



**MUTH ARRAK
THE UNITING ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHRISTIAN CONGRESS QLD
REGIONAL COMMITTEE QUEENSLAND**

TERMS OF REFERENCE

FOR RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN

THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA, QLD SYNOD AND RELATED ENTITIES

PREFACE

In 1994, The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) Assembly entered into Covenant with First Peoples of these lands, through the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC or Congress), which itself commenced in 1985. The birth of Congress and the subsequent signing of the Covenanting Statement are historically significant national events, not just for members of the Uniting Church, but for all peoples who seek to walk a path of justice, healing, equity and reconciliation of peoples to each other and to God.

Uncle Bill Hollingsworth is quoted within the Covenanting Statement as stating *“We come to this covenanting table with our gifts of Aboriginal spirituality, our culture, our Aboriginal way of loving and caring, our instinctive concern and a willingness to share and teach our history and every good aspect about being Aboriginal and Islander.”*

In sharing and teaching, Congress should also be welcomed to speak freely and be part of the relational discernment spaces, where decision making about the spiritual lives of First Peoples together with others takes place.

The newly articulated hope for Congress nationally and for First Peoples in Queensland is;

“For First Peoples to be autonomous and live freely in decision making as we minister with First Peoples and engage all peoples in theological, culturally safe and holistic ways.”

1 NAME AND SOURCE OF AUTHORITY

- 1.1 The name of the UAICC Regional Committee of Queensland is Muth arrak.
 - 1.1.1 Muth arrak (meaning fire stick) is a word from the Thaynakwith language lands and it has been gifted to the UAICC members of Queensland by Cultural and Congress Elder, Aunty Mary Ann Coconut.
 - 1.1.2 Within this document “Muth arrak” and “Regional Committee.” have the same meaning.
 - 1.1.3 Outside this document Muth arrak will also be used as the collective name for all UAICC members of Queensland congregations and faith communities. Within this document Muth arrak refers to the Regional Committee only.
- 1.2 Muth arrak is a committee under the UAICC Constitution.
 - 1.2.1 For a detailed understanding of the UAICC nationally and locally see Division 4 of the UCA Constitution and UCA Regulation 3.2.
- 1.3 Clause 7 of the UAICC Charter states:

- *The Congress may establish State Committees which will normally reflect Synod boundaries and be elected by members of the Congress in the Synods in a manner ensuring representation from parishes, congregations and agencies related to Aboriginal people, and providing for men and women, lay and ministerial/pastor representatives and for members in fellowship with the Congress.*
- *Each State may organise its life in a way which is suitable for the Aboriginal and Islander people it serves. However, any arrangements must be consistent with those approved by the Conference or by a resolution of the National Committee or its Executive.*
- *Each State Committee will list:*
 - *1. the parish of the State Committee;*
 - *2. congregations in fellowship with the Congress,*
- *A Congress State Committee will liaise with the local presbyteries of the UCA, with a view to exchanging information and arranging shared experiences for the cultivation of understanding, the growth of fellowship and natural enrichment of the two branches of the Uniting Church community.*

2 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Purpose of the UAICC National and State bodies is for “First Peoples to be autonomous and live freely in decision making as we minister with First Peoples and engage all peoples in theological, culturally safe and holistic ways”.

The role of Muth arrak, is to provide strategic covenantal and ministerial leadership across the life of UAICC Queensland congregations and work in relationship with the National UAICC, the Qld Covenanting Action Plan Steering Committee, Presbyteries and Congregations, to live out the hope articulated within Uniting Church in Australia Covenanting Statement and Preamble, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As outlined within UCA Regulation 3.2.2, Muth arrak has responsibility for oversight of the Church’s life and mission with and for First Peoples.

We faithfully and respectfully serve the ways of being, as outlined within the Basis of Union, the Church law and regulations alongside the Cultural and Spiritual knowing that forms the identity of First Peoples across Australia.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS

In understanding the above Statement of Purpose for Muth arrak as the governing body of the UAICC members across Queensland, the Synod Standing Committee of the Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod affirms the rights, powers and responsibilities detailed below:

- 3.1 Muth arrak is a representative of Congress. It has oversight of the Church’s life and mission with and for the First Peoples of Australia. The following are in part drawn from the UCA Regulation 3.2.2:
 - 3.1.1 support the proclamation of the gospel to Aboriginal and Islander people across Queensland;
 - 3.1.2 support the establishment of congregations of Aboriginal and Islander peoples;
 - 3.1.3 take action in the Church and in the Australian community in relation to the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Islander people;
 - 3.1.4 encourage the expression of Christian theology from the perspective of Aboriginal and Islander culture;
 - 3.1.5 relate to Aboriginal and Islander bodies of other churches in Australia, whether directly or through ecumenical bodies;
 - 3.1.6 oversee the Church’s relationship with Aboriginal and Islander organisations in Australia;
 - 3.1.7 relate directly to the Indigenous bodies of churches overseas and to international

- organisations of Indigenous peoples;
 - 3.1.8 appoint representatives of the UAICC to the Assembly;
 - 3.1.9 Support First Peoples theological knowledge across the Ministerial Education Board of the Uniting Church in Australia;
 - 3.1.10 enter into partnerships with Church institutions, colleges and schools to fulfill the mission and ministry of Muth arrak;
- 3.2 Muth arrak is a State Committee of Congress and has relationship to Presbyteries. It acts as a point of liaison for Presbyteries in relation to matters concerning UAICC members, UAICC Congregations, and Aboriginal and Islander peoples and cultures within the bounds of the Synod. The following is drawn from Section 7 of the UAICC Charter.
- 3.2.1 *liaise with the local presbyteries of the UCA, with a view to exchanging information and arranging shared experiences for the cultivation of understanding, the growth of fellowship and natural enrichment of the two branches of the Uniting Church community.*
- 3.3 Muth arrak share with and partner with Presbyteries in their exercise of all the powers and responsibility of the Presbytery, regarding UAICC and First Peoples matters, including the following Regulations:
- 3.3.1 *Oversight of Ministers (Reg 3.1.3 (a)-(c))*
 - 3.3.2 *Oversight of Congregations (Reg 3.1.3 (d))*
 - 3.3.3 *Wider Work of the Church (Reg 3.1.3 (e))*
 - 3.3.4 *Selection and Oversight of Candidates (Reg 3.1.3 (f)-(g))*
 - 3.3.5 *Ordination, Accreditation or Recognition of Specified Ministries (Reg 3.1.3 (h)-(i))*
 - 3.3.6 *Oversight of Lay Preachers (Reg 3.1.3 (j))*
 - 3.3.7 *Placement and Appointment of Specified Ministries and Supervision of Vacancies (Reg 3.1.3 (k)-(n))*
 - 3.3.8 *Administration (Reg 3.1.3 (o))*
 - 3.3.9 *Other (Reg 3.1.3 (p)-(s))*

This means each Presbytery will work with Muth arrak in good faith, consult with and take reasonable steps to seek the input of Muth arrak in First Peoples matters.

- 3.4 Muth arrak has responsibility for allocating funding from a range of sources, including on behalf of SSC, within funding levels and in accordance with the rules governing the relevant funds. This includes, but is not exclusive to, the Covenanting Ministry Fund established in 2025 at the 38th Synod. (See also Clauses 5 and 6)
- 3.5 Regulation 7 of the UAICC Constitution outlines the distinctive role of Muth arrak in Church Discipline. UAICC Regulation 7.4 states:
- Where a Regional Committee is not a Presbytery, the responsibility for the discipline of ministers is shared between the Regional Committee, the Presbytery of which the minister is a member and the National Office, with the National Elder(s) playing a major role.*
- Clause 15 of the UCA Constitution provides as follows:
- “Ministers and Lay Pastors will be responsible to a Presbytery and Synod in matters of faith and discipline and to the Presbytery or other appointing body for the exercise of their ministry.”*

In “matters of faith and discipline” the discipline under Section 5 of the Regulations is the primary responsibility with the Presbytery (and Synod).

In matters of “the exercise of their ministry”, where the Muth arrak is the appointing body, the primary responsibility is with Muth arrak.

3.6 Muth arrak has joint responsibility with the Synod in the recruitment and appointment of the Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting of the Synod.

3.7 It is acknowledged that UAICC Congregations are members of their respective Presbyteries and have the same rights as other Congregations under UCA Regulation 3.3.4.

3.7.1 At the time of the initial approval of this Terms of Reference the UAICC congregations and faith communities were;

- Zillmere UAICC Congregation
- Mornington Island UAICC Congregation
- Aurukun UAICC Faith Community
- Napranum UAICC Congregation
- West End Townsville UAICC Congregation
- Gordonvale UAICC Faith Community

3.8 New UAICC congregations and faith communities shall be planted and supported as part of agreed Church Renewal and Covenant Ministry Guiding Principles, and in the spirit of Walking Together in covenantal relationship to honour the responsibilities as outlined within paragraph 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

3.9 Muth arrak understands that not all First Peoples of the church, are or choose to be Members of the UAICC. Muth arrak will support Presbyteries and congregations to walk alongside First Peoples with whom they share ministry, to experience the gospel in ways that provide life giving abundance.

4 DELEGATION OF APPOINTMENTS

4.1 Muth arrak shall appoint from its members, representatives as follows:

4.1.1 An ex-officio member of the Queensland Synod Standing Committee, being the Chair of Muth arrak, or their delegate, as per the Synod By-laws.

4.1.2 The Covenant Steering Committee of the Synod of Queensland;

4.1.3 One representative to the Presbytery Synod Interface, being the Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting.

4.1.4 Members of the Synod in Session meeting of Queensland;

4.1.5 Members of the Assembly meeting of the UCA

4.1.6 Members of the UAICC National Executive;

4.1.7 Members of the UAICC National Conference.

4.2 As required by UAICC Regulation 3.5, Muth arrak shall appoint a State Development team consisting of, as far as possible:

4.2.1 A Development and Outreach Officer;

4.2.2 A Consultant or Resource Worker;

4.2.3 A Pastoral Support Worker;

4.2.4 A Youth Worker.

4.3 Muth arrak may assign representatives to committees, councils or other groups of the Synod of Queensland as required or requested.

5 FINANCIAL DELEGATION RELATING TO ALLOCATION OF SYNOD FUNDS

- 5.1 Muth arrak has a delegation from the SSC to direct the Synod Office to make payment to a Uniting Church in Australia Queensland entity, subject to:
 - 5.1.1 Muth arrak's prior approval of a business case with an identified covenanting outcome from the same entity, and in accordance with the rules governing the relevant funds.
 - 5.1.2 Payment being within the delegation provided to Muth arrak; and
 - 5.1.3 Payments in total for that financial year do not exceed the approved budget for Muth arrak for that financial year.
- 5.2 The financial delegation provided to Muth arrak will be determined by SSC on an annual basis as part of the Synod Budget approval process.
- 5.3 Initiatives requiring Synod policy changes may be reviewed by Muth arrak and will be deferred to SSC for final decision.

6 ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS

- 6.1 Muth arrak develops mission assessment criteria or relies on established criteria for the funds it allocates, such as the Covenanting Ministry Fund.
- 6.2 Muth arrak will develop a range of material to support appropriate applications, administration of the funds and their allocation.
- 6.3 Proposals brought to Muth arrak must meet the assessment criteria.
- 6.4 Muth arrak must consider applications on their merits and through prayer and discernment.
- 6.5 The proposal is either:
 - 6.5.1 Approved and funding disbursed.
 - 6.5.2 Qualified approval - approval subject to further information and discernment, and then approval if appropriate.
 - 6.5.3 Further development required – Funding not approved. Guidance on potential improvements provided with encouragement to reapply in future years.
- 6.6 Funding for the proposal will be disbursed as agreed with the recipient.
- 6.7 Funding that cannot be disbursed within the funding period may be rescinded at the discretion of Muth arrak, and subject to written advice to the SSC of the same.
- 6.8 Funded activities will provide regular updates as per mission assessment criteria to Muth arrak.

7 MEMBERSHIP

- 7.1 All positions on Muth arrak are voluntary. Appropriate expenses related to the role of being a member may be reimbursed.
- 7.2 Muth arrak Regional Committee Queensland membership shall be not less than six, and will include:
 - 7.2.1 Where practicable, as per UAICC Regulation 3.4:
 - All ministers in placement within the bounds of the Regional Committee who are ministers of the Congress;
 - At least one lay person from each Parish / Congregation;
 - Such other people as the Regional Committee may decide;
 - At least half of the members of the Regional Committee shall be lay persons;
 - The membership shall include at least two women wherever possible.
 - 7.2.2 First Peoples who are members of the UAICC as defined by Section 3 of the UAICC Charter, and comprise more than half the members of the Regional Committee.
 - 7.2.3 The Moderator of the Uniting Church in Australia Queensland as an ex-officio member.
 - 7.2.4 The General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia Queensland, or their delegate as an ex-officio member.
 - 7.2.5 The Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting is an ex-officio member.

- 7.2.6 Up to two individuals who are members of the UCA in Queensland who are not First Peoples and demonstrate cultural awareness and intelligence and experience of working alongside First Peoples.
- 7.3 Any person with a material personal interest in a matter being considered at a meeting must not be present for consideration of that matter.
- 7.4 Muth arrak may associate participants for the purposes of expert specialist knowledge.

8 SKILLS, EVALUATION, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 8.1 All members shall offer their unique gifts to serve the Regional Committee in accordance with the needs of a strategic agenda and holistic ministry in fulfilling God's plan for First Peoples of this nation.
- 8.2 It is expected that all members will:
- 8.2.1 Provide contextual knowledge, theological and cultural perspectives and/or specialist covenanting skills and experience.
 - 8.2.2 Participate in Committee evaluation processes; and
 - 8.2.3 Diligently participate in appropriate professional development.
- 8.3 The following skills may be desirable for members:
- 8.3.1 Financial management
 - 8.3.2 Grant fund management
 - 8.3.3 Program management
 - 8.3.4 Impact measurement

9 OFFICE BEARERS

- 9.1 The Regional Committee shall elect officers as may be necessary for the fulfilling of good governance, including but not limited to:
- 9.1.1 A Chairperson, who shall be a confirmed member of the Uniting Church in Australia, and an active Member of the UAICC and will be elected for a term of up to three years as the committee shall determine. The Chair will be nominated by Muth arrak and approved by the SSC.
 - Duties of the Chairperson shall be to constitute and preside over and generally direct the business of the meeting of the committee and to exercise such leadership to enable the committee to fulfill its governance responsibilities. The Chairperson will also have a role to represent the committee when required.
 - 9.1.2 A Deputy Chairperson, who will be appointed to chair meetings during the absence of the Chairperson, or when asked by the chairperson to occupy the chair.
 - In the absence of the Muth arrak chairperson, deputy chairperson or appointed delegate, the members will elect one of their number as chairperson of that meeting.
 - 9.1.3 A Secretary to manage minutes and communication of the Regional Committee.
 - 9.1.4 A Spiritual and Pastoral Officer to provide pastoral oversight and care to members of the Regional Committee.
 - 9.1.5 An Officer for Women to develop strategy and programs, which support a flourishing women's ministry across the state. (UAICC Regulation 3.3)
 - 9.1.6 An Officer for Men to develop strategy and programs, which support a men's ministry of healing and strengthening across the state.
 - 9.1.7 An Officer for Youth and Young Adults to develop strategy and programs, which support a flourishing youth and young adult's ministry across the state.

10 LENGTH OF SERVICE

- 10.1 Appointment to Muth arrak is for a 3-year term or as approved by the SSC subject to Muth arrak's determination.
- 10.2 The maximum continuous time a person can serve as a committee member is 9 years, unless that person has served 1 or more terms as chairperson, in which case the maximum continuous time is 12 years.
- 10.3 Persons appointed to fill a casual vacancy shall have their initial term included in their maximum length of term.
- 10.4 A member who reaches the maximum length of service shall be eligible for appointment to the Committee again after a period of twelve months has elapsed.

11 MEETINGS

- 11.1 The Regional Committee shall meet at least four times a year and at other times as it may determine. The chairperson convenes meetings at other times when necessary to carry out the role of Muth arrak.
- 11.2 Meetings will be conducted according to the UCA 'Manual for Meetings', including in regard to electronic decision making.
- 11.3 A quorum shall be the nearest whole number above 50% + 1 of the total number of members of the Committee
- 11.4 Meetings may be held in person or, where agreed in advance by the Regional Committee, through the use of technology.
- 11.5 The notice and agenda of meetings includes supporting papers. The agenda for meetings is determined by the Muth arrak chairperson in consultation as needed.

12 MINUTES

- 12.1 The Muth arrak minute secretary prepares minutes for each Muth arrak meeting.
- 12.2 The draft minutes of each meeting are reviewed by the chairperson and circulated to all Muth arrak members by the Muth arrak minute secretary as soon as practicable after each meeting.
- 12.3 A copy of the Muth arrak minutes, once they have been approved by Muth arrak, are signed by the Muth arrak chairperson. The signed minutes are saved in the Synod record management system and are accessible to Committee members on request.

13 ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 13.1 Muth arrak has the authority to seek any information it lawfully requires from any employee of the Synod and all employees must comply with such requests.
- 13.2 Professional advisers may be appointed at Synod's expense to assist Muth arrak in evaluating specific issues or risks and mitigating strategies to meet the Muth arrak's purpose and discharge its responsibilities. In engaging such advisors, Muth arrak must consider the reasonableness of the expense and budget availability.

14 INDEMNITY

- 14.1 Any person acting as a member of the Committee and its committees shall be entitled to be indemnified in accordance with Regulation 4.11.2.
- 14.2 The Synod will maintain Directors and Officers Insurance for this purpose.

15 RELATIONSHIP WITH UAICC NATIONAL

- 15.1 Muth arrak will report to the UAICC National Executive Meeting and the National Conference
- 15.2 Muth arrak will appoint up to two representatives as well as the Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting to the UAICC National Executive.

16 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SYNOD OF QUEENSLAND GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

- 16.1 Muth arrak:
 - 16.1.1 Shall provide a report to ordinary meetings of the Synod of Queensland as requested. Muth arrak will be represented by the Chair of Muth arrak or their delegate, the Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting, and other members of the Regional Committee at the discretion of Muth arrak.
 - 16.1.2 Shall meet annually or more often with the Moderator and General Secretary of the Queensland Synod.
 - 16.1.3 May create a sub-committee or sub-committees as per Queensland Synod By-laws of the Synod, or as otherwise approved by the Synod Standing Committee.
 - 16.1.4 Shall meet regularly with the Synod Leadership Team. Muth arrak will be represented at these meetings by the Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting.

17 Revisions

- 17.1 This document should be reviewed every 18th months or earlier as required.

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1.0	04/12/2025	Synod Standing Committee		Muth arrak (UAICC Regional Committee Queensland)	Executive Officer UAICC & Covenanting
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