at the carbon price legislation just prior to its release.

In the lead-up to the international climate change talks in Copenhagen, the National Director represented the NCCA and the UCA at a number of ministerial briefings held by the then Minister, Penny Wong.

We have continued to produce annual resources for World Environment Day and are grateful for the contribution of the Justice and International Mission Unit in the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania and Cath James from that office who manages the production of the resource on our behalf.

2.2.2 Just Taxation

An Economy of Life addresses the issue of the structures of the global financial system and commits the Church to advocate for a better regulated, transparent and accountable financial system that supports the wellbeing of people and the planet. To this end UJA is a supporter of the campaign for the introduction of a financial transaction tax (FTT) which is a tiny tax on banks' financial transactions that could raise hundreds of billions of dollars every year that could go toward domestic and global causes. The campaign for the FTT is called the Robin Hood Tax Campaign. UJA participated as a supporter of that campaign issuing a number of media releases and interviews on radio, signing joint NGO letters to the G20 leaders and the Australian Government. At this time, the Australian Government maintains a staunch opposition to such a tax.

Locally, the issue of a mining tax has generated a great deal of public debate. UJA made submissions to the parliamentary inquiries into the draft legislation for a Minerals Resource Rent Tax. While the legislation is flawed, it is important that more of the billions of dollars in profit flowing from the exploitation of natural resources which belong to us all is redirected back into our society.

2.3 A Vibrant, Open and Participatory Democracy

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 a long interest in matters related to democracy and participatory citizenship. UJA is committed to supporting and encouraging church members to be active in Australia's political life, especially to supporting Church members to cast a prayerful, thoughtful and informed vote at election time.

In 2010, as it does every three years, UJA managed the production of the Assembly's election briefing resource, this time with the theme *Building an Economy for Life: your faith, your vote, your voice*.

Building an Economy for Life was developed to encourage Uniting Church members to consider their vote in light of the vision and values expressed in the statement *An Economy of Life*. The suite of resources included a printed booklet and A5 'Hot Issues' briefs, and web-based resources such as in-depth issues papers. 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 (those areas of life where the Assembly and its agencies are engaged): justice for Indigenous Australians, asylum seekers, climate change, issues for regional and remote Australia, human rights, income support, taxation reform, support for older Australians, multiculturalism and international development. A total of 10 000 copies of the booklet 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.

In the lead-up to the election in August 2010, the National Director met with a number of Federal Senators and MPs and senior political advisers across all political parties to talk with them about the policy priorities that were described in *Building an Economy for Life*.

3. WORKING COLLABORATIVELY

3.1 National Council of Churches

UnitingJustice is a keen contributor to the life and work of the NCCA. The National Director has continued in her role as Chairperson of the Christian World Service Commission (the Commission of Act for Peace) since March 2009 and has lead the Commission in its responsibilities through a major restructure of its policy and programs and the AusAid re-accreditation process in 2011. Elenie is also a member of the NCCA Social Justice Network.

3.2 World Council of Churches

Elenie has continued to serve on one of the WCC's four advisory bodies, the Commission of the Churches in International Affairs (CCIA). She is the only Australian representative. She continued her role as convenor of the CCIA Working Group on Global Advocacy until the Group concluded its work in 2010. At the time of writing, Elenie is preparing to attend the final meeting of the Commission for this seven-year term in China. The previous meeting of the Commission was held in Albania in October 2010.

In November 2009, Elenie attended the WCC Asia-Pacific Regional AGAPE Consultations on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Chiang Mai, Thailand and was invited to make a presentation on the GFC and its effects in Australia. That month, she also attended the WCC's United Nations Advocacy Week in New York and was invited to deliver the sermon at the opening service at the Church's Center at the UN. One of the major themes for the week was the displacement of people as a result of climate change and Elenie worked closely with the team from the Pacific Conference of Churches throughout the week.

In the lead-up to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Review Conference in New York in May 2010, the WCC invited member churches to join in a 'stereo advocacy' campaign calling for action on a Nuclear Weapons Convention and other actions to support a stronger non-proliferation regime.

In such a campaign government delegations receive interventions from churches prior to attending the Conference (in the case of the UCA, UJA facilitated a letter from the General Secretary to the Minister Stephen Smith and the National Director, Elenie Poulos, attended a DFAT NGO meeting organised by ICAN) and then WCC interventions during the course of the Conference. The same messages are delivered at both ends and the WCC lobbying team, knowing which member churches had communicated with their delegates, are able to follow-up. Elenie was invited to join the ecumenical team in New York but unfortunately was unable to attend.

3.3 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 coalitions, including the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and the Climate Action Network of Australia (CANAN).

We have participated in joint lobbying activities on refugee and asylum seeker policy issues, at least annually, with Amnesty International Australia, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), the Asylum Seekers Centre Sydney, the Refugee Advice and Casework Service (RACS) and others. In October

2011 the ACTU and ACOSS organised a series of events to raise concerns about the direction of current policy. UJA was invited to participate and Elenie spoke at the parliamentary forum, attended a series of meetings with parliamentarians, addressed a media conference at Parliament House and was interviewed live on ABC TV News24 Breakfast as well as on a number of radio stations. We maintain good working relationships with human rights services and groups including Amnesty (Elenie was interviewed on video as part of Amnesty's 'Rethink Refugees' campaign), the Public Interest Advocacy Centre (PIAC) and the Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC). UJA represents the Assembly in regular meetings with the Commissioners of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and senior staff from the various units. We also maintain working relationships with the Centre for Policy Development (CPD), the Australia Institute and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF). UnitingJustice has also developed relationships with a number of university-based centres including the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (University of Sydney).

4. 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 over 430 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 third staff person with some particular responsibilities for this area of our work.

UJA has become an active participant in the social media space. At the time of writing our Twitter feed (<https://twitter.com/#!/UnitingJustice>) had well over 1000 followers, mostly people and organisations beyond the confines of the UCA. Twitter is extremely useful for publicising our work as our followers share our news with their own

followers and it also serves to drive people to our website. Elenie has a blog (The Little Rev Goes Blogging) which has demonstrated some potential and is in line for a more concerted effort through 2012. The blog, twitter account and website drive traffic to each other and have proven to be excellent forms of communication about not only the work of UJA, but also the wider work of the Assembly and the Church.

In February 2012 we launched our new website, totally redesigned to improve its accessibility and useability. The response to the site (www.unitingjustice.org.au) has been extremely encouraging with people finding it easier to use.

Elenie has had three opinion pieces published on the ABC Religion and Ethics website – two on asylum seekers and one about human rights and has also published on Online Opinion.

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, including as keynote speaker for Morialta Uniting Church's Social Justice Week in 2010 and the 2011 Justice and International Mission (Synod of Victoria and Tasmania) Convention on the topic of Christian Advocacy for a Radical Justice in a Globalised World. She presented a workshop on the Uniting Church and advocacy and political engagement at the National Young Adult Leaders' Conference in 2012. Elenie has also received a number of invitations to speak at NGO conferences, seminars and rallies, for example, as the guest speaker for the International Women's Day lunch hosted by Woollahra Council in 2010 and as a member of the Opening Panel of the 10th Biennial Australia New Zealand Third Sector Research Conference, addressing issues about the future of civil society.

5. STAFFING AND RESOURCING

UnitingJustice received a major boost in its capacity in January 2012 when the budget allocation was increased to allow for the employment of a third staff person.

UJA's two staff members have struggled to meet the demands and the expectations placed on UJA. Difficult decisions about priorities had to be made, often leaving significant work on hold and major issues unaddressed. For example, we have been unable to make much progress on our work in the area of peacemaking (especially militarism, disarmament and defence funding) as was intended.

Jennifer Whyte who began work as the UJA Research Officer in March 2008 left UnitingJustice in June 2011 to take up a position in the Australian Human Rights Commission. Jennifer is now the Executive Assistant to the Age Discrimination Commissioner, the Hon. Susan Ryan AO. Jennifer's contribution to the life and work of UJA and the Assembly office was outstanding and we were blessed by her enthusiasm, commitment and passion for justice and her wonderfully supportive and encouraging presence.

In September 2011, Siobhan Marren joined UJA as the new Research Officer. Prior to joining UnitingJustice, Siobhan taught philosophy and social justice at the University of Western Sydney where she was undertaking her PhD in political philosophy, investigating the nexus between theology and politics in communal apologies. She has worked as an education consultant as well as researching and writing for a number of policy-based organisations, especially on issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees, Indigenous justice and young people and democracy. She has spent considerable time working and teaching in East and Northern Arica with young refugee students. Siobhan's extensive experience and exceptionally high standard of work enabled her promotion to the role of Senior Policy Officer in January 2012.

In March 2012, Sarah Harrison joined as the third member of the UJA team in the new role of Administration and Research Officer. Sarah is a recent graduate with degrees in international relations and development studies and experience working on gender equity for an international NGO in The Hague.

The Reference Committee members for the triennium have been Ms Janeen Barker (Chair), Rev. Glenda Blakefield (ex officio), Dr Colin Cargill, Ms Michelle Erofeeff, Ms Helen Hodgson, Mr Andrew Johnson, Prof. John Langmore, Prof. Graham Maddox and Ms Rosemary Hudson Miller (UCA justice staff network representative). We are grateful for the commitment, energy and expertise the Committee have offered to the unit.

6. 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 Indigenous Australians;
- how we define and ensure human progress and wellbeing;
- economic reform and economic justice (Australian taxation reform, the mining boom);
- the environment and sustainability; and
- human rights (education, protections in Australia, 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.

Ms Janeen Barker
Chairperson

Rev. Elenie Poulos
National Director

March 2012