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The Uniting Church in Australia
Queensland Synod

A report on Synod-wide
mission
implementation
strategies
2016–18

August 2017



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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Foreword

1. Scope and context

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The purpose of this document is to capture key information around the implementation of the mission and strategy of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod and to collate this into one place. This document, provides a unique perspective into the operations of the church and can be used as a tool to check where we are and where we might think we are in our journey of growth, transition and innovation.

The document will be reviewed annually and is intended to be seen as adaptable and amendable.



Rev Heather den Houting
General Secretary

Whole of Synod

While this document doesn't provide the full picture of the life of the Assembly, presbyteries, congregations, schools and agencies and our various boards, committees and commissions in Queensland, it does explain how the Synod oversees and implements services and strategies which are designed to support these activities.

It will be used as a reference point to assess how the Synod is going from one year to the next and to keep us on track through the *Together on the way, enriching community* process. In particular the document reveals the current strategies and activities in place to assist us to achieve our 2016–2020 Priority Directions.

This document can be used to identify gaps in strategy and suggest how the Synod might manage its resources for the long-term growth and sustainability of the church, and provide a catalyst for developing the church for the future.

It also provides an insight for those who wish to learn more about the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod and to see how our faith is expressed in action.

A church in transition

The Uniting Church in Australia is in a transitional space. Some tools that have served us well over the last decades are no longer effective in our current context. For example, the Synod is acutely aware of the need to review the following parameters:

- the way we collect and utilise our financial resources, including the unsustainability of our current funding models
- the way we gather and use information about ourselves to assist in planning
- the way we call and place ministers and ministry agents
- the way we have set up our governing structures and our policy framework
- the way the Synod office can best resource the whole of the church
- the interactions between congregations and the service agencies of the church
- the way we identify and train leaders across all aspects of the church
- the manner in which we undertake activities in accordance with our broad strategic objectives
- the way we relate to government, other faith communities and community development organisations.

Each of the activities of the Synod are subject to the effects of how well we manage these parameters. This in turn impacts on how we behave as a community and how the community experiences us as a church.

2. Main undertakings

Synod

The responsibilities of the Synod as a council of the church are clearly articulated in the Uniting Church in Australia Constitution.

We are to exercise general oversight, direction and administration of the church's worship, witness and service (Paragraph 32 of the Constitution). The regulations specify how this is to be done, particularly in relation to mission, theological and ministerial education, and resource management.

No council of the church acts alone, but the responsibility to take a whole-of-state view of all our activities sits at the Synod level. While Synod in Session will hear reports from across the life of the church, it is necessary that the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) takes the governance responsibility for strategy and risk assessment for the whole of the Queensland Synod.

Property Trust

The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) is the primary legal entity of the Uniting Church in Queensland. A Synod-wide approach is required to manage and indemnify all the activities of the church to manage the resources held by the Trust.

The Synod office

The general secretary is the executive officer of the Synod and has executive leadership, pastoral and advisory roles and is responsible for the functioning of the Synod office. This document is based on the understanding that Synod-wide activities will be overseen and resourced through the Synod office where appropriate.

The functions of the Synod office are driven by the imperative to resource the whole of the church in Queensland. These areas can be divided into:

1. those activities where a Synod responsibility is required to be exercised under the constitution and regulations, and
2. where it is reasonable to expect the operation at a Synod level is the best use of shared resources.

3. Missional strategy

Vision: *Together on the way, enriching community*

In 2010 we started a revitalisation journey for the Queensland Synod through the *Together on the way, enriching community* framework. This story continues and holds us together as a community of Christ which has committed to be:

Uniting in Christ
acting with love
living with hope
witnessing in faith
working for justice

Mission: Priority Directions 2016–2020

In 2016 the 32nd Synod in Session reviewed our Priority Directions and agreed to actively pursue development in particular areas in order to give some depth to our vision. We asked ourselves how we might truly be the church that Christ calls us to be, and discerned that the following areas would be our focus over the next four years as the church grows, transitions and innovates:

- to be Christ-centred, at prayer, and listening
- discipleship
- leadership
- connecting with communities
- youth, children and families.

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Strategy: Key Change Initiatives 2017–2020

In May 2017 the Synod Standing Committee and presbytery ministers met to agree on Key Change Initiatives that would be supported for the following three years across the life of the Synod.

Four Key Change Initiatives were identified:

- Strategic locations for intentional churches (including church planting). We will ensure that right forms of church in each geographic, demographic and virtual context are kingdom-focused and steadily improving in health and vitality.
- Multicultural church. We will be confident that we invite, nurture and enable multi- and cross cultural communities and leaders to full participation across the whole church.

- Effective First Peoples engagement. We will work together until First Peoples feel fully engaged across the whole church.
- One church. The community will see one unified Christ-centred identity for the whole church.

Mapping our projects

The consequence of developing the vision, mission and strategy means that we will concentrate our project resourcing for Synod-wide projects across a mission and strategy matrix. This will have significant implications for how we channel our resources over the next few years.

The following matrix illustrates some of the current projects but also reveals the gaps where more intentional work is required.

Key Change Initiatives → Priority Directions ↓	Strategic locations for intentional church communities	Development of a multicultural church	Whole of church first peoples engagement	One church
 Christ-centered at prayer, and listening	Rural and remote task group			
 Discipleship	Youth and digital discipleship			
 Leadership	Leadership Development Framework	Leadership Development Framework	Leadership Development Framework	Leadership Development Framework
		Next Gen Arise Diversity task group		Governance Review including membership on boards and committees
 Connecting with communities	Framework for community structures (village, regional and resourcing)	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) link with communities	Rural and remote task group	
 Youth, children and families	Youth and digital discipleship		Shalom transition	

4. Reporting

Key reporting measures: a balanced approach

When the Synod reports on the activities of the church, the focus will be on our Priority Directions and the Key Change Initiatives. At a Synod in Session we have traditionally heard reports from a number of different activity areas across the church; this is important and will continue.

To enhance this we will provide a whole-of-church perspective across a range of areas (both Synod-wide and Synod office activities) in determining whether our Priority Directions are fruitful.

We will provide a balanced reporting model which looks at what we have done (where we have put our resources), what might stop us doing things (risks and mitigation strategies) and what changes we have seen over the past 12 months (appropriate data collection and analysis).

The following content illustrates the breadth of the activities of the church which will require regular analysis against our Synod priorities and strategic change initiatives.

4.1 Funding strategy

Funding Synod-wide activities has been a topic on the agenda of various Synod boards and committees since at least 2010. The assumption that congregational contributions to the Mission and Service Fund are sufficient to fund a Synod presence, including the Synod office, has not been true for many years.

The current model of funding is a combination of direct (stewardship) contributions from church activities across the Synod and applying a treasury margin to investments and loans within the centralised treasury function (also known as the Uniting Church Investment Service or U.C.I.S).

However this model is unsustainable as the activities of the church face challenging times. A reliance on one or two major resourcing activities does not build resilience for our future.

This means that it is time to review our funding or revenue strategy. We have started by reviewing the current contributions from each of the following activities:

- presbyteries
- UnitingCare Queensland
- Wesley Mission Queensland
- Property Trust schools
- activities of the Synod office (Mission Support Enterprises, Group Insurance scheme)
- other associated entities outside of the Property Trust.

In addition existing businesses and operations will be reviewed to obtain efficiencies and our fundraising and bequest program will be reviewed and re-targeted.

While we do this, we will consider other models of funding which may include additions to existing businesses and operations as well as new sources of funding and leveraging our existing assets.

Assumptions

- Synod-wide activities will continue to be run from the Synod office.
- U.C.I.S will continue to operate and surpluses will contribute to funding Synod-wide activities.
- Treasury management will remain a key lever for U.C.I.S to generate additional income for the church.
- The Group Insurance scheme will continue to operate and a contribution will be made to assist funding Synod-wide activities.
- In the event that the Synod Group Insurance scheme moves to a national scheme, a contribution will be required to assist funding Synod-wide activities.
- The Finance, Investment and Property Board (FIP Board) and the Synod Standing Committee will explore expanded and new funding sources.

Financial performance indicators

- Our Synod Reserve Fund will continue to be rebuilt by 2022 in line with the current FIP Board strategy.
- We will report the actual/budget analysis annually at the Synod office and presbytery level, taking into account the diversity of activities included in the Synod office financials.

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- In the next 12 months key performance drivers and indicators will be developed for significant Synod-based activities.

Investment policy

- A revised Synod-wide Treasury policy (including investments) was approved by the FIP Board in June 2017.
- A significant policy inclusion was to create a Growth Fund to allow long-term investments in equity-based managed funds. This will assist in obtaining better than cash product returns over the long term.

4.2 Insurance strategy

The Synod office will continue to provide a whole-of-Synod insurance service for all activities of the church. This means we will continue to operate the Queensland Synod Insurance Managed Fund. The purpose of the current Queensland Synod Insurance Managed Fund model is to:

- assist in covering the cost of large deductibles applicable across the insurance program.
- manage volatility in the insurance market leading to changes in underwritten premiums and/or deductibles.
- build reserves in line with APRA guidance to cater for the possibility of a catastrophic period or event beyond that accounted for in the actuarial reports provided by our insurers. For instance, climate change and the evolving litigiousness of society continue to be factors that could impact on the predictability of future event and claims.
- charge church bodies to cover ongoing premium, administrative and claims expenses.

In 2017 we have:

- commissioned Aon Analytical Services to undertake an updated formal review of the APRA Minimum Capital Adequacy Requirements.
- increased the 2017/2018 property insurance panel to five co-insurers, namely Vero (lead insurer), AIG, Zurich, XL Catlin and CCI.
- noted that the primary consideration that has affected the 2017/2018 Public & Products Liability Insurance renewal negotiations with insurers has been an increase in sexual abuse claims following the Royal Commission. This has resulted in an increase in the insurance premiums payable for this policy.
- noted that the increased costs associated with the Queensland Synod's Interim Redress Scheme has resulted in an increase being applied across liability classes through the insurance-managed fund premium allocation process.

4.3 Property strategy

Real property represents the largest financial value asset of the Uniting Church, Queensland Synod. At this point in time the Synod office maintains the Register of Properties as per Regulation 4.11.6 which contains all details on all real property owned or leased in the name of the Property Trust.

While we might know what property is owned, a whole-of-church property strategy does not currently exist to assist in determining the best and highest use of church property for the beneficial use of:

- congregations
- presbyteries
- Synod-wide activities
- schools
- the Synod office.

To this end, a Synod-wide property strategy will commence development in 2017/18. It will be coordinated with the mission strategies of church activities and the mission and property strategies of UnitingCare Queensland, Wesley Mission Queensland and Property Trust schools. While the strategy document has not yet been scoped, it will focus on whether a property is fit for purpose and whether it is being appropriately utilised.

Assumptions

- The current property practices will continue until the property strategy is completed.
- If in this time the Synod encounters a large financial event that requires payments that are more than external debt can raise, then the alternative utilisation of property is the most likely source of funds.
- Property performance indicators will be developed through the property strategy project.
- Property policies will be updated to align with the property strategy.

4.4 Strategic cost management

The costs of the operations of the presbyteries and Synod activities will be regularly reported. Synod-wide activities will be resourced in a manner that recognises we are in a transitional space.

A strategic business and costing model that balances both the need to adequately resource missional imperatives but also seeks efficiencies in the delivery of Synod-wide services will be identified.

In 2017/2018 a review of our current suppliers to the Synod office will be undertaken to inform decisions about the effectiveness of these arrangements.

All proposals requiring the application of resourcing through the Synod office will be assessed against the Synod's Priority Directions. Boards, committees and commissions will be advised of the resources available for new initiatives and collaborative strategies for resourcing will be developed as required.

It is important to note that during 2016/2017 the Synod faced significant costs in managing some extraordinary events, namely two appearances at the Royal Commission into historical child sexual abuse and the delivery and costs associated with our Interim Redress Scheme. These costs, while unlikely to be repeated at the same level, will be ongoing as the history of abuse within our institutions and congregations is revealed.

4.5 Synod-wide enterprises

Trinity College Queensland

Since announcing changes to the staffing and accreditation of the college in July 2016, the Future Ministry Model endorsed by the Synod Standing Committee is mostly in place. The goal of the Future Ministry Model is to build a college that facilitates the emergence of mission-ready graduates: people who can re-invigorate congregations and plant new ministries. Over the past 10 months faculty roles have been developed and consolidated to support this purpose.

The next 12 months will see Trinity focus on the promotion of its new educational offerings, especially those that will serve as student catchments. With regard to the latter, the Trinity faculty are responsible for delivering low-cost events (Trinity Unplugged) and unaccredited short courses that aim to develop an appetite for further theological education.

These changes together with a new marketing campaign have resulted in a near tripling of the number of students enrolling from Uniting Church congregations.

2016/17 highlights include:

1. Expenditure has been reduced and planning is in place to increase income.
2. Re-accreditation with the Adelaide College of Divinity will double the proportion of income received from student fees.
3. The number of candidates for ministry has risen from 6 FTE (2016) to 16 FTE (2017).
4. The number of enrolments in faculty-delivered unaccredited short courses in first semester 2017 is almost higher than the total enrolments for the Adult Faith Education lay program in 2016 (c. 40).
5. The new website launched in June 2017 allows people to register and enroll online.
6. The introduction of a performance review system keeps faculty accountable to college outcomes.
7. Trinity offered its first professional development classes at Uniting Church schools in July 2017.

Alexandra Park Conference Centre

Strategic planning for the best and highest use of the centre is continuing in collaboration with the Mary Burnett Presbytery. No decisions have been made by the Synod in terms of longer term strategic outcomes, but all options available to promote the best use of the site are being explored.

Until a decision is made, the existing conference centre business will continue to operate and be developed so that it can continue to produce surpluses and contribute to the funding of Synod-wide activities.

Raymont Residential College

A new principal was appointed in 2017 and a business plan has been developed.

The intent of the plan is to see a substantial improvement in the financial operations of the college and in the offerings made to students, such as:

- improved pastoral support program
- new academic support program
- new leadership development program.

Rebuilding the numbers of students to full occupancy is a key objective of the plan, so there is currently a strong emphasis on marketing including trade shows, targeted school visits in regional areas and increased retention of existing students.

4.6 Leadership strategy

The 32nd Synod identified leadership as a priority direction. The Synod will continue to work within its bounds and responsibilities to advance the church's mission through identifying, inviting, training, equipping and sustaining leaders. This objective will apply to both lay and ordained leaders of the church and extend to the governance capacity of our councils.

Assumptions

- For the church to grow, transition and innovate, strong, capable and courageous leadership is required by both ordained and lay leaders in paid and unpaid roles.
- Due to a range of issues the ability of individuals to volunteer long periods of leadership in the church through boards, committees and commissions is declining.
- The increasing complexity of the issues that boards, committees and commissions are required to deal with requires significant governance skill and knowledge. Sometimes this skill set is to be found outside the bounds of the membership of the Uniting Church.

Leadership Development Framework

The Synod has developed and deployed a Leadership Development Framework to guide and support the development of capabilities needed to rise to the current and future challenges for the church. In addition a series of tools has been developed to assist in assessing individual leadership capacity, suitability of a leadership development program, and the leadership demands of a particular position.

A series of short workshops enabling small groups to explore leadership development will be made available throughout the church in 2017/2018.

Leadership development tools for the Queensland Synod

Component	Description	Status
Leadership Development Framework (LDF)	A framework document that describes leadership through a series of definitions, domains, capabilities and behavioural descriptors.	Version 1 released November 2016.
Tools for LDF	A series of tools enabling the LDF to be used in a variety of ways and contexts across the church. The tools are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-assessment (long and short versions available) 2. Feedback from staff, peers, supervisors (long and short versions available) 3. Leadership program mapping 4. Leadership position mapping 5. Performance review tool (for internal Synod HR use). 	Version 1 released March 2017.

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Component	Description	Status
Workshops	<p>A series of seven short workshops designed to be used with small groups (for example church council) to explore and develop leadership capacity in alignment with the Leadership Development Framework.</p> <p>Workshops include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Overview of LDF 2. What is Leadership? 3. Developing and leading self 4. Build relationships and engage others 5. Partner and collaborate 6. Shape a preferred future 7. Achieve results. <p>Each workshop is designed to take 30–60 minutes (some workshops include an optional 20–30 minute “extension” activity) and includes all resources to enable leadership by a competent facilitator.</p>	Anticipated release October 2017.

Leadership development courses/experiences

The Synod will continue to coordinate a range of leadership development opportunities and courses. It will continually review (and revise as appropriate) our existing offerings in light of the Leadership Development Framework and constantly evolving context and culture.

The courses and experiences being delivered or developed include:

Name	Target audience	Content description	Status
Gap Year project	17–18 year old young adults	A gap year experience incorporating elements of a diploma in ministry, learning opportunities, practical mission experience. Program designed and delivered in-house by Trinity College, self-funded via student fee for service. Leadership content aligned with Synod Leadership Development Framework.	Planning for 2018 commencement. Coordinated by Trinity College Queensland.
Next Gen Arise leadership project	Young adults from multicultural backgrounds	Develop a community of second generation young adults from a multicultural context. Project includes regular worship gatherings and leadership development workshops. Coordinated by Noah Kim.	Active, commenced late 2016. Coordinated by Synod project officer.

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Name	Target audience	Content description	Status
A Place at the Table	Intentional leadership diversity program	Arising from the Synod resolution that the Governance, Nomination and remuneration committee (GNRC) seek more ways to locate, develop and include people from diverse backgrounds in leadership positions in the church.	Active, commenced 2016. Programs and initiatives to invite emerging leaders to participate in the councils, committees and boards of the church. Coordinated by the GNRC.
Emerging Leaders project	25–35-year-old lay leaders	<p>A four-part leadership development experience for lay leaders.</p> <p>Part 1: 5–7 day residential experiential leadership development experience.</p> <p>Part 2: Practical project in small groups.</p> <p>Part 3: Follow-up residential reflection/debrief.</p> <p>Part 4: Period of Discernment (POD) or six-month mentoring relationship.</p> <p>Residential course content to be developed, potentially with delivery partners, and aligned with Synod Leadership Development Framework.</p>	Under consideration.
Lay ministry/preacher training	Lay leaders	A selection of course offerings from Trinity College Queensland available as stand-alone units or together towards lay preacher accreditation. Content being redeveloped by Trinity College.	Active
Formation of ordinands	Candidates	<p>Under the leadership of the Board for Christian Formation (BCF) and Trinity College Queensland.</p> <p>Formation program being reviewed in the light of the repurposed Trinity College and the Synod Leadership Development Framework.</p>	Active

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Name	Target audience	Content description	Status
Post-graduate leadership program	Emerging ministry leaders (ordained ministers/deacons, and pastors)	<p>A post-graduate certificate course supported by extra-curricular content to provide for development of leadership capacity and preparation for significant leadership roles.</p> <p>Course content developed in partnership with Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, South Australia.</p> <p>Synod-funded scholarships to successful applicants cover travel/accommodation/meals and approximately 75% of course costs. Maximum of 15 students per cohort.</p>	<p>First cohort completed May 2017.</p> <p>Second cohort to complete in November 2017.</p> <p>Third cohort to commence February 2018.</p> <p>Fourth cohort in July 2018 pending demand.</p> <p>Moving to Trinity College as delivery partner in 2018.</p>
Continuing Education for Ministry (CEM)	Ordained ministry workers and pastors	<p>Trinity College are reviewing the Continuing Education for Ministers (CEM) offerings for ministers, deacons, pastors.</p> <p>The review includes consideration of a new funding model utilising ministry agents' CEM allowance.</p>	Planning for launch Semester 2, 2017.
Executive leadership program	Uniting Church staff in or preparing for executive leadership roles	A proposal being developed nationally to provide leadership training for executive roles such as general secretary, associate general secretary, directors, presbytery ministers, ministers leading multi-staff congregations etc.	Planning for 2018 launch as part of the Uniting Leaders national partnership.
Uniting Leaders conferences	Lay and ordained leaders	<p>Annual Uniting Church national leadership conference first conducted in 2016 and scheduled for August 2017.</p> <p>Joint venture between South Australia and Queensland Synods.</p>	Active
Uniting Leaders national partnership	All leaders	Participating in national/inter-synod leadership development strategy. Details under discussion.	In planning

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Non-Synod initiatives related to the leadership development strategy

There are a number of initiatives underway that have capacity to contribute to leadership development within the Queensland Synod. This includes ecumenical, non-denominational and presbytery initiatives. Some involve participation of the Synod office while others are independent.

Initiative	Notes	Coordinator
Mission Shaped Ministry	Training experience developing leadership capacity for “fresh expressions of church” or new missional initiatives. Delivered in 2015 and 2016; 2017 course offered following significant revision.	South Moreton, Moreton Rivers, Bremer Brisbane Presbyteries with support of Synod office
Renovators	Training experience developing leadership capacity within youth ministry leaders.	South Moreton, Moreton Rivers, Bremer Brisbane Presbyteries
3DM	Structured discipleship and leadership development program.	3DM Australia
Re-Imagine Church and Postcard Radio	Community of people leading “fresh expressions” or “missional communities”. Exploring form, function, discipleship, leadership.	Joint project of Queensland Churches of Christ, Malyon College and Queensland Synod office from Semester 2, 2017
Global Leadership Summit	Annual international leadership conference with video-streamed content to local conference hosts. Synod has offered some financial support in the past and several Uniting Church congregations host events.	Willow Creek International
Central Queensland Rural and Remote Ministry Project	Project of the Central Queensland Presbytery to explore new models of ministry, mission, leadership and faith community in rural and remote central Queensland.	Central Queensland Presbytery

Performance indicators for leadership development

We will report on a number of indicators including:

- numbers of participants in programs
- movement of leaders from development opportunities into leadership positions within the church
- impact on the capacity and confidence of participants to offer leadership and bring about strategic change
- effect on the capacity of the church to grow, transition and innovate.

4.7 Ministry strategy

Ministry offered by ordained and lay persons has and will continue to be a key feature of the Uniting Church. However models of ministry for a changing future is the vision driving some of our strategic responses. For example the work in our rural and remote ministry models will seek to provision ministry in areas of dwindling resources, wide geographic spread and the rise and fall of communities as they respond to economic drivers.

The strategic locations for church communities (Key Change Initiative) will also feed into this area as we develop a coordinated approach to providing for ministry needs for a range of church styles including specialist positions such as church planting, Indigenous ministry and rural and remote placements.

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Assumptions

- The Uniting Church will continue to recognise the ordained ministries of the Word and deacon and the lay ministry of pastor.
- The church will continue to be served by people called into ministry to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care.
- The model designed to support a single minister in an independent congregation will be only one of many forms of provision of ministry in the community.

Key delivery programs for ministry in the Queensland Synod

Period of Discernment

The Period of Discernment (POD) is intended to give any member of the church an opportunity to engage in sustained reflection and ministry activity to discern God's call on their life. The Synod will continue to resource presbyteries with material that provides flexibility and engagement.

Synod Selection Panel

The Synod Selection Panel (SSP) secretariat undertook a review of its processes in 2016. Through constant revision the SSP will ensure that its processes provide transparent information that gives applicants, congregations and presbyteries confidence in the decisions made by the panel.

Formation of candidates for ministry

Trinity College Queensland has implemented a future ministry model to build a college that facilitates the emergence of mission-ready graduates: people who can re-invigorate congregations and plant new ministries. Further information is provided under the heading Trinity College Queensland.

Placements Committee

The Placements Committee operates in a highly regulated environment. In exercising its oversight function, the committee is confronted by some deep issues within the life of the church. A review of the placements process since 2014 has revealed some underlying structural issues:

- a. The current process breeds dependency and lack of clarity by facilitating triangulation of relationships: Placements Committee, placements, ministers.
- b. The review uncovered a "work around" culture, including "informal" conversations taking place and a lack of transparency of process in some appointments. The Placements Committee is dealing with this by naming such behaviours, understanding the causes, and developing policy that addresses the underlying issues.

- c. The current process is significantly hampered by ministers' availability to relocate.
- d. In terms of placements and ministers, the Placements Committee's capacity appears to be either restrictive (by only giving permission for certain names to go forward to a Joint Nominating Committee (JNC) or persuasive (seeking to influence a name to take up a role or a placement to take a name). This is not regarded as an appropriate model for the future.
- e. Information that is used in the discernment process is often unable to be substantiated. A higher standard of information sharing and provision will be required to facilitate better informed discernment processes.

In response to these findings the review has developed an optional dual track placements process. In addition to the existing placements process, we are working on a proposal that will allow ministers and JNCs to take greater control in the placements process. The alternative placements track will introduce greater flexibility and provide opportunity for longer-term strategic planning. Subject to some approvals and training processes, the option should be available through the placements process in 2018.

Admission of ministers

The Admission of Ministers Committee is also highly regulated. This is a joint Synod and Assembly activity which will continue to review its processes for assessing the suitability of applicants from other denominations seeking to be admitted as a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia.

Ministry of pastor

The ministry of pastor offers a flexible form of ministry that responds to needs in local contexts and allows individuals to offer themselves for ministry for a limited time. It is not an alternative to ordained ministry and the processes for training and developing pastors are significantly different. Standardisation of training and assessment of core and general competencies will continue to be developed and refined in consultation with presbyteries.

Third phase of ministry

Third phase of ministry relates to the first three years of ordained ministry, following the completion of the core phase of ministerial education. Its purpose is to assist the minister to make a smooth transition from the core phase into active and responsible ministry and to develop life-long habits of engagement in professional development. In conjunction with

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presbyteries, the Synod is working to reinvigorate a new framework for ministers to successfully participate in the third phase of ministry. Recommendations have been presented and will be implemented in the second half of 2017.

Synod Chaplaincy Commission

The Synod Chaplaincy Commission provides oversight and support to Synod chaplaincy placements across schools, hospitals, aged care facilities and police. The commission also considers emerging contexts for chaplaincy. As with many other activities of the Synod, the commission is faced by limited and unsustainable funding. The commission is actively pursuing new models of funding, including crowd funding and direct support from business.

Ministry: strategic indicators

1. Numbers of participants entering and completing the POD.
2. Number of people applying to the Synod Selection Panel.
3. A range of metrics will be developed concerning approved placements, including:
 - a. number of placements and their fraction – grouped according to organisation type (congregational, agency etc.)
 - b. number of active placements (i.e. people in current placements), number of vacant placements we are actively seeking to fill, number of vacant placements that we are not seeking to fill
 - c. number of people in ministry locations
 - d. split between ordained and lay people
 - e. age
 - f. breakdown of gender, cultural diversity and Indigenous representation
 - g. average length of time a placement is vacant.
4. Development of training modules for core and general competencies for ministry of pastor.
5. Numbers of applicants accepted, deferred and declined by the SSP.
6. New initiatives in chaplaincy placements.

4.8 Youth, Children and Families strategy

The 32nd Synod identified youth, children and families as a priority direction. The Synod currently has no overall strategy for ministry to youth, children and families. Some activities are afoot that are designed to offer ministry in this space, and resourcing has been provided to presbyteries to facilitate active ministry in various forms to the youth, children and families in their local area.

The 2016 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) survey shows that the average age of members of the Uniting Church in Queensland is 62 years.

Over the next two years a comprehensive youth, children and families strategy will be developed for the Synod. This strategy will be based on a partnership model between family and church. It will focus on aspects of discipleship relating to:

- worship
- service
- witness
- Bible study/knowledge
- personal spirituality
- community relationships.

The Synod will seek to resource schools, presbyteries and congregations in the application of this strategy.

Assumptions

- Ministry to youth, children and families will remain an essential concern for the Uniting Church.
- Contemporary and emerging models of youth ministry will be researched to inform our strategy.
- The strategy will incorporate consideration of activities already happening.

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Current youth, children and family strategies

Name	Target audience	Content description	Status
Easter Madness	High school-aged youth	A state-wide camp held annually on the Sunshine Coast during the Easter School holidays. Previous camps have included 12 to 25-year-olds. The intention for 2018 and beyond is that Easter Madness will only cater for high schoolers and there will be a separate young adult camp.	Planning already commenced for 2018. Organised by a volunteer team and supported by the Synod office.
Young adults camp	18–25 year olds	A spin-off from Easter Madness. This camp will intentionally reflect on discipleship as it impacts young adults.	In planning, to be offered in January 2018.
Digital Youth Discipleship	Youth and young adults	Project developing strategy for discipleship and faith-building in younger generations via digital community.	Active. Synod office project officer.
Camps, including day camps, residential camps (such as Country Madness) conducted by presbyteries and congregations throughout the year.	Children and youth	Many congregations and presbyteries conduct camps throughout the year. We will build these activities into the wider children's and youth strategy.	Camps take place throughout the year.
Sunday Schools, children's groups, youth groups, Mainly Music, etc.	Children and youth	Many congregations conduct such activities throughout the year. We will build these activities into the wider children's and youth strategy.	Activities take place throughout the year.
Religious Instruction (RI)	School-aged children	Many congregations offer RI to their local state schools. Education Queensland regulates this activity but relies on churches to have standards of training, monitoring and accreditation.	Active
Religious Education (RE) framework	Uniting Church schools	Throughout 2016/2017 a comprehensive Uniting Church RE framework has been developed through a collaboration with Trinity College and the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission. This will be launched shortly and rolled out across our school communities.	Active

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Strategic indicators

1. Numbers of congregations offering activities for youth, children and families.
2. Numbers of youth, children and young adults participating in congregations.
3. Take up of the RI and RE programs.

4.9 Schools and residential colleges strategy

The Queensland Synod operates four Property Trust schools and two separately incorporated schools. We are in partnership with other denominations or councils to oversee 13 other schools and residential colleges. Details of these can be found at schoolscommission.ucaqld.com.au

Governance and oversight arrangements for Uniting Church schools and colleges varies greatly. This affects the ability of the Synod to directly impact the operation of the school and affects the Synod's level of exposure to risk. It is the intention of the Synod to develop a whole-of-schools strategy and risk framework which will continue to respect these varying relationships whilst ensuring the highest level of governance oversight.

Assumptions

Uniting Church schools and colleges will have:

- an approved constitution and governing board
- clear guidelines for the board to act with confidence and to articulate its reporting requirements
- clear guidelines for the principal and their executive team to act with confidence and to articulate their reporting requirements
- systems to develop and appraise staff
- processes to engage with parents and the wider school community
- an approved strategic plan
- a facilities master plan
- a curriculum plan that outlines the scope and sequence of work programs P–12
- systems, policies and procedures to mitigate the high risks inherent in a school (e.g. health and safety) to ensure a culture of compliance.

Schools and colleges framework

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission has commenced work on developing a framework that will express the Synod's intention in regards to Uniting Church schools and colleges.

The issues to be addressed in this framework will include:

- the church's mission as expressed through schools and colleges
- partnership between church, school and home
- distinctive culture
- the Australian Curriculum
- teacher quality
- governance principles
- philosophy of learning and leadership
- enterprise efficiencies in a Uniting Church association of schools and/or colleges.

Performance indicators

Measures will be put in place for all schools and colleges to ensure the relevance of each constitution, the effectiveness of governing boards and the suitability of Uniting Church board appointments.

Reporting tools will be developed to monitor the performance of Property Trust schools that will include measures such as:

- financial performance
- effectiveness of the school's board
- application of the school's risk management strategy, including the timeliness and efficiency of systems, policies and procedures to mitigate the high risks inherent in the school
- application of the strategic plan, facilities master plan and curriculum plan.

4.10 Community services strategy

While the Uniting Church has large, effective and well-governed community service agencies and institutions, we do not have a whole-of-Synod strategy which assesses new and developing services in other areas of the church.

Assumptions

- The Queensland Synod will continue to express the mission of God through community services operated by state-wide agencies such as UnitingCare Queensland and Wesley Mission Queensland and through more localised expressions, including those of local congregations.
- The operation of all community services activities will comply with relevant government legislation and community expectations.
- The various expressions of community service will evolve in line with the needs of society.

Strategic framework

A strategic framework for community services will be developed by the Synod. This will give the Synod and its agencies, presbyteries and congregations confidence in the mission and operation of existing services and enable the identification and pursuit of new opportunities. At the same time the framework will assist the Synod in the management of the risks to which the church is exposed through these activities.

The framework will address:

- appropriate governance models
- principles relating to the management of risk
- clarity of relationships within and between councils and the activities of the church
- compliance with relevant legislation
- obligations relating to reporting and monitoring on matters that have a likely effect on the Synod
- a proactive risk management strategy for application by congregation-based community service activities.

5. Key challenges for the Queensland Synod

Risk management framework

The Synod office has commenced development of a whole-of-church risk management framework. The framework is designed to ensure that all potential strategic, financial, investment, operational, missional and other risks are identified, assessed, monitored, managed and reported.

The framework will also assist the Synod Standing Committee to determine its risk appetite and is dependent on the missional priorities and the Key Change Initiatives. Risk appetite assists us in deciding how far we are going to put the resources of the church behind particular initiatives, and what reporting procedures to put in place to monitor and manage those initiatives.

The risk management framework takes a proactive approach to managing the whole of the church enterprise and has identified some significant challenges for 2017–2018.

One church

Ensuring an integrated approach to telling the story of the Uniting Church in the Queensland context

A significant Key Change Initiative is to tell the story of ourselves as one church. The notion of the church being identified by only one activity or manifestation as the body of Christ does not capture the depth and breadth

of the church in Queensland. An intentional focus on this issue ensures we keep our planning and ideas sufficiently broad to capture all the resources of the church across the state.

The ecumenical adventure

We are also known by our continuing commitment to our ecumenical foundations. The work of the Synod Ecumenical Relations Committee is an active witness to ecumenism in the Synod. We also maintain ecumenical ventures based on projects, most notably in ecumenical schools' partnerships.

Again this is an area where strategic planning will assist us to concentrate our resources on vibrant and life-giving partnerships in Christ.

In addition we provide funding and resources to the following ecumenical and community-based activities:

- Ecumenical Tertiary Chaplaincy Committee
- University of Queensland Tertiary Chaplaincy Program
- James Cook University Multi-faith Chaplaincy
- Association of Related Churches
- Queensland Churches Together
- Queensland Community Alliance
- Wontulp-Bi-Buya College.

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Changing environment in the aged and community care and disability sectors

The changing nature of the aged and community care and disability sectors means that our service arms are having to radically transform their business models in a relatively short space of time. This work is regularly flagged and reported in agency annual reports which can be found at:

unitingcareqld.com.au/news-and-publications/publications

wmq.org.au/news-events-and-media/publication-listing

Child sexual abuse in the church

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, our Interim Redress Scheme and the removal of the statute of limitations for civil claims in this area have all had and will continue to have a significant impact on the activities, response and financial cost to the Synod.

Our acknowledgement of harm and wrongdoing in this area is well known and our commitment to restorative practice cannot be underestimated. It is already transforming church practice and will continue to do so. Our commitment to maintain a safe space for all people as they explore their life in Christ has real and tangible impacts on the ministry of the church in all areas.

Changing funding sources

The “traditional model” of funding for church activities, namely congregational giving, has not adequately supported the Synod activities of the church for some time. Income-producing activities such as Alexandra Park Conference Centre and Raymont College are requiring significant reinvestment at this time. For some time, whole-of-Synod activities such as the Synod office have relied on the health and wellbeing of our service agencies. This can no longer be taken for granted.

Congregational trends

The Queensland Synod participated in the 2016 NCLS survey which provides us with information about the congregational life of the church.

While the information is still new and subject to further analysis some early observations are:

- A little over half the congregations in the state participated, including many of our larger and healthier congregations. The number of responses was 6320 adult attenders aged 15 years and over in 113 churches, and 349 children aged 8 to 14 years.
- Of the adults who completed the forms, 76% were born in Australia and 11% speak a language other than English at home. The average age is 62 years, 63% are female, 44% are over 70 years, 8% are 15–29 years and 31% were new to their church in the last five years (22% switched/transferred from another church/denomination, 8% were new altogether).
- The three most valued things were sermons/preaching/teaching, Holy Communion and practical care in time of need.
- The three highest priorities were nurturing worship services, spiritual growth and a sense of community.

Further information can be found at 2016ncls.org.au

Boards, committees and commissions: appointments, diversity and succession planning

Synod-wide activities are based on a large number of groups which are either regulated or have been developed as a response to the needs of the church.

The need for skilled people who are available to represent the church on these groups is high and unlikely to diminish in the near future. An intentional strategy to locate, encourage and equip people for the variety of positions is required to maintain the vital functions of the church. We may need to review the number and nature of these groups and the way they are resourced.

The GNRC is tasked with this responsibility and is working with the Synod office on several projects to meet the current appointment and diversity needs of these groups.

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As a rough guide the following groups currently exist at the Synod level:

Board/committee/commission	Appointed by:
Governance, Nomination and Remuneration Committee (GNRC)	Synod in Session (chair only)
Board for Christian Formation (BCF)	Synod in Session
Synod Standing Committee (SSC)	Synod in Session
Finance, Investment and Property Board (FIP)	Synod in Session
UnitingCare Queensland Board	Synod Standing Committee
Chaplaincy Commission	Synod Standing Committee
Schools and Residential Colleges Commission	Synod Standing Committee
Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group	Synod Standing Committee
Synod Inter-Faith Relationships Committee	Synod Standing Committee
Synod Ecumenical Relationships Committee	Synod Standing Committee
Legal Reference Committee	Synod Standing Committee
Social Responsibility Reference Group	
Editorial Advisory Panel	
Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements	Presbytery
Reception of Ministers Committee	
Pastor Application Committee	
Presbytery Synod Interface (PSI)	Presbytery
School Boards (nine)	Synod Standing Committee
Theology and Worship Committee	Synod in Session (not active)
Synod Business Committee	
Synod in Session	Various
Synod Audit and Risk Committee (SARC)	
Easter Madness committee	
Australian Regional and Remote Community Services	Synod Standing Committee
Synod Sexual Misconduct Complaints Committee	Synod Standing Committee
Committee for Discipline	Synod Standing Committee
Counselling Committee	Synod Standing Committee
Queensland Synod Royal Commission Task Group	
Uniting Women 2018 organising committee	
Uniting Church Adult Fellowship	
Frontier Services Support	
UnitingWorld	
The Uniting Church In Australia Property Trust (Q.)	Synod in Session
Queensland Synod Disaster Response Committee (DRC)	

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Synod office structure

The Synod office has recently developed a strategy and has been redesigned to deliver appropriate and responsive services to the whole of the Queensland Synod. However it is important that the Synod office is maintained at a level that reflects the changing context of the church and the resources available to fund Synod-wide strategies and operations. The structure and performance of the office will be regularly reviewed.

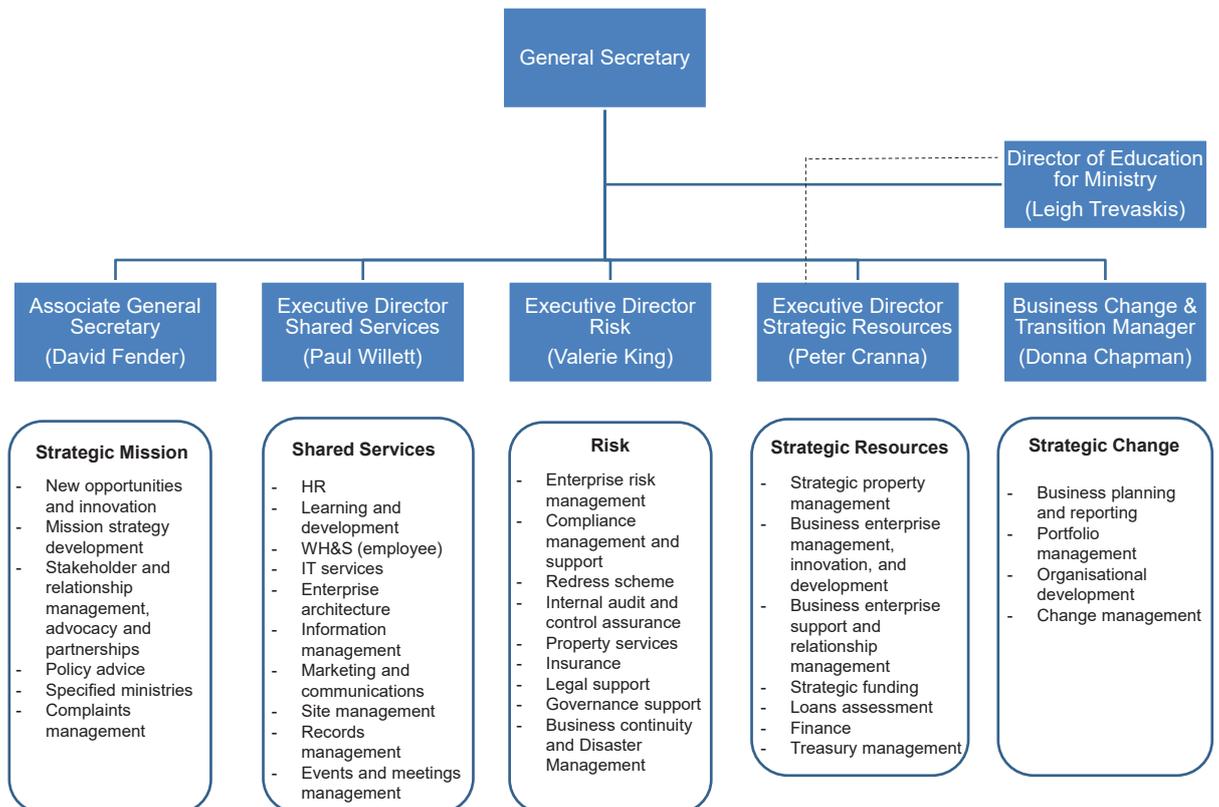
At this time the Synod office strategy on a page is as follows:

Synod office Strategy on a page				
Future vision	The Queensland Synod office exists to serve the wider church. We will do this in a way that is service-oriented, fiscally viable and responsible, continually improving and sustainable in terms of the resources, service and value required by the church.			
Objective	Undertake the changes required to realise the Queensland Synod office future vision by the end of 2020.			
Strategic goals	<p>1 Service</p> <p>We build an organisation that services and supports our stakeholders by providing agile, responsive and efficient stakeholder focused services.</p>	<p>2 Leadership</p> <p>We develop and provide effective and successful theological and ministerial education and leadership programs which build Christian leadership in the church and the community.</p>	<p>3 Sustainability</p> <p>We assist the church to strategically manage resources for long-term growth and sustainability of the church.</p>	<p>4 Collaboration</p> <p>We are a catalyst for state-wide missional faith sharing and discipleship strategies that support the church of today and grow the church of tomorrow.</p>
Strategies	<p>Focus on the functions and services that the Synod office must do and is best placed to do to serve the church whilst supporting change and growth.</p> <p>Simplify processes and governance structures and increase availability and reliability of information to enable more timely and informed decisions and actions.</p> <p>Shape resilient and service-oriented people.</p>	<p>Reshape innovative and high quality educational, spiritual and leadership programs.</p> <p>Support the provision of learning, development and growth opportunities for stakeholders.</p>	<p>Facilitate collaborative strategic resource management actions that will strengthen the church.</p> <p>Source new and unlock existing resources for allocation and release to mission.</p>	<p>Strengthen and maintain closer working relationships with stakeholders to ensure that we are aware of and able to respond to the changing needs of the church.</p> <p>Provide well researched contemporary and innovative advice.</p>
Synod office Key Change Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Realign the Synod office functions, structures, people, processes and technology to support the delivery of services that meet the current and emerging needs of our stakeholders. ❖ Build strategic, risk, compliance and information management capabilities that are appropriate for our complex environment. ❖ Define the desired attributes, culture and practices of the Synod office and manage a program of developing capable, engaged and service-oriented people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Reposition and grow: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trinity College Queensland as a quality and innovative provider of theological education. ▪ Raymont Residential College as a caring community that enhances academic success, spiritual growth and career pathways with the Uniting Church in Australia. ❖ Work with presbyteries to develop clear professional standards for ministers, enhanced leadership development and assessment. ❖ Develop and implement a relevant and contemporary learning and development framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work with stakeholders to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify strategic locations for worship witness and service ▪ Develop and implement appropriate mission plans ❖ Develop plans and associated processes for strategic asset management, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ income sources ▪ property ▪ investment ▪ insurance ▪ Treasury. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish a relationship management framework with our key stakeholders to share insights and plans and capitalise on strategies in order to optimise outcomes for the church. ❖ Develop plans and associated processes for supporting Key Change Initiatives as advised by the Synod Standing Committee, which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic locations for intentional church communities ▪ Development of a multicultural church ▪ Whole of church first peoples engagement ▪ One church.

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The Synod office reporting structure is as follows:

Synod office reporting structure – top line reporting from 14 August 2017



Our By-laws

A recent review of the By-laws has brought this regulatory tool into a more usable form. All operational and policy matters have been pulled out of the By-laws and now sit within the Synod office business or in a policy framework. A standardised expectation of governance and meeting procedure has been developed and is applicable to almost all committees, commissions and boards.

A copy of the revised [By-laws can be found here](#)

A number of recommendations to simplify the governance structure of the Synod will be brought to the 33rd Synod in Session in October 2017.

Finally, some more creative suggestions for changing the way we operate as a Synod generally will be incorporated into a discussion paper which will be circulated for comment and discussion throughout the Synod in late 2017.

6. Future-proofing

Managing the whole: a national unincorporated association

While we acknowledge the responsibilities of the different councils of the church, what is undisputed is that each of these activities must operate as a whole. Any part of the church that makes decisions about its future capacity without acknowledging that it operates in a national framework fails to understand that we are part of a national unincorporated association.

A reminder that the councils of the church are: Assembly in Session (and delegation to the Assembly Standing Committee), Synod in Session (and delegation to the SSC), Presbytery (and delegation to the Presbytery Standing Committee) and church councils. All other boards, commissions and committees, whether regulated or not, are activities of the church and subservient to the binding decisions of the councils of the church.

When we acknowledge the view that every decision about resources, people and mission has a national impact, then our decision-making starts to take a different form. It also helps us acknowledge the different levels of responsibility for each council with the recognition that a decision by one council can bind other councils of the church.

One of the benefits of being a national church is that we are resilient and diverse. One of the disadvantages is that decisions made by another council of the church may seem to have little relevance to our day-to-day activities. Hence diverse membership on the various committees and activities of the church is vitally important to our future.

Supporting collaboration across the national church

Decisions are being made every day to work more collaboratively in the national space. The informal networks of the past are becoming more formalised to ensure there is transparency and transferability of church knowledge. We are setting ourselves up for the next wave of leadership in the church who will make decisions about our future as a movement of Christians in Australia.

Where it makes good corporate sense to collaborate, in terms of purchasing power in Synods or in order to provide services in a national market, moves are already being made to consolidate our activities.

Recognising and managing our national brand takes on a new piquancy as we consider the stories of the past and the plans for the future.

Committing to the Key Change Initiatives

By choosing several explicit strategies over the next years we will focus our energy and resources in that area. The SSC and presbytery ministers have agreed to work particularly in the areas of:

- strategic locations for intentional churches (including church planting)
- multicultural church
- effective First Peoples engagement
- one church.

The consequence of this is that some areas of the mission of the church may not receive intensive attention over the next few years. This does not mean they are unimportant, but that this council has chosen other priorities at this time.

These strategies should provide the platform for the next set of discerned priorities for the whole of the Synod. The work on discerning these for the Synod will commence in 2019.

Safe Ministry framework

The Uniting Church takes its responsibility to provide safe places for people to grow in faith seriously. The lessons of the past clearly reveal that this is not a situation that occurs without constant effort and vigilance. While the investment into our safe ministry program may be regarded by some as over-governance, the Synod has shifted from the compliance focus which sets up our foundation to the call framework.

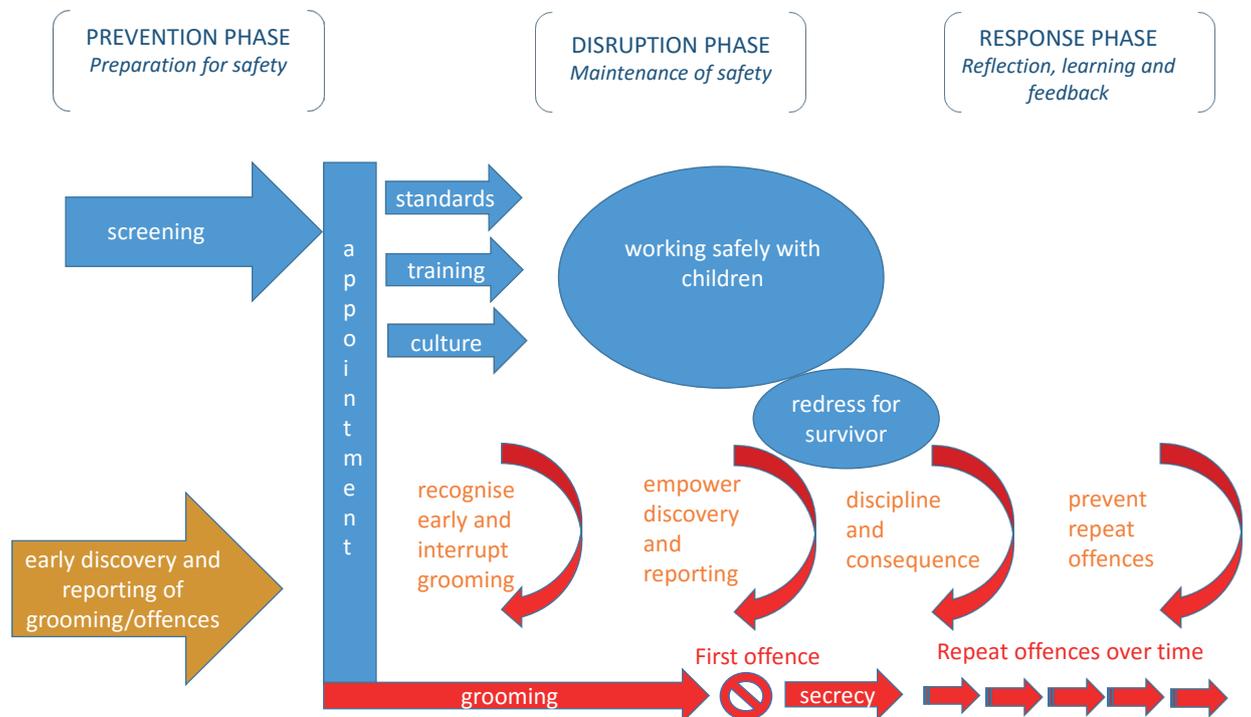
The Safe Ministry with Children Framework: from compliance to call

The Safe Ministry with Children model (see diagram on p.25) acts to enhance the culture of the church so that we are better equipped to deliberately conduct ministry safely. The Safe Ministry with Children policy, processes and tools support congregations to fulfil their vision for children's ministry in a way that meets the legislated standards and is the result of a major shift in focus in response to evidence gathered from reviews of literature and current practice.

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The development of this bespoke model for conducting activities with children in the Queensland Synod has resulted from researching the evidence of “what works”, and listening to “what will work here”. Though this is a shift in focus from compliance to call, the intent is to reengage and ultimately increase compliance by demystifying the requirements of the legislation and providing clear policies, process and tools. The key priority areas within this model include awareness, robust systems, record keeping, capacity development and cycle of review as illustrated below.

Safe Ministry with Children model



For the remainder of 2017 the focus will be on consolidating the strategy with a view to making recommendations for sustainable implementation into the future. The Safe Ministry with Children Reference Group will consider what Safe Ministry with Children looks like in 2018 and beyond and how the follow-on actions will achieve this.

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Provisioning for likely action against the church

The likelihood of continuing and escalating legal action against the church in relation to historical child abuse is high. The effects of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, together with high profile legal cases against ministry agents across all churches has meant that the public is more likely to take action against the church for past failures in keeping young people safe.

This means the Property Trust as the legal entity of the church will be managing significant claims against the resources of the church. The decision on how to provision for these claims is one that is ongoing and is caught up in a piece of policy work to determine which activity of the church will be responsible for paying uninsured claims against the church. We have come to an agreement with the continuing Presbyterian Church in relation to activities that were conducted pre-union, but all other denominational liability rests with the Queensland Synod.

The coming year will see a consolidation of this work and a settlement of the best ways to provision ourselves for this likelihood.

Interim Redress Scheme

The Interim Redress Scheme developed by the Queensland Synod has been operating for just under 12 months.

An independent panel assesses the material provided by the applicant and makes a recommendation to the general secretary in terms of the claim. The independent panel have conducted their duties with great acumen and capacity. The burden they carry on behalf of the church, to hear the stories of the nature and extent of abuse that occurred within church institutions and congregations cannot be underestimated. They do this work on behalf of us all and for this we owe them our deepest thanks.



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

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