

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As representatives of churches in our association who have brought motions to be discussed and voted on this Saturday, we wanted to write to express our thanks to all those who've engaged with this significant matter. We are especially grateful to those who have continued to bring this matter to our Heavenly Father in prayer for the sake of our churches and our partnership together in the gospel.

From the beginning, our desire and practice has been to invite conversation, to listen and to work together towards the best outcome for the sake of our churches and our movement. Our motions have been through a number of revisions through dialogue with the Assembly Council and others. In addition, we saw the value in allowing time for all involved to process the motions and to talk through the pastoral and procedural implications. We are grateful to all those who participated constructively in the forums in early 2020, and especially to those who made significant personal sacrifices to serve on the Taskforce charged with facilitating that process of dialogue.

We are aware, however, that some are still quite anxious about the possible consequences these motions may have on our movement. In particular, we are conscious of the concerns some have expressed that the process laid out in the original Motion 1 might be applied in a way that created unhelpful anxieties and uncertainties for individuals and churches.

It is not our intention in any way to contribute to a culture of fear around difference, or suspicion of other churches. Indeed, our intention is to strengthen our partnership through clarity on the basis for that partnership. Likewise, we deeply value the Baptist distinctive of Freedom of Conscience, and the diversity it allows for within our agreed boundaries, and do not wish to undermine that distinctive.

It has always been the intention of our motions to simply make explicit, through corporate agreement, what we believe has always been implicit in our constitution - that support for the basic doctrines, objects and core values of the association is not merely a requirement for joining, but the ongoing expectation for those of us who continue to associate.

To that end, and as a result of dialogue with Assembly Council and some of those who have expressed concerns about the original form of our motions over this past week, we are convinced that the best way forward is to present an amended form of Motion 1 to clear away any potentially unhelpful distractions and focus on the core issue at hand. We also see the value of focusing first and foremost on inviting ongoing, proactive affirmation of our beliefs and values, rather than the reactive process of Assembly Council dealing with churches that appear to no longer hold to these affirmations.

Thus, we will be proposing that Motion 1 be amended to the following form:

*"That assembly affirm in principle that continued support for the basic doctrines, objects and core values of the association should be an ongoing requirement for affiliation, and request that assembly council bring to a future assembly recommendations on (1) any constitutional amendments necessary to make that explicit, (2) a process for churches to give periodic reaffirmation of the basic doctrines, objects, and core values (no less frequently than 5 yearly), (3) a suitable process to apply section 17.5(a) of the constitution in circumstances where a church no longer meets such requirements."*

In Christ, and on behalf of our churches, the pastors of Campbelltown Baptist, Castlehill Baptist, Chatswood Baptist, and Wollongong Baptist.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019 Newtown Baptist Church instructed their delegates to participate in moving motions, allowing for some editing. In the opinion of the delegates, recent amendments to motion 1 go beyond the scope given to them and they are thus unable to join in moving this amended form of motion 1.