**Agenda 2.3.17**

**Recognition of Aboriginal members**

(See also Agenda 2.4.14)

**proposed motion**

*Submitted by Redeemer Lutheran Congregation, Toowoomba Qld*

**BE IT RESOLVED**

1. That the Aboriginal pastors and congregations of the LCA be granted the in-principle right:
	* 1. To send representatives to pastors conferences and synodical conventions with the same rights to speak and vote as all other delegates, commensurate with the level of representation that is granted to the other pastors and people of the LCA;
		2. To exercise this right regardless of whether these congregations and pastors meet our current constitutional requirements, since these were designed for a Western cultural context and are ill-fitted for the cultural context of most of our Aboriginal communities;
2. That GCC form a taskforce to consult with the Standing Committee on Constitutions, ABMINSA, FRM, Hopevale Mission, our Aboriginal pastors, and members of our Aboriginal congregations to devise a culturally appropriate mechanism for:
	1. determining the number of Aboriginal representatives
	2. determining the means by which they are selected
	3. ensuring that they have the logistical support they need to be able to attend;
3. That this taskforce report back to Synod with the necessary constitutional amendments to ensure that our Aboriginal brothers and sisters are able to send representatives to pastors’ conferences and synodical conventions in the future.

**REASONS FOR THE MOTION**

Our Aboriginal brothers and sisters in Christ are equal members with us of God’s church. Therefore we have a responsibility before God to treat them as such.

The reason why Aborigines have been excluded from pastors conferences and synodical conventions in the past is because most of our Aboriginal pastors are SMPs with restricted calls, and most of our Aboriginal congregations are not properly constituted congregations of our church. They therefore do not qualify for representation under our constitution. The issue here is not racial but cultural. Our current practice amounts to a kind of cultural imperialism in which we effectively say, “Because these Aborigines do not tick our whitefella boxes they do not have the right to be represented.” Such a practice is inconsistent with the nature of the church as the body of Christ, who died to welcome people of all races and cultures and nations into his kingdom. If these people do not fit our boxes, then we have a duty before God to create new boxes that fit with who they are, so that they can have a voice along with everyone else.

It has sometimes been argued that many Aborigines feel out of place at pastors conferences and synodical conventions, and much of the business of convention is not of interest or concern for them. While there is some truth to this, some of them do feel sufficiently at home at pastors conferences and synodical conventions that they can make a contribution and the rest will only start to feel at home if we welcome them as full participants. Furthermore, some of the business is very important to them, and they should have the right to speak and vote on these issues, without waiting for an invitation from us to do so. It is true that they may not always choose to send the full number of representatives to which they are entitled, or exercise their right to speak and vote. Nevertheless, it is important that we send them the message that we value their contribution, and will accord to them the same right to have their say as the rest of us whenever they choose to do so.