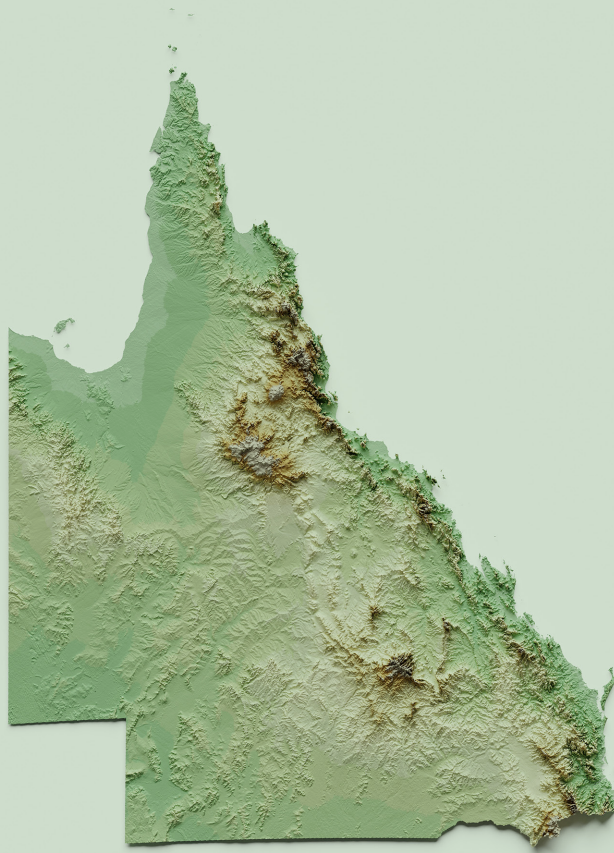


Presbytery Capacity

A discussion paper for the Synod of Queensland



renewal



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

QUEENSLAND SYNOD SHARED AMBITION - REAFFIRMED AT THE 38TH SYNOD

One church,

active in every Queensland community,
bearers of Christ's offer of life in all its fullness.

Together we are committed to a

flourishing future

for church and community.

QUEENSLAND SYNOD STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS

MISSION RENEWAL AND GROWTH

We will accompany the Church, supporting renewed discipleship, new growth and missional development.
We will deepen our covenant with the UAICC and advocate and act for Social Justice for all.

FLOURISHING PRESBYTERIES

We will co-create plans to support Presbyteries, developing
new approaches to shared and delegated responsibilities.

FORMING LEADERS

We will embed, build, and optimise the Synod's leadership principles and pathways,
and develop emerging leaders across Queensland.

FIT-FOR-PURPOSE GOVERNANCE

We will improve whole-of-church governance processes and structures, implement governance review
outcomes for institutions, and develop the capability of governing bodies and councils of the Church.

STEWARDING RESOURCES

We will steward our resources and innovate and diversify funding sources to improve financial
sustainability for the Office of the Synod and the wider Church in Queensland.

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Executive summary

At the 38th Synod meeting, the Synod approved a 'Renewal and Growth' strategy, including a shared ambition and five strategic foundations as the focus of the Synod until 2028. One of those foundations is 'Flourishing Presbyteries'. The Presbytery Capacity project looks at how presbyteries in the Queensland Synod can more effectively support and encourage congregations and faith communities, with the goal of helping the church grow and renew. To achieve this, the project will gather feedback in different ways and work towards creating a proposal for the 39th Synod regarding the future composition and functioning of presbyteries within the Synod.

Understanding the background

Presbyteries in Queensland have faced a lot of challenges—financial, leadership, and cultural. As congregations and faith communities encounter their own challenges in a changing world, they often turn to the presbytery for extra support. There is a need for flourishing presbyteries as we respond to God's call to be a renewing and growing Church in Queensland. Presbytery Ministers from all seven presbyteries have considered different ideas and have now asked the General Secretary and Synod Standing Committee to lead a group effort to develop a formal proposal for the 39th Synod to consider in October 2026. This paper is the starting point for feedback from presbyteries, ministry agents, and lay leaders, after which a preferred model will be created for further discussion in early 2026. Together, we are seeking the best way to help Queensland's presbyteries thrive, innovate and most effectively to contribute to renewal and growth across the church.

How the project will work

There are three main stages, starting with the opportunity to reflect and provide feedback on this discussion paper. Based on that feedback, a draft proposal will be developed in early 2026, and then finalised for the 39th Synod in October 2026:

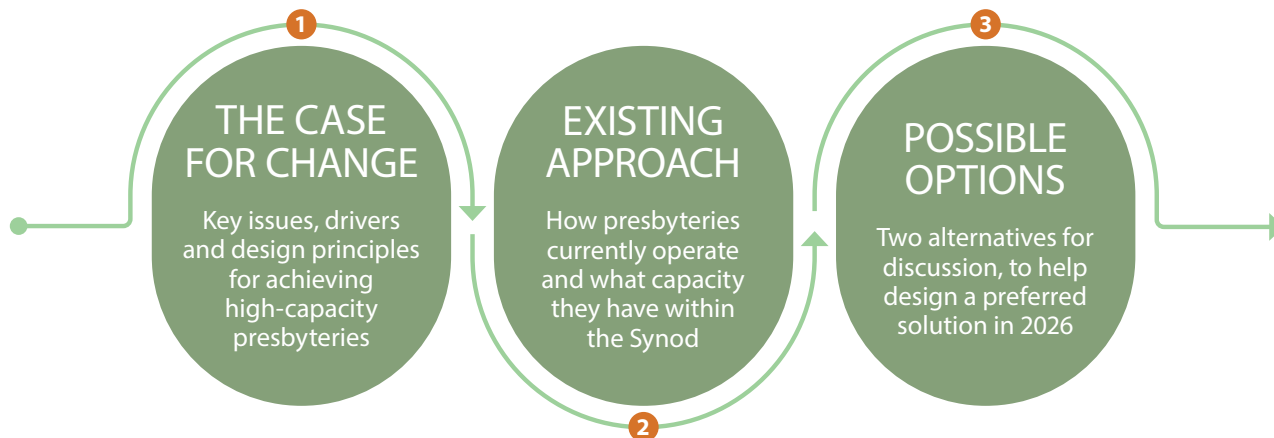


How to participate

- Pray for wisdom and discernment for our Church
- Attend presbytery meetings in October or November 2025
- Send your individual reflections by November 30, 2025
- Email your feedback via your Presbytery or to Cherry.Koshy@ucaqld.com.au

What this paper covers

- The project's outline, including the main ideas, principles, and risks involved in any new approach
- How presbyteries currently operate and what capacity they have within the Synod
- The main ways to improve presbytery capacity
- Two possible approaches for discernment and discussion, to help design a preferred solution in 2026.



Two alternative examples

To encourage creative thinking, two possible alternate examples of presbytery form are described within the paper. These models have in mind the needs for the Church as we continue of the path to renewal and growth.



Example one: three presbyteries

Create three new presbyteries across Queensland, with changes to staffing in ministry and administration roles so that congregations, faith communities, and leaders get better support.

One of the three new presbyteries would cover regional Queensland, and two the south-east.

This option could facilitate the provision of more specialist staff within each presbytery than current arrangements, using a long-term plan for resourcing.



Example two: four presbyteries

Create four new presbyteries across Queensland, also changing staffing in ministry and administration to better serve congregations, faith communities, and lay and ordained leaders.

Two of the four new presbyteries would cover regional Queensland, and two the south-east.

This option involves more presbyteries, again with provision of more specialist staff within each presbytery than current arrangements. It may therefore require a much larger financial investment to pay for more staff, again with a long-term plan for resources.

This paper invites everyone to share their thoughts on the topics raised. It encourages a shared commitment to helping grow presbytery capacity, for the sake of renewal across the whole church. By working together, the church can answer God's call for renewal and growth, especially through congregations and faith communities.

1. Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) is a missional movement in which the congregation, as the gathered community of faith, shares in the ongoing ministry of Christ. The presbytery, through its oversight and the synod through resourcing, work to support congregations and faith communities in their diverse expressions of worship, witness and service.

In his 1979 retiring address as the first president of the UCA Assembly, Rev Dr Davis McCaughey stated:



// The councils of the church exist primarily to serve the basic unit, the congregation: to make sure that Word and Sacrament are available for Christ's people, so that they can worship, witness and serve. Presbytery, Synod and Assembly are constituted for that purpose. Of course they may have other things to do as well, but they ought to remember that the further they get away from the task of simply serving Christ's people gathered around Word and Sacrament the further they move from their own sphere of competence. //

- Rev Dr Davis McCaughey

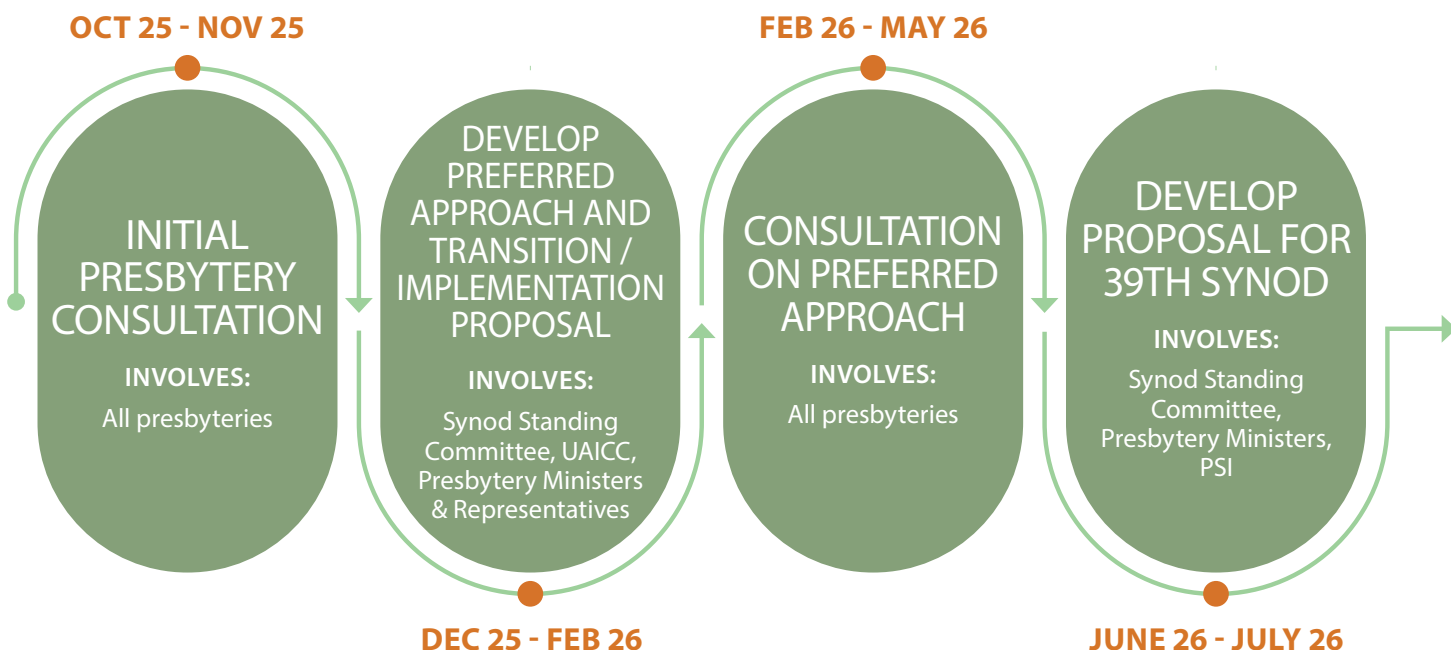
The missional heart of the UCA informs a structure in which the congregation is the primary focus of our communal life. Within the Uniting Church, the congregation is understood as being "the embodiment in one place of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping, witnessing and serving as a fellowship of the Spirit in Christ" (Par. 15, Basis of Union).



The Basis of Union envisions a church which continues to grow and change in response to a changing world.

Together, we seek "a continuing renewal" (Par. 1), understanding ourselves as "a pilgrim people, always on the way" (Par. 3), acknowledging that Christ "constitutes, rules and renews" us (Par. 4), and praying that "God will constantly correct us" (Par. 18). Even as we speak of church governance in the Basis of Union, we declare first that "the faith and unity of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church are built upon the one Lord Jesus Christ" (Par. 3), and that "Christ alone is supreme" (Par. 15).

Project timeline



A renewing church participates in the ongoing ministry of Christ which is the fulfillment and expression of the mission of God. Finally, the Basis of Union recognises prophetically that our church governance and laws are “always subject to revision in order that (we) may better serve the Gospel” (Par. 17).

Consistent with this call to continuing renewal that is at the heart of the movement, the Uniting Church throughout Queensland has discerned a focus on growth and renewal in this period. New commitments, including a church planting, replanting and revitalisation strategy, and a set of priorities for our collective work, have been adopted. A key focus area is encouraging healthy, thriving congregations in communities across the state. Both Presbytery, and Synod have a vital role to play, and the Synod’s commitments align with existing presbytery priorities in this area.

It is in light of this commitment to seeking a continuing renewal that this discussion paper is offered. It offers both a vision, and an invitation to explore new ways in which presbyteries can effectively fulfil their primary responsibility to exhort, stimulate, and encourage congregations, ministry agents and lay leaders to share in the ongoing ministry of Christ. Ensuring our presbyteries have appropriate capacity is a crucial in fostering vibrant congregations, faith communities, and lay and ordained ministry. These objectives are the primary purpose for the presbytery.

This paper explores ways in which presbytery priorities, relationships, resourcing, processes and composition can be refreshed to increase capacity for innovative, missional thinking and support congregations, faith communities and ministry leadership.

How to provide feedback

This document itself is not a proposal but a discussion paper exploring key issues, outlining some options to be further considered, inviting reflection and feedback. We invite you to join our dreaming and share your thoughts, ideas and possibilities of what we could do differently.

Feedback will be sought at each presbytery meeting in October and November 2025. Additionally, individual feedback in response to the questions raised in the document can be submitted through a survey to be released in October via **Uniting News**. Feedback will be accepted until November 30th, 2025.

You are also welcome to send feedback directly through your Presbytery, through the Presbytery Capacity Project Team at Cherry.Koshy@ucaqld.com.au or to contact the team to arrange a phone, online or in-person conversation.

Feedback will assist in the development of a proposal for consideration at the 39th Synod in October 2026. A preferred approach will be endorsed by Synod Standing Committee in early 2026 for discussion at each presbytery’s first meeting in the year. The proposal will then be finalised ahead of the Synod meeting.

SEPT 26 - OCT 26

TOWN HALL MEETINGS EXPLORING THE PROPOSAL

INVOLVES:
Presbyteries, Ministry agents, Lay leaders, Synod members

DECISION AT 39TH SYNOD

INVOLVES:
Synod members

OCT 26

NOV 26 - JUNE 27

TRANSITION

INVOLVES:
Synod Standing Committee

IMPLEMENTATION (IF CHANGE APPROVED)

INVOLVES:
All presbyteries

JULY 27

2. Background

Presbyteries across Queensland have faced significant challenges in recent years, affecting their ability to encourage and support congregations effectively. This is particularly true as they strive to help congregations and faith communities respond to a rapidly changing world. The decline in church attendance has led to the closure of congregations and a reduction in the number of ministry agents, increasing the vulnerability of presbyteries.

Some presbyteries with more staff have been able to provide greater support to congregations and faith communities, fostering innovation in church planting, church revitalisation and ministry with younger generations. However, these resources have not been spread equally across all the presbyteries.

At the same time, the church has clearly discerned and is acting on a call to growth and renewal. The Synod's renewal and growth strategy includes five strategic foundations – mission renewal and growth, flourishing presbyteries, forming leaders, fit-for-purpose governance, and stewarding resources. Additionally, the Synod approved the formation of two new funds oriented to renewal: the Church Renewal Fund, and Covenant Ministry Fund.

A new Synod-wide church planting, replanting and revitalisation strategy was agreed upon to support the ongoing work of congregations and presbyteries, with a commitment to a 20% increase in the number of congregations and faith communities over the next ten years.

Further efforts are underway to identify opportunities for development in other areas including ministry with younger generations, and cross-cultural and inter-cultural ministry.

The loss of capacity to maintain the presbytery functions and thereby contribute to the ongoing renewal of the church remains a central issue for the church in Queensland. In this environment of sustained

challenges, and the desire for renewal and growth, key issues for Presbyteries in fulfilling their responsibilities have been identified (see following page).

One strength within Queensland is the collaborative relationships between presbyteries, as well as between presbyteries and the Synod office and related bodies. The quality of these relationships is unique compared to some other Synod/presbytery relationships across Australia and creates opportunities to co-create renewed presbytery operational arrangements.

This strong collaboration has led to the presbytery capacity discussion. Over the last 12 months, Presbytery Ministers have explored the challenges facing presbyteries and envisioned potential new forms, functions, and resourcing models. These conversations have led to the conviction that the current model of presbytery operation in Queensland neither meets the church's needs now, particularly regarding the primary role of presbyteries to exhort, stimulate, and encourage healthy congregations and ministry, nor is it likely to provide sustained support for the church's renewal and growth in the foreseeable future.

This cohort of Presbytery Ministers strongly believes that a significant reshaping of presbyteries, focused on boosting capacity, is urgently needed.

The Presbytery Synod Interface group has requested the General Secretary and Synod Standing Committee to facilitate further discussion and develop a proposal for consideration by the 39th Synod in October 2026. This request, consistent with the ecclesiology and commitment of the Uniting Church to align its activities with its mission, and with the Synod's growth and renewal strategy, has led to the preparation of this discussion paper.

This discussion paper, along with the opportunity to provide feedback, precedes a collaborative process that will result in recommendations for consideration by the 39th Synod in October 2026.

Key issues for presbyteries



Discipleship vision

Helping congregations develop and implement a vision for their future that includes discipleship, sharing faith, fostering a healthy worshipping community, and commitment to serve their neighbours.

Leadership

Traditionally, presbyteries have relied on volunteer lay leaders and ministry agents to perform essential functions, including roles within committees and task groups. As the number of volunteers and ministry agents has decreased, some presbyteries have merged governance groups, and many are increasingly dependent on presbytery staff to perform functions previously undertaken by volunteer lay leaders or ministry agents. Reconsidering the operating models, leadership functions, staff roles, and composition of presbyteries may help identify and enhance leadership competency and capacity for each presbytery.



Compliance and administration

Governance, compliance, and administrative requirements have increased across the church, placing additional demands on presbytery staff, office-bearers, and governance groups as they support congregations. Effective and efficient resourcing and support for compliance and administration are critical.



Resourcing regional areas

As the broader community has evolved, so has the nature of the church. Presbyteries in regional Queensland have faced particular pressures in recent years, casting doubt on their future function. With the Church committed to being “active in every Queensland community”, supporting presbyteries in both regional and south-east Queensland is vital.



Declining resourcing, and heavy dependence on a single source of funding

Over the last decade, presbyteries have adopted collaborative funding approaches, such as the Combined Presbyteries Mission Pool (CPMP), to which all presbyteries contribute and from which core operations are supported. However, financial inequity between presbyteries remains, partly due to regional differences in the value of inherited property. Contributions from congregations to the CPMP have recently proven insufficient to fund all presbytery operations and our commitment to First Nations ministry. As a result, the fund has required support from the Synod office budget, and it has been some time since congregational contributions have supported the Synod office operating budget.



For reflection

How can presbyteries, at their best, contribute to the health of congregations and faith communities, and a renewed and growing church?

In your experience, what factors most impact the operation of presbyteries and their task to exhort and encourage congregations in their ministry?

3. Design principles and approach

In developing of a new approach to presbytery operations and capacity, we will follow an agreed set of design principles and parameters. These will guide the drafting and design of a proposal and implementation plan, addressing known or anticipated risks.

What is presbytery capacity?

The role of a presbytery is informed by the UCA's regulations. A high-capacity presbytery will effectively undertake its regulated responsibilities, including:

- Supporting healthy sustainable ministry
- Life and witness consultations
- Commitment to the Covenant with First Peoples and working with UAICC Queensland Regional Committee (Muth arrak)
- Governance committees with suitable and skilled people
- Adequate staffing for ministry and administration
- Financial stewardship and management
- Education and formation resourcing
- Property management
- Innovation, including church planting.

Capacity involves the competency of committees, office bearers and ministry staff, together with resources available to the presbytery (human, property, financial and systems). Presbytery capacity is therefore directly related to the competency amongst the leadership tasked with fulfilling the regulatory responsibilities of this council.

A season of renewal allows for an examination of the resources required by presbyteries to effectively engage in their oversight work. Resources required for the operational life of the presbytery include adequate ministry and administration staffing, financial sustainability, clear strategic direction, suitable property for presbytery office, activities and meetings.

Based on extract from "Presbytery Capacity Renewal Paper" – 38th Synod.

Design parameters

Elements of presbytery structure and operation subject to review and redesign may include:

- The number and composition of presbyteries
- Staffing and resourcing models
- Presbytery funding and financial models
- Operating models and working practices of presbytery governance bodies
- Internal presbytery structures, including the use of zones in larger, regional presbyteries
- The exercise, funding, and design of Synod office functions specifically aligned to supporting presbytery health, vitality, and effectiveness
- Any design must include detailed transition and implementation planning for the period after the 39th Synod.

Any design must include detailed transition and implementation planning for the period after the 39th Synod.

For reflection

What changes, if any, would you suggest to the design parameters described here?

Design principles

1

Led by the Spirit // Seeking renewal

- A response to the Holy Spirit leading the Church in Queensland toward renewal and growth
- Recognises presbyteries as primary partners in the renewal of congregations and faith communities, enabling revitalisation, church planting, replanting and innovation
- Incorporates prayerful discernment

Improves capacity of presbyteries

- Enhances the capacity of each presbytery to meet regulated responsibilities
- Reduces duplication of effort within and between presbyteries

2

3

Faithful to the Uniting Church

- Consistent with Basis of Union (incl Par. 15), constitution and regulations
- The Church is committed to ongoing renewal and open to correction by God

Invites whole church response

- Encourages other councils and entities of the church, including congregations, Synod, and Synod office, to make own changes in response
- Aware of, and aligned with objectives of Assembly Act2 process

4

Presbytery motivated

5

- Motivated by, and completed in collaboration with all presbyteries within the Synod
- Recommendations are based on, and address lived experiences in Queensland presbyteries
- Extensive, open and transparent collaboration and co-creation with each presbytery
- Draws lessons from experiences and approaches within other Synods
- Synod office involvement is at the invitation of presbyteries, via Presbytery Ministers

Forward focussed and sustainable

- Aligned with Synod strategy for renewal and growth, including church planting strategy and targets
- Presents a generational opportunity to build a new approach suited for (at least) the next decade and beyond
- Includes flexibility and scalability to respond to both current and emerging needs, including social change, changes to church capability/capacity, and changes due to Act2

6

For reflection

Which of these principles do you believe are most important? Why?

4. Current Queensland presbytery status

Currently there are seven presbyteries operating across Queensland. Established by the Synod per regulations, those presbyteries have a long history of gathering and supporting congregations, faith communities, ministry agents and lay leaders within their bounds. Over time there have been some changes to presbyteries, with the current arrangement in place since 2020 when the former Calvary and North Queensland Presbyteries merged to become Carpentaria Presbytery.

The seven existing presbyteries show a deep commitment to the congregations, faith communities, ministry agents and lay leaders within their bounds. Despite the challenges described here, there is a long history of productive work to encourage and equip congregations, identify and support lay and ministry leaders and fulfill the responsibilities of a presbytery within the Uniting Church system. The understanding of regional context, history, relationships between congregations, and commitment to worship, witness and service in local communities are strengths to be celebrated.

4a. Operating processes in Queensland presbyteries

Governance

Each presbytery within the Synod determines its own operating processes, principle and priorities. They decide their approach to governance and leadership within the framework provided by the Uniting Church regulations. Two presbyteries (Carpentaria and Central Queensland) operate a combined Presbytery Standing Committee and Pastoral Relations Committee model of governance, while the remaining presbyteries operate the three regulated governance bodies (Presbytery Standing Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee and Property Committee). Filling governance roles has increasingly become an issue, particularly in regional presbyteries where the number of congregational ministry agents and lay leaders has declined. This has resulted in increased demands on paid presbytery staff and a growing burden on a declining number of volunteers. Similar challenges also face some congregations, further increasing pressure on presbyteries.

Funding

The primary funding for the core operation of each presbytery comes from the Combined Presbyteries Mission Pool (CPMP). Congregations across the state contribute to this pool. Presbyteries collectively determine the distribution of CPMP funds to meet core operating costs. CPMP no longer contributes funding to

support Synod Office operations. Operating costs vary for each presbytery, and disbursements from CPMP are based on need, rather than on the contribution from congregations within each presbytery. Funding to CPMP has declined over time as congregational financial capacity has declined, and some congregations have closed. The fund is now insufficient to meet ongoing presbytery operating costs and support of First Nations congregations, requiring a contribution from the Synod office budget in recent years. Beyond CPMP, additional funding sources vary from presbytery-to-presbytery, including internal income sources, mission development fund accounts, and retained presbytery funds. The results is a range of operating and staffing models from presbytery to presbytery in accordance with both local priorities, and presbytery resource capacity, as outlined in 4(b) below.

There are financial inequities between presbyteries, based on several factors. First, the number and health of congregations vary widely between presbyteries. Second, there are inherent difference in property values for which the presbytery is beneficial owner. Thirdly, geography and related operating costs (such as travel) vary widely between presbyteries. The CPMP process has developed to assist with equity between presbyteries in terms of core operating costs, but these differences mean some presbyteries are able to independently fund and prioritise additional activities, while others cannot.

CPMP budget – FY 2025/26

Presbytery	FROM Congregations	TO Presbyteries	Funding Purpose
Brisbane Bremer	\$415,000.00	\$381,000.00	Core Operations
Central Queensland	\$238,830.00	\$258,000.00	Core Operations
Mary Burnett	\$330,000.00	\$310,000.00	Core Operations
Moreton Rivers	\$861,416.15	\$630,000.00	Core Operations, UAICC Congregation
South Moreton	\$850,596.00	\$385,000.00	Core Operations
The Downs	\$131,081.00	\$144,375.00	Core Operations
Carpentaria	\$163,732.00	\$975,096.00	Core Operations, UAICC Congregations
Total	\$2,990,655.15	\$3,083,471.00	

Staffing

Staffing models vary from presbytery-to-presbytery. Core funding includes cost of a presbytery minister (two in the case of Carpentaria Presbytery), plus administration officers, with further specialist staffing based on each presbytery's priorities. Demands on presbytery staff have increased significantly over recent years, driven by the decline in congregational capacity evident in some locations, and increasing compliance and administration demands, both external and internal to the church. Changes to the Synod office with the establishment of Presbytery Support Unit and Mission Accompanying Team may contribute to presbytery life, however those demands may continue to increase.

The role of Presbytery Minister has become increasingly important, not only within the life of each presbytery, but also in the wider leadership of the Uniting Church. As these wider leadership contributions have become more important, time demands on the incumbents have increased. The Presbytery Minister role, as currently exercised, is in danger of becoming unsustainable, and with increasingly limited capacity to effectively support congregations, faith communities, and lay and ordained leaders.

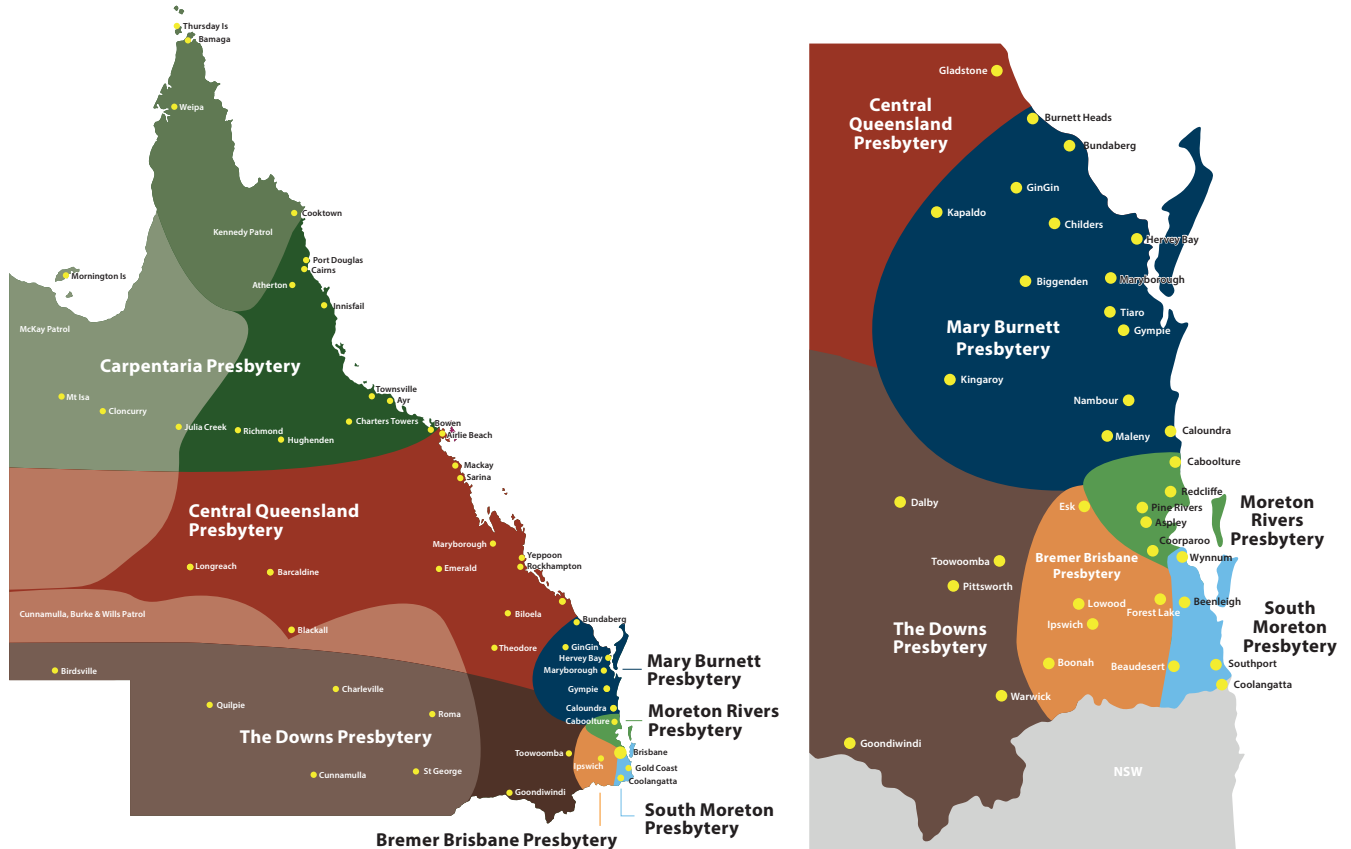
Zones

Some regional presbyteries use Zone groups to overcome the challenges of large geographical areas. Carpentaria, for example, uses four zones within the presbytery to help organise and facilitate pastoral care, congregational support, and the conduct of presbytery business. These include the three geographic zones of Northern, Southern, and Cape/Gulf, together with the non-geographic Muth Arrak Zone, which includes both urban and remote indigenous communities.

Muth Arrak – UAICC Queensland Regional Committee

Congregations and ministry leaders within Muth Arrak Zone of Carpentaria Presbytery, comprising the bulk of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress presence within Queensland, also relate to the Queensland Regional Committee of UAICC (Muth Arrak). These relationship between congregations, presbytery and Muth Arrak are vital, both in the current presbytery arrangement, and in any future presbytery re-shaping.

4b. Summary of existing seven-presbytery approach



Presbytery description

Presbytery	Description	# of Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	Total FTE Ministry Agents in Placement ²	Staff in Ministry Locations
Brisbane Bremer	Brisbane (South-West), Ipswich, to base of Great Dividing Range	28	19.1	10 (? FTE)
Carpentaria	Far North Queensland (Bowen to Cape)	28 (incl. 5 UAICC)	16.25 (incl. 5 UAICC)	0 (0 FTE)
Central Queensland	Proserpine to Gladstone, west to Longreach	19	9	0 (0 FTE)
Mary Burnett	Bundaberg, to Sunshine Coast	24	15.7	1 (? FTE)
Moreton Rivers	Brisbane (North), Redcliffe, Caboolture	39 (incl. 1 UAICC)	41.9 (incl. 1 UAICC)	6 (3.2 FTE)
South Moreton	Brisbane (South-East), Logan, Gold Coast	28	25.8	17 (? FTE)
The Downs	Toowoomba, Warwick, Darling Downs	16	10	0 (0 FTE)
Total	All Presbyteries	182	137.75	34 (?FTE)

Notes:

- As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
- In presbytery and/or congregation roles only. Excludes ministry agents in agency, Synod or Assembly roles. Staff in ministry locations shown separately.

Presbytery staffing

Role	Presbytery	Funding Source	Total FTE
Presbytery Ministers	All	CPMP	8
Presbytery Admin	All	CPMP	8.4
Youth/Children/YA	Moreton Rivers		1
Mission Specialist	Moreton Rivers	MRP	1
Mission Specialist	Bremer Brisbane (0.5 vacant)	Bremer, CPMP, Connect100	1.5
Pastoral Support	Moreton Rivers (Vacant)	MRP Funding	1
Total			20.9

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current trajectory of challenge to presbytery operations will likely continue Within the foreseeable future several presbyteries may lose the capacity to operate effectively, requiring intervention CPMP capacity to support presbytery operations will likely continue to degrade over time, requiring further funding inputs from other sources not easily identified Current staffing levels may decrease due to reduced CPMP No additional capacity or specialist staffing for presbyteries to support and equip congregations and faith communities for renewal is deployed Inequities between presbyteries will continue, likely worsening in the longer term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcing needs will require minimal change in the short term Minimal operational changes required in the short term Maintain existing network of relationships and contextual knowledge
<p>COMMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing with this approach, while an available option, is not recommended. Some presbyteries are experiencing increasingly limited capacity to contribute to the renewal of the church as outlined earlier Considering and making changes now, on our own terms and timeframe, is preferable to a situation arising in which one or more presbyteries are unable to function effectively, and we are forced to respond rapidly 	

For reflection

What have been the strengths of the current seven-presbytery model?

What do you believe are the biggest challenges to continuing with this approach? How could these be met?

5. Key drivers to energise presbytery capacity

To enhance the capacity of presbyteries to support, encourage and equip congregations and faith communities for the mission of God, we must consider the key drivers of presbytery capacity. Possibilities include:

Stewardship and generosity

A paper entitled *Theology of Stewardship* was received by the 38th Synod. The principles within this paper address how the Church stewards and deploys resources, including through presbyteries to support healthy congregations, faith communities and lay and ordained ministry:



- The Church as Steward, not Owner: “The church, as an exemplar of human flourishing, is called to manage, preserve and care for resources that ultimately belong to God.”
- Good stewardship facilitates human flourishing: “the church can facilitate worship through the responsible and thoughtful use of buildings, human resources and finances in numerous creative ways that will glorify God throughout Queensland”
- The Generosity of God: Decisions “should testify to the generous nature and open heart of God... stewardship extends beyond wealth and property, applying also to time, knowledge and talents.”
- Management and accountability: “The church is called to manage its resources wisely to ensure that finances are used responsibly to effectively widen the reach of God’s mission in local communities.”

Staffing and leadership

The number, skills, capacity and roles of presbytery staff are key drivers in enhancing the capacity of presbyteries. Crucial roles for presbytery tasks include:

- **Presbytery ministry staff:** Roles in formation and pastoral care, mission development, executive leadership, ministry with younger generations
- **Paid chair roles:** including within Zones in larger regional presbyteries
- **Administrative Staff:** Supporting congregations in areas such as administration, finance, compliance, property and safe ministry.

Consider establishing a standard core staff to ensure each presbytery has access to an agreed level of staffing and skills, providing effective support to congregations and faith communities may be considered. Additional specialist staff roles may vary from presbytery to presbytery based on contextual factors such as demography, geography, presbytery priorities and congregational capacity.



Governance/leadership groups and committees

The number, size and capacity of governance and leadership groups are key factors, including:

- Designing governance groups appropriate to the context, including meeting cadence and composition
- Defining tasks for each governance group, prioritising tasks set in constitution/regulations/by-laws and other work necessary for the health and vitality of the church
- Identifying and calling suitably skilled and gifted members and leaders for governance groups
- Using technology to enhance capacity of governance groups.



Congregation/minister/lay leaders in presbytery life

To effectively support congregations and faith communities, presbyteries require more than just paid staffing. The active participation of ministry agents, lay leaders and congregations in the life of the presbytery is vital. Involvement ideally includes:

- Membership of presbytery and active participation in Presbytery meetings
- Active and skilled membership of Presbytery committees, task groups, working groups
- Commitment to strong relationships between congregations and faith communities within presbytery.



Presbytery operations

The day-to-day operation of each presbytery, including how governance groups and staff operate and prioritise tasks, directly impacts the capacity of the presbytery. While each presbytery may develop elements in response to its context, the broad range of activity includes:

- Finance and property management, including each presbytery's financial and property matters, along with providing some level of advice or support to congregations and faith communities
- Administration including meeting and event management
- Safe Church training and compliance tasks
- Design and cadence of presbytery meetings
- Oversight of congregations and faith communities, including faith and witness consultations
- Oversight of placements, including participation in Synod Placements Committee
- Leadership and ministry development, including period of discernment
- Relationship with Synod office, i.e. Presbytery Support Unit and Mission Accompanying Team.



Wider church

As articulated in the Basis of Union and Constitution, presbyteries play a crucial role in the wider life of the Uniting Church as one of its four councils. A presbytery operating at full capacity will participate through:

- Building strong collaborative relationships with other councils, particularly including the Synod and its office and staff
- Appointing members to both Synod and Assembly
- Participation in Synod committees and governance groups including PSI, Placements, MC3
- Relationships with Synod and Assembly agencies, such as UnitingCare (including Connect100), Wesley Mission Queensland, Uniting World and Frontier Services.





Cross-presbytery collaboration

Intentionally building cross-presbytery collaboration to increase effectiveness, or efficiency, or both:

- For example, could functions be undertaken by one person or group on behalf of multiple presbyteries? Tasks such as financial management, property development, administration, faith and witness consultations, or support of church planting and leadership development.

Delegation of powers or operational tasks to Synod or other presbyteries

Under the regulations, presbyteries may delegate responsibilities to the Synod or other presbyteries:

- This could include delegation to Synod Standing Committee, or consideration of a “Lead Presbytery” model, where one or more presbyteries are delegated to undertake tasks on behalf of others
- The Synod office could be requested to undertake tasks on behalf of presbyteries. This may range from administrative or operational financial tasks, to supporting periods of discernment, ministry support tasks, or congregational mission support.



For reflection

How could the noted stewardship principles impact decisions about resourcing presbytery operations?

What do you believe would be the ideal staffing mix for each Presbytery (skills, roles, quantity)?

How will that mix lead to mission and renewal growth of the church?

6. Presbytery approaches for consideration

Presbytery ministers, with support from Synod office staff, have considered a range of alternate approaches to the current seven-presbytery model. Their primary focus was on enhancing the capacity of presbyteries to support the ministry and mission life of congregations and faith communities and to promote healthy ministry. The group identified two approaches for further consideration, as outlined below. Other approaches considered by the group are included at Appendix B for completeness.

Toowoomba and the Eastern Downs

One of the questions to be considered in any reconfiguration of presbyteries is the home presbytery for congregations in Toowoomba and the eastern Darling Downs (Crows Nest, Toowoomba and surrounds, Central Downs, Eastern Downs, Warwick/Killarney, Granite Belt).

In the two sample options presented in this paper, those congregations are included within presbyteries in the south-east of the state. Some reasons to consider this approach include:

- the projected growth of the greater south-east, including the eastern Downs, over the next 20 years
- the growing similarity in context between Toowoomba and the wider south-east
- balancing the number of congregations in each of the possible presbyteries.

Alternately, those congregations could be included within a regional presbytery in any reconfiguration. Some reasons to consider this approach include:

- the significance of Toowoomba and eastern Downs communities to the western Downs, both in terms of church relationships and wider culture
- congregations in this area, including Toowoomba and Warwick, currently have more in common with other regional cities (e.g. Townsville, Cairns, Gladstone), than Brisbane
- the availability of ministry agents in the Toowoomba/Warwick regions to provide support in any southern zone of a regional Presbytery.

A First Peoples perspective

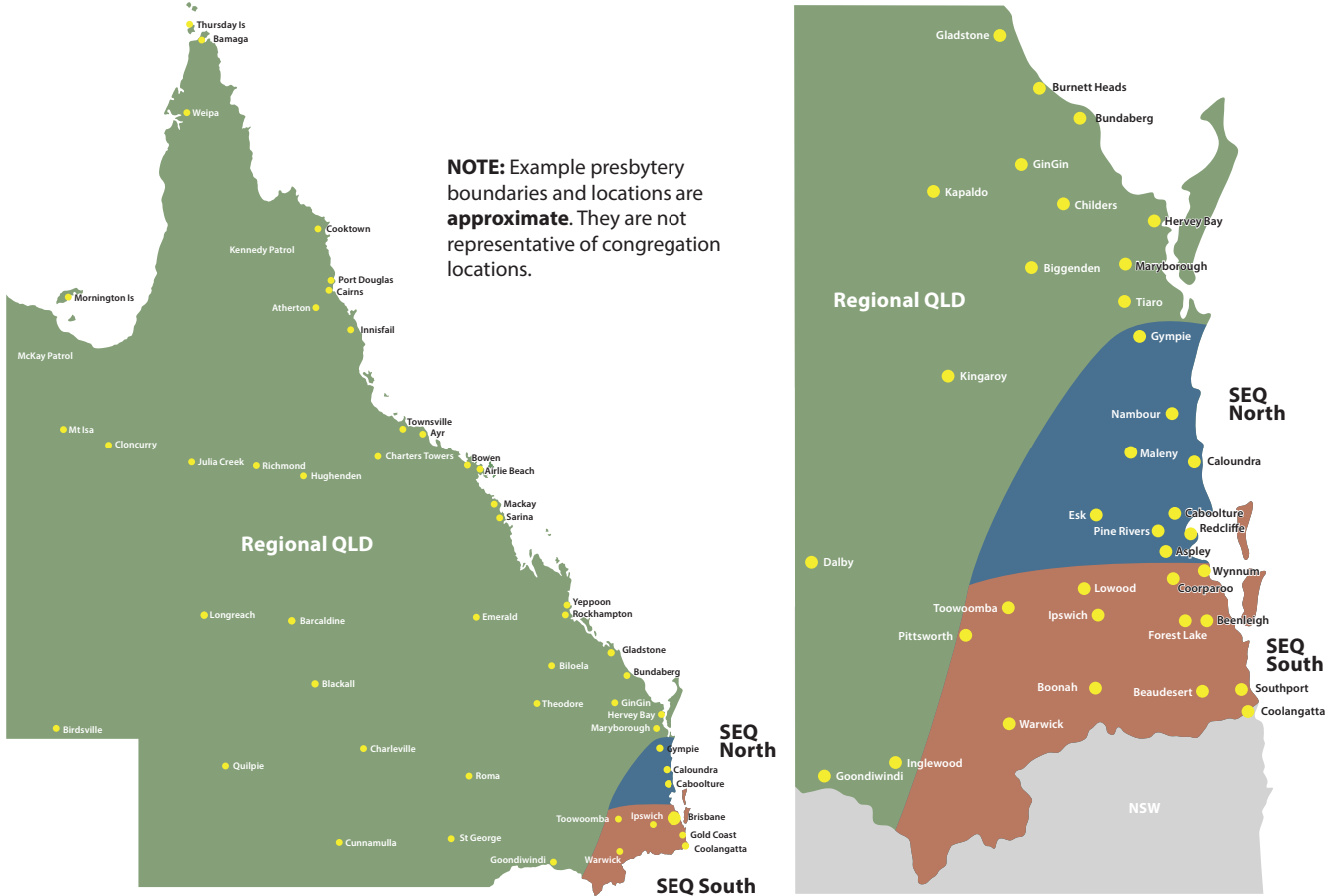
From a First Peoples and Covenanting perspective, it may be helpful to consider some of the historical and current cultural connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clan groups and nations across this region.

We could consider the continuing connections between the Wakka Wakka, Jarowair, Giabal, Burrungam, Gubbi Gubbi / Kabi Kabi and other peoples more broadly, in relation to the Bunya Nut Festival / Bunya Nut Dreaming. In 2022, the Wakka Wakka peoples were granted Native Title over the Bunya Mountains and they share the management responsibility of these significant lands with acknowledged historical custodians, through an established corporation, supported by the works of Bonye Buru Booburrgan Ngmmunge.

In understanding the deep cultural traditions that were sent into a time of sleeping across our state and are now being awakened; the church could acknowledge and support the way in which First Peoples organise their cultural and kinship lives today, in relation to this and other significant cultural gatherings and trading places.

Example one: three presbyteries

Re-aligning to three presbyteries within Queensland (one regional, two in south-east), with an increase in financial, volunteer and staff resources to provide additional support in mission, leadership development and formation for congregations and faith communities within each presbytery. This possible three-presbytery model requires the creation of three entirely new presbyteries, supported by a sustainable resourcing model. The regional presbytery example could also continue to utilise the zone model.



Presbytery Description & Size

Presbytery	Description	Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	FTE Ministry Agents ²
Regional Qld	All of Qld, outside the south-east areas noted below	63 (incl. 5 UAICC) <i>(Estimate 70 by 2035)</i>	32.75 (incl. 5 UAICC)
SEQ North	Central Brisbane north to Gympie	53 (incl. 1 UAICC) <i>(Estimate 65 by 2035)</i>	51.6 (incl. 1 UAICC)
SEQ South	Central Brisbane, south to border, west to and including Toowoomba, Warwick, Granite Belt	66 <i>(Estimate 78 by 2035)</i>	53.4
Total	All Presbyteries	182 <i>(Estimate 213 by 2035)</i>	137.75

Notes:

1. As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
2. Presbytery and congregational ministry agents only. Excludes agency, Synod and Presbytery ministry agents. Excludes staff in ministry locations.
3. Estimate based on for growth targets in Synod church planting and revitalisation.

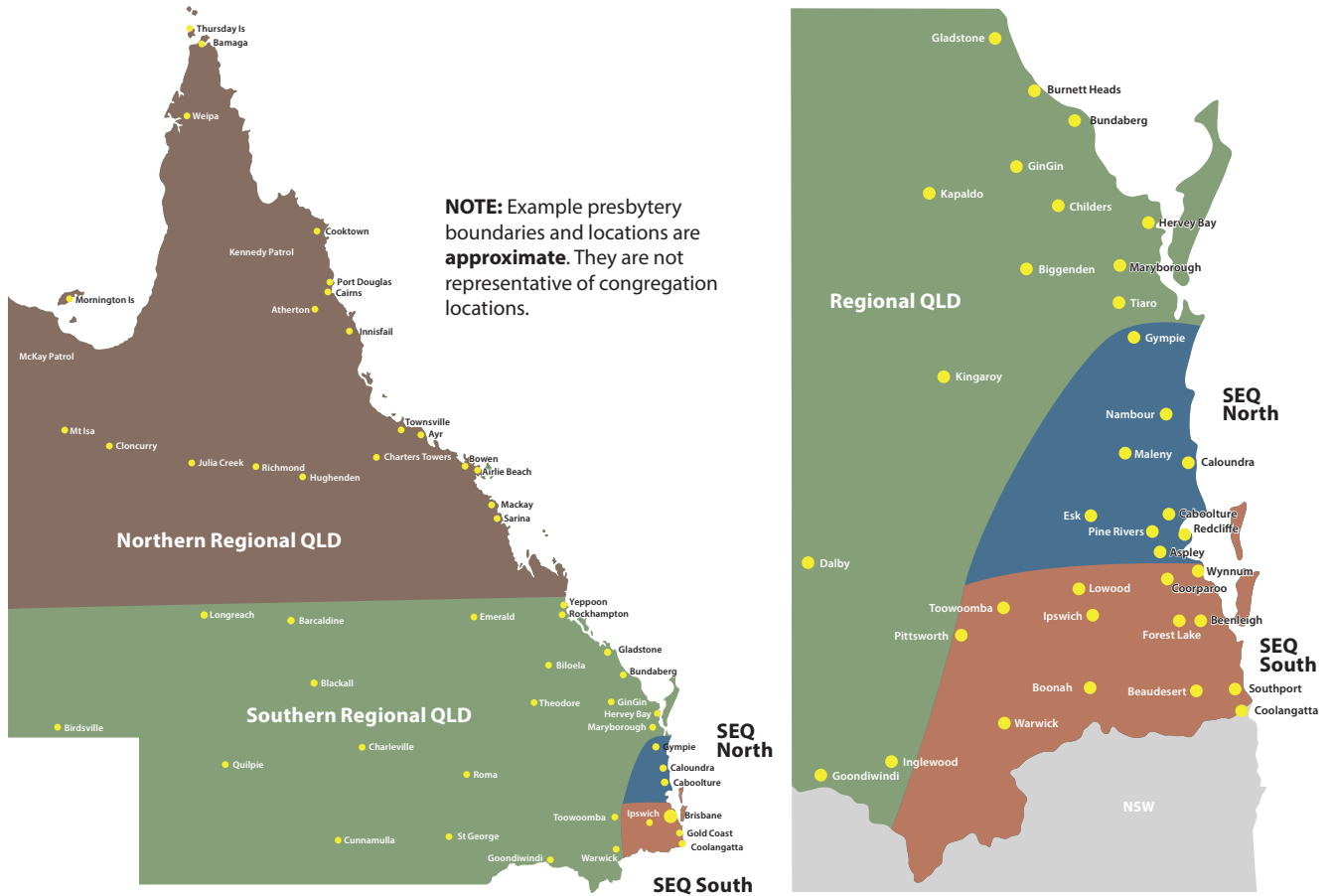
Staffing

To increase capacity, each of the proposed presbyteries could be provisioned with a core set of staff across various areas. First, presbytery ministry roles may include executive leadership, pastoral care and mission development. Second, administration and business-development roles tailored to presbytery needs. Third, paid chair roles, including zone chairs in regional presbyteries, could be considered.

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict within new presbyteries over operating models and culture • Inability to identify and call suitably skilled staff • Continued decline in short term further degrades CPMP capacity to fund • Regional Qld Presbytery covers both large geographic areas and relatively high number of congregations. Will require careful design of operating model and suitable investment in staffing and travel • Without including a change to the resourcing model, the Regional Qld Presbytery has relatively low internal financial and property resources, meaning it continues to be dependent on funding via CPMP model of common life and shared wealth • Regional Qld Presbytery potentially has lower ministry agents to congregation ratio • Regional, rural and remote congregations may feel “left out” through being established as one single presbytery covering 90% of the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates new resourcing and staffing opportunities • Concentrates executive and wider church leadership functions in fewer presbytery ministers, freeing others to work in mission and leadership development and formation areas • Reduced duplication of committees and functions with an increased available volunteer pool • Potential contribution to renewal, including long-term increases in CPMP capacity to fund • Relatively equal numbers of congregations across all presbyteries • Near cost-neutral in terms of staffing relative to the current model
<p>COMMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation will involve significant change management and costs, including the development of new presbytery culture and operating models in all presbyteries • This approach involves significantly altered regional relationships where existing presbyteries are split (Mary Burnett) 	

Example two: four presbyteries

Re-aligning to four presbyteries within Queensland (two regional, two in south-east), with increased financial and staff resources to provide additional support in mission, leadership development and formation for congregations and faith communities. This possible model requires the creation of four entirely new presbyteries. The regional presbytery example could also continue to utilise the zone model.



Presbytery Description & Size

Presbytery	Description	Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	FTE Ministry Agents ²
Northern Regional	From just north of Rockhampton, to Cape York, and west to border, including Bowen Basin, Mt Isa	37 (incl. 5 UAICC) <i>(Estimate 42 by 2035³)</i>	19.25 (incl. 5 UAICC)
Southern Regional	Rockhampton south, excluding SEQ areas outlined below. West to border areas and incl Longreach	26 <i>(Estimate 30 by 2035)</i>	13.5
SEQ North	Central Brisbane north to Gympie	53 (incl 1 UAICC) <i>(Estimate 67 by 2035³)</i>	51.6 (incl 1 UAICC)
SEQ South	Central Brisbane, south to border, west to and including Toowoomba, Warwick, Granite Belt	66 <i>(Estimate 78 by 2035³)</i>	53.4
Total	All Presbyteries	182 <i>(Estimate 213 by 2035³)</i>	137.75

Notes:

- As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
- Number of ministry agents in congregational and presbytery placements. Excludes agency, Synod and Assembly placements. Excludes staff in ministry locations
- Estimate based on for growth targets in Synod church planting and revitalisation.

Staffing

To increase capacity, each of the proposed presbyteries could be provisioned with a core set of staff across various areas. First, presbytery ministry roles may include executive leadership, pastoral care and mission development. Second, administration and business-development roles tailored to presbytery needs. Third, paid chair roles, including zone chairs in regional presbyteries, could be considered.

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to resource at funding levels if additional staffing requested/required. This is highly likely relative to both a three-presbytery model and the current seven-presbytery model • Conflict within new presbyteries over operating models and culture • Inability to identify and call suitably skilled staff • Continued decline in short term further degrades CPMP capacity to fund • The two regional Presbyteries have relatively low internal financial and property resources, meaning they may continue to be dependent on funding via CPMP model of common life and shared wealth without a change in the resourcing model • Regional presbyteries potentially have relatively low ministry agents to congregation ratio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates new resourcing and staffing opportunities • Concentrates executive and wider church leadership functions in fewer presbytery ministers, freeing others to work in mission and leadership development and formation areas • Potential contribution to renewal, including long-term increases in CPMP capacity to fund • Relatively equal numbers of congregations across all presbyteries • Reduced geographic spread in regional presbyteries relative to three-presbytery model
<p>COMMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide each presbytery with the same staffing skill mix, this option may require an increase in investment in staffing relative to a three-presbytery approach. The source of funding to meet that potential cost is unknown. • Implementation will require significant change effort and costs, including developing new presbytery culture and operating models in all presbyteries • Significantly altering relationships in areas where existing presbyteries are split (Central Queensland, Downs, Mary Burnett) • Consideration could be given to boundaries in the Toowoomba/Warwick/Stanthorpe/Crows Nest region to determine whether those congregations fall within either Regional or SEQ presbyteries 	

For reflection

For each of these two options:

- How could this approach facilitate higher capacity for presbyteries, in their support of congregations and faith communities?
- What appeals about this option?
- What are the biggest challenges you see with this option?
- Which (if either) do you warm to?

Broadly speaking, can you describe another option to be considered?

How do you believe the eastern Downs congregations are best connected in any presbytery reconfiguration?

7. Other factors

7.1 Resourcing Models

The paper outlines the current financial resourcing model that supports presbytery operations. A separate, parallel process is underway, to explore potential models for the future resourcing of presbytery operations. While related to the discussion paper, this topic is complex and necessary regardless of the future composition and operating models of presbyteries.

Therefore, a separate consultation paper focuses solely on developing a proposal for future presbytery resourcing. Feedback will be sought separately and will likely result in a parallel proposal to the 39th Synod.

7.2 Risks

In any change project of this nature, significant risks must be considered and mitigated. The key risks inherent in this work, particularly in any proposed change to form and function of presbyteries, include:

- Loss of history and continuity of relationship in redefined presbyteries
- Larger presbyteries may result in perceptions of:
 - Distant relationship between congregation/s and presbytery staff or committees
 - Lack of local insight into contextual issues by presbytery leadership
 - Challenge of distance in facilitating pastoral care
 - Lack of personal relationships with key leaders, including identifying future leaders
 - Challenges in managing local ecumenical relationships
 - Lack of local knowledge to support congregations and communities in disaster response
 - Increased travel costs for presbytery staff and presbytery meetings/events
 - Loss of commitment to presbytery life and function from congregations, ministers and leaders in a larger presbytery
- Increasing “professionalisation” (staff-dependency) of presbyteries
- Capacity to effectively fund the transition, implementation and operation of new presbytery structure without an increased draw on CPMP funding
- One or more of the new presbyteries does not grow to effectively function within a reasonable time frame
- Insufficient or insufficiently skilled ministry and other staff available to effectively lead in any new presbytery structure
- The new presbytery model does not reverse the decline in church attendance or congregational numbers
- The process of leadership formation is not aligned to or responsive enough to support the new presbytery structure

7.3 Synod Office Resourcing & Presbyteries

During 2023 and 2024, the Synod office was reorganised around a strategy for renewal and growth approved by the Synod Standing Committee. While this resulted in numerous changes to the structure and function of the Synod office, several specific changes relate to how presbyteries and congregations are encouraged, equipped and enabled:

Mission Accompanying Team (MAT)

The MAT was established specifically to provide or facilitate improved support to presbyteries and congregations in the areas of congregation revitalisation, ministry with younger generations, cross/multi/inter-cultural mission and church planting, all through a discipleship lens. MAT is a multi-disciplinary team, many of whom are in part-time MAT roles, alongside part-time ministry roles in congregational settings.

Presbytery Support Unit (PSU)

The PSU was established specifically to provide or facilitate improved support to presbyteries and congregations in areas such as administration, compliance, safe ministry, finance and property. PSU includes a representative notionally assigned to each presbytery, and in some instances (Carpentaria, Downs), working from a relevant regional location.

For reflection

Which risks do you think are most relevant? What other significant risks can you identify?

How could Synod office staff, including PSU and MAT, best contribute to presbytery capacity?



Appendix A:

Presbyteries in the Basis of Union, Constitution, & Regulations

The role of the presbytery as one of the four councils of the church is well described and defined in the Basis of Union, Constitution and Regulations of the Uniting Church.

Basis of Union

The primary description of the councils of the church, including the Presbytery, comes in Paragraph 15 of the Basis of Union. Extracted contents of this paragraph include (some text bolded for emphasis):

*The Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them. The Uniting Church therefore so organises its life that locally, regionally and nationally government will be entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing the gifts and graces with which God has endowed them for the building up of the Church. The Uniting Church is governed by **a series of inter-related councils, each of which has its tasks and responsibilities in relation both to the Church and the world.***

*The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in his Church, and that he may speak to it through any of its councils. **It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight.** Each council will recognise the limits of its own authority and give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel.*

To this end the Uniting Church makes provision in its constitution for the following:

(a) The Congregation...

(b) The Elders' or Leaders' Meeting...

*(c) The Presbytery (the district council) consists of such ministers, elders/leaders and other Church members as are appointed thereto, the majority of elders/leaders and Church members being appointed by Elders'/Leaders' Meetings and/or congregations, on a basis determined by the Synod. Its function is **to perform all the acts of oversight necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area for which it is responsible**, except for those agencies which are directly responsible to the Synod or Assembly. **It will in particular exercise oversight over the congregations within its bounds, encouraging them to strengthen one another's faith, to bear one another's burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus.** It will promote those wider aspects of the work of the Church committed to it by the Synod or Assembly.*

(d) The Synod (the regional council)...

(e) The Assembly (the national council)...

The Presbytery ...
will in particular exercise
oversight over the
congregations within its
bounds, encouraging
them to strengthen one
another's faith, to bear
one another's burdens,
and exhorting them to
fulfil their high calling in
Christ Jesus
Par. 15, Basis of Union

Constitution

The components of the Constitution most directly dealing with purpose, roles, responsibilities of the Presbytery are in Division 3, Part B:

FORMATION

25. A Presbytery shall be a council of the Church **formed or dissolved by the Synod which shall determine its name, fix its bounds and arrange for its first meeting.**

RESPONSIBILITIES

26. The Presbytery shall have such **oversight as is necessary to the life and mission of the Church in the area committed to it; it shall stimulate and encourage the Congregations** within the bounds, providing them with opportunities for counsel in the strengthening and assistance of one another and in their participation in wider aspects of the work of the Church. The Presbytery shall also have such further responsibilities as may be assigned to it by the Assembly or Synod and may do such other things as are consistent with the purposes of the Church, not being the exclusive responsibility of any other council or body within the Church.

MEMBERSHIP

27. The members of the Presbytery shall be such Ministers and persons in other ministries as may be prescribed, and such confirmed lay members as are elected to represent the Congregations within the bounds and as may be otherwise appointed together with such confirmed lay members as may be prescribed. The lay members of the Presbytery shall be not fewer in number than the ministerial members, and the lay persons elected to represent the Congregations shall be not fewer than half the total number of lay members.

OFFICERS

28. The Presbytery shall elect a Chairperson and other officers as may be necessary.

MEETINGS

29. The Presbytery shall meet at such intervals as may be prescribed, and at such other times as it may determine.

COMMITTEES AND DELEGATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

30. The Presbytery shall appoint a Standing Committee and may appoint other committees or other bodies for such purposes and for such term as it may determine and may assign to them or to other councils of the Church such of the responsibilities of the Presbytery as may be so delegated for the better fulfilment of those responsibilities.

OTHER PARTS

A Presbytery may make rules not inconsistent with this Constitution or with any relevant Regulations and by-laws prescribing all matters which are required, permitted, necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to the Constitution in respect of all matters within the oversight and responsibility of the Presbytery.

Regulations

The Regulations of the Uniting Church define and describe in detail the tasks and operations of the Presbytery. There are extensive regulations dealing with the presbytery, including:

- Regulation 3.1.3: The Presbytery
 - o (a, b, c) define the pastoral and administrative oversight of all Ministers
 - o (d, n, q) define the oversight of all Congregations within the bounds
 - o (f, g & h) define the selection, oversight and ordination of candidates
 - o (l, j, k, l, m, & r) define the recognising specified ministries and oversight of ministry
 - o (e, o, p, s) define the other responsibilities incl participation in wider work of church, administration, property, reporting etc
- 3.1.4: Consultations on life and witness of a congregation
- 3.3.4 Membership of the Presbytery
- 3.3.5 Associate Members of the presbytery
- 3.3.6 Terms of Appointment of members of the Presbytery
- 3.4.6 Formation of a Presbytery
- 3.4.7 Dissolution or Alteration of the Bounds of a Presbytery
- 3.5.4 Meetings of the Presbytery
- 3.5.5 Special Meetings of the Presbytery
- 3.6.2 Officers of the Presbytery
- 3.7.2 Presbytery Committees
- 3.7.3 Pastoral Relations Committee
- 4.2.2 Property delegation to presbytery
- 4.3 Presbytery property committee
- 4.5 property other than congregational property
- 5.4.2 Discipline responsibilities of the presbytery
- 5.4.3 discipline responsibilities of PRC

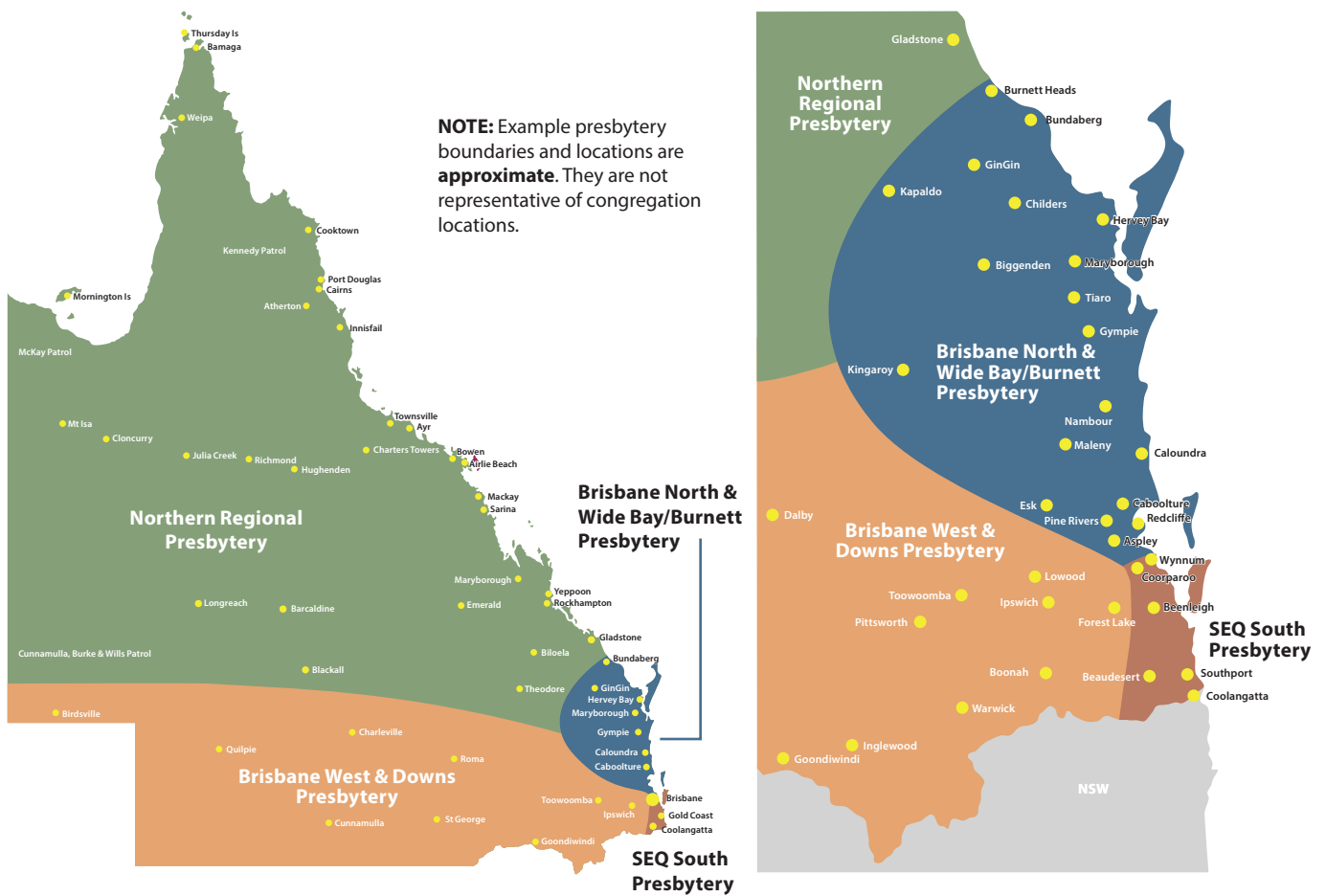
For reflection

As the Church responds to God's call to renewal, what aspects of the presbytery's life and activity described in the Basis of Union, Constitution, or Regulations are most vital?

Appendix B: Alternate presbytery approaches considered

Example three: alternate four presbytery model (“merger” version)

Re-align to four presbyteries within Queensland (one regional, three taking in parts of Brisbane, plus southern regional Queensland), with an increase in financial and staff resources to provide additional support in mission, leadership development and formation. This proposed 4-presbytery model is based on the approach of merging existing presbyteries to form three new presbyteries plus the existing South Moreton Presbytery.



Presbytery description & size

Presbytery	Description	Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	# Ministry Agents
Northern Regional	Covers existing Carpentaria and Central Qld Presbytery areas	47 (incl 5 UAICC)	25.25 (incl 5 UAICC)
Brisbane North & Wide Bay/Burnett	Covers largely the existing Mary Burnett and Moreton Rivers Presbytery areas*	57 (incl 1 UAICC)	50.5 (incl 1 UAICC)
Brisbane West & Downs	Covers existing Bremer Brisbane and Downs Presbytery areas	44	29.1

SEQ South	Covers largely the existing South Moreton Presbytery*	34	33.5
Total	All Presbyteries	182	138.35

Notes:

1. As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
2. Includes ministry agents in presbytery and congregational placements. Excludes Synod, Assembly and agency placements. Excludes staff in ministry locations.

Staffing

To increase capacity, each of the proposed presbyteries could be provisioned with a core set of staff across various areas. First, presbytery ministry roles may include executive leadership, pastoral care and mission development. Second, administration and business-development roles tailored to presbytery needs. Third, paid chair roles, including zone chairs in regional presbyteries, could be considered.

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to resource at funding levels for the additional staffing required, relative to three-presbytery model. • Conflict within new presbyteries over operating models and culture • Inability to identify and call suitably skilled staff • Continued decline in short term further degrades CPMP capacity to fund • Does not resolve financial inequities – particularly for Northern Regional Presbytery, leaving it with relatively low internal financial and property resources and continued dependence on CPMP approach • Northern regional presbytery has relatively low ministry agents to congregation ratio and capacity constraints may quickly re-emerge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates new resourcing and staffing opportunities • Concentrates Executive leadership functions and tasks in fewer Presbytery ministers, freeing others to work in mission and leadership development and formation areas • Mainly requires existing whole presbyteries to join to form new presbyteries, easing path to establishing new process and operating models • Potential contribution to renewal, including long-term increases in CPMP capacity to fund • Relatively equal numbers of congregations across all presbyteries, with exception of SEQ South

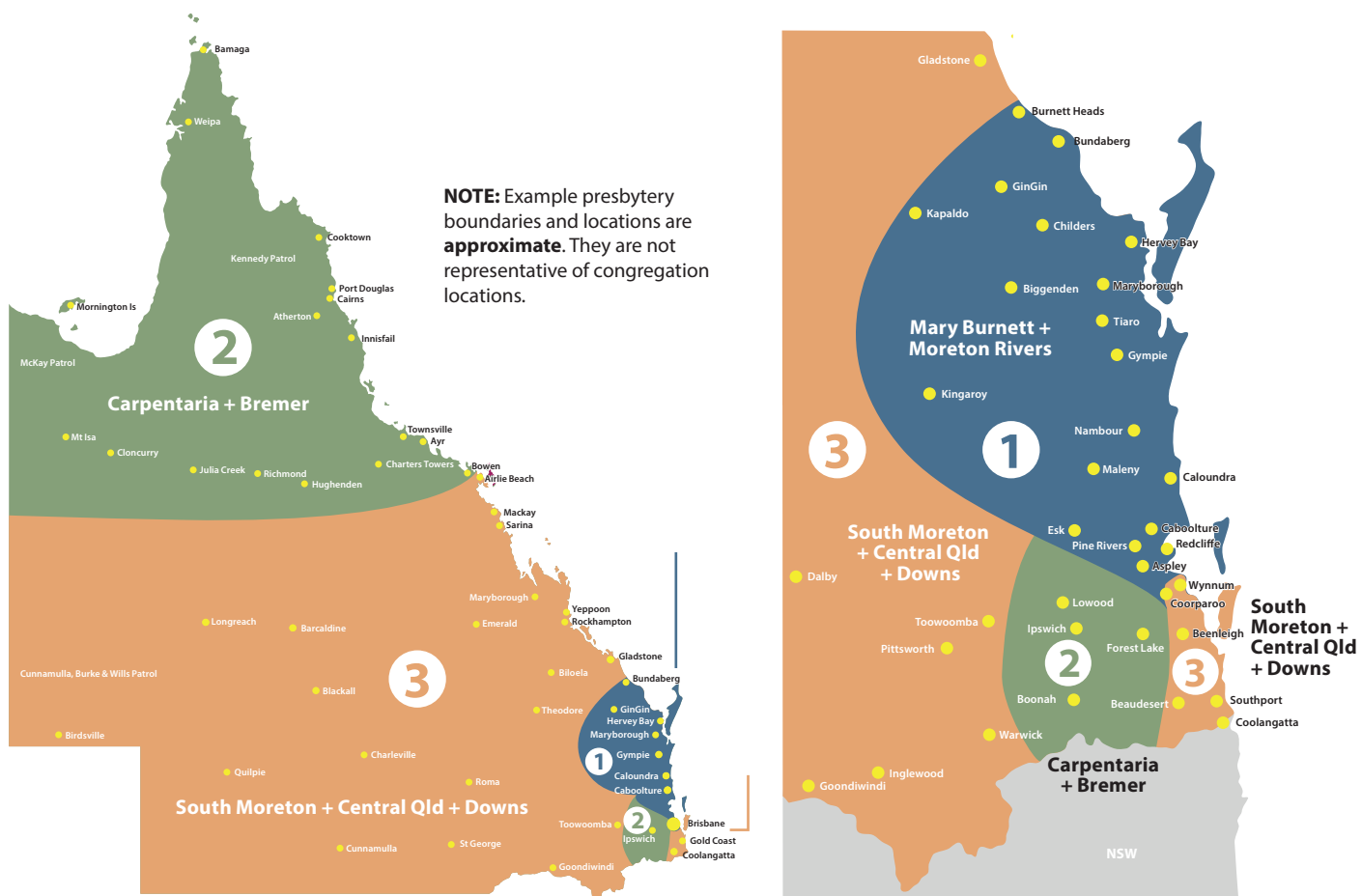
COMMENTS

- Not recommended for further consideration due to substantially increased costs relative to three-presbytery model
- Implementation would involve significant implementation effort and costs, including developing new presbytery culture and operating models in three of four presbyteries
- Altered relationships in areas where existing presbyteries are split (Moreton Rivers/South Moreton)

Example four: three presbytery, non-contiguous approach

Re-aligning to three presbyteries within Queensland, based on the merging of existing presbyteries to include metropolitan, coastal and rural contexts. In this model the proposed presbyteries are not geographically contiguous. This design is based largely on:

- Merging existing presbyteries to form the new presbyteries
- Including metro, regional/coastal and rural areas in each presbytery, informed by NSW/ACT approach
- As near to equal number of congregations per presbytery as possible.



Presbytery description & size

Presbytery	Description	Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	# Ministry Agents ²
Pres 1	Mary Burnett + Moreton Rivers	63 (incl 1 UAICC)	57.1 (incl 1 UAICC)
Pres 2	Bremer + Carpentaria	56 (incl 5 UAICC)	34.35 (incl 5 UAICC)
Pres 3	South Moreton + Central Qld + Downs	63	48
Total	All Presbyteries	182	139.45

Notes:

1. As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
2. Includes ministry agents in presbytery and congregational placements. Excludes Synod, Assembly and agency placements. Excludes staff in ministry locations.

Staffing

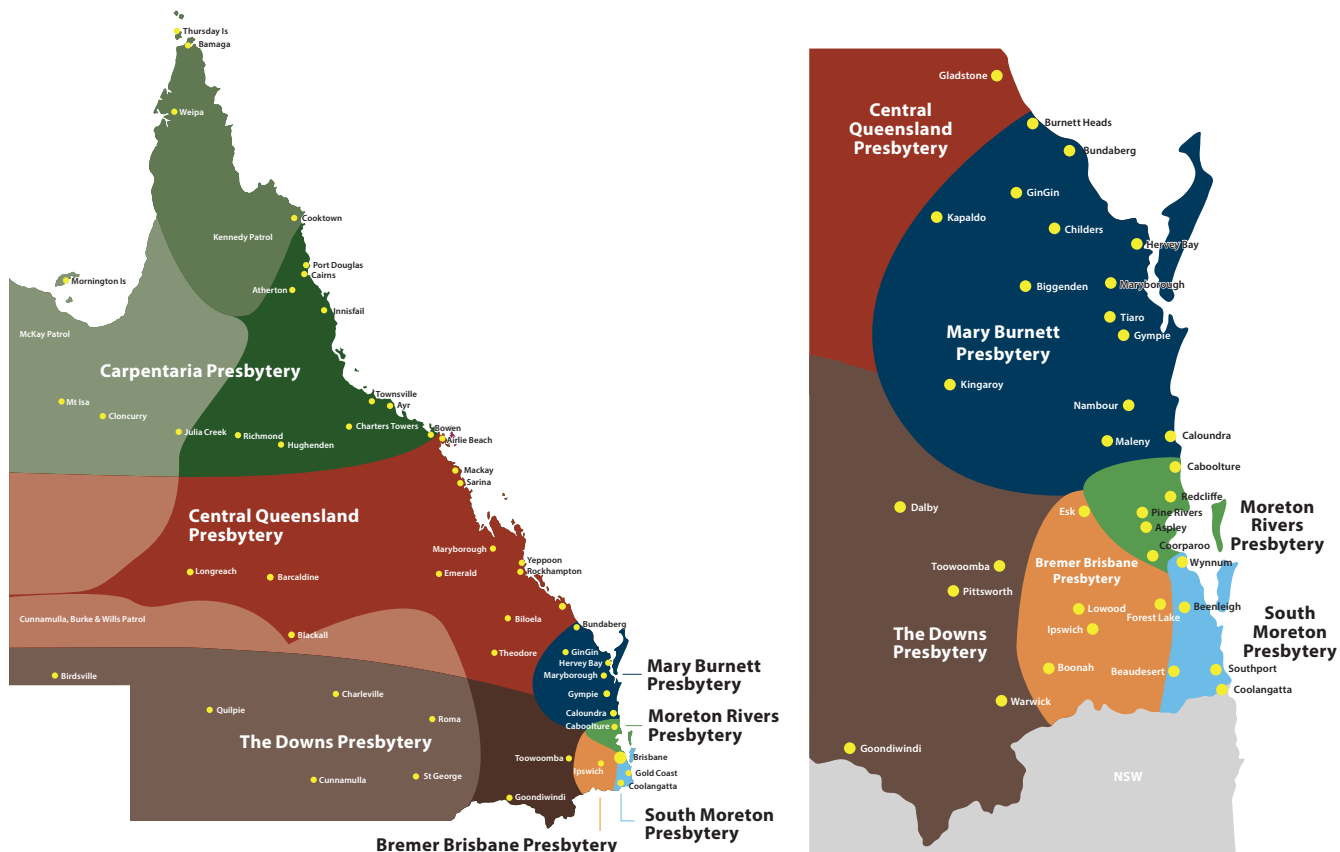
To increase capacity, each of the proposed presbyteries could be provisioned with a core set of staff across various areas. First, presbytery ministry roles may include executive leadership, pastoral care and mission development. Second, administration and business-development roles tailored to presbytery needs. Third, paid chair roles, including zone chairs in regional presbyteries, could be considered.

Assessment

- Implementation requires significant implementation effort and costs including developing new presbytery culture and operating models in all presbyteries
- Significant difficulty in developing culture and operations in non-contiguous presbyteries #2 and #3

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incompatibility of congregational community culture in non-contiguous presbyteries #2 and #3 • Inability to resource at funding levels required for additional staffing and travel • Conflict within new presbyteries over operating models and culture • Inability to identify and call suitably skilled staff • Continued decline in short term further degrades CPMP capacity to fund • Particular challenges for operation of non-contiguous presbyteries #2, #3, including high operating costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates new resourcing and staffing opportunities • Centralises Exec leadership in fewer Presbytery ministers, freeing others to work in mission and leadership development and formation areas • Each presbytery has metro, regional/coastal and rural areas • Each presbytery has funding/resource strength of a SEQ base • Mainly requires existing whole presbyteries to join to form new presbyteries, easing path to establishing new process and operating models • Potential contribution to renewal, including long-term increases in CPMP capacity to fund • Relatively equal numbers of congregations across all presbyteries
<p>COMMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is not recommended for further consideration due to both the complexity of operating models, and potentially non-compatible culture in non-contiguous presbyteries 	

Example five - current seven presbytery approach with additional staff resourcing



Presbytery description

Presbytery	Description	Congregations & Faith Communities ¹	# Ministry Agents ²
Brisbane Bremer	Brisbane (South-West), Ipswich, to Toowoomba range	28	19.1
Carpentaria	Far North Queensland (Bowen to Cape)	28 (incl. 5 UAICC)	16.25 (incl. 5 UAICC)
Central Queensland	Proserpine to Gladstone, west to Longreach	19	9
Mary Burnett	Bundaberg, to Sunshine Coast	24	15.7
Moreton Rivers	Brisbane (North), Redcliffe, Caboolture	39 (incl. 1 UAICC)	41.9 (incl. 1 UAICC)
South Moreton	Brisbane (South-East), Logan, Gold Coast	28	25.8
The Downs	Toowoomba, Warwick, Darling Downs	16	10
Total	All Presbyteries	182	137.75

Notes:

1. As listed in Synod contact database. Multi-site congregations listed as one congregation.
2. Includes congregational and presbytery ministry placements only. Excludes Synod, Assembly and agency placements.

Staffing

This approach would, by design, require significant additional staffing to provision an expanded range of staff roles that may encompass executive leadership, pastoral care and mission development. Second, administration and business-development roles specific to presbytery needs. Third, paid chair roles (including zone chairs in regional presbyteries) could be considered.

Assessment

- Implementation is relatively simple, requiring only the recruitment of additional staff and realignment of staffing in presbyteries significantly impacted (all except Moreton Rivers)

CHALLENGES AND RISKS	STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addition of staff to existing presbyteries not guaranteed to materially alter current challenges – particularly in presbyteries where other resourcing is limited and ministry agent/ congregation ratio is low (Downs, CQ, Mary Burnett initially) • Presbytery resourcing needs are significantly increased to cover additional staffing. CPMP will not have capacity to support this additional need, therefore requiring external input. The source for this additional funding is not obvious • This approach does not resolve other presbytery issues/concerns • Does not provide other specialist staff such as Business Managers suggested in both 3 and 4-presbytery approaches • Does not address governance and other challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively simple implementation • Offers additional staff resourcing to most presbyteries, almost all of whom would be focus on support of congregations, faith communities and ministry agents
<p>COMMENTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This approach is not recommended due to substantial cost increases, with uncertain outcomes and failure to address other significant presbytery capacity issues 	

Appendix C:

Other synods & Assembly Act2

Other Synods have responded to similarly challenging contexts for presbyteries with a range of approaches. The direction of the national Assembly is also important with respect to the review of church governance built into the ongoing Act2 process. While a review of outcomes of each of the Synod's approaches is outside the scope of this document, awareness of different decisions and the factors involved may be helpful.

NSW & ACT

In July 2025, the Synod of NSW/ACT agreed to move from 12 presbyteries to three, commencing from July 2025. The approach agreed includes the formation of three new geographic presbyteries, each of which includes parts of Sydney, regional cities and rural/remote areas. The three new presbyteries fan out from the central Sydney area (northern, central/west and southern respectively). The decision was reached by the Synod after an intentional development process. Implementation involves significant increases in staffing, financial investment and a cost-sharing approach between presbyteries.

Over the past ten years, several regional presbyteries in NSW/ACT reached a point where ongoing operation was not possible. An urgent intervention program was designed and implemented, referring powers of each presbytery in question to the Synod Standing Committee. This intervention, while sustaining the presbyteries in the short term, was not suitable for ongoing use.

Victoria & Tasmania

Nearly 20 years ago, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania moved from 12 presbyteries to eight, including seven in Victoria, plus the Presbytery of Tasmania. Changes were made to allow for significant increases in staffing with a standard model of three full-time presbytery ministers for each presbytery established. Roles included focus on pastoral care, mission and education and administration. An emphasis was placed on relationships between presbyteries. That arrangement largely continues today, with contextual changes to staffing and resourcing in some presbyteries.

South Australia

Having earlier moved from seven presbyteries to a single presbytery model (2005), in recent years the Synod of South Australia has reverted to three presbyteries. One is a non-geographic presbytery, while two cover geographic regions of the state. Each congregation freely chose to participate either in the single non-geographic presbytery, or the appropriate geographic presbytery. The non-geographic presbytery was established largely based on theological convictions of member congregations/ministry agents in the period after the 2018 Assembly and its decisions on marriage. Read the history [here](#).

Western Synod

The Synod of Western Australia has operated on a single presbytery model over an extended period of time. In recent years, efforts have been made to further distinguish between the functions and responsibilities of presbytery and synod after the two became increasingly entangled. The Synod/Presbytery operates with capacity limitations relative to Queensland.

Northern Synod

The Northern Synod operates with two presbyteries. The Northern Regional Council of Congress consists of 28 primarily indigenous congregations. The Pilgrim Presbytery of Northern Australia consists of 15 primarily non-indigenous congregations across the Synod. Both cover essentially the same geographic area – encompassing the full bounds of the Synod.

Assembly & Act2

In 2020, the national Assembly commenced the Act2 process, an invitation to every council of the church to work to discern the future for the Uniting Church. At the 17th Assembly, the work of Act2 resulted in the adoption of new vision statements for the future of the church and the establishment of two new national commissions.

One of these, the Commission for Governance, Resourcing and Administration will “undertake a feasibility study related to the national structure of the Uniting Church, investigating the consequences, risks and opportunities of both a three-council and a four-council model.” This body of work is of relevance to the Queensland conversation on presbytery capacity (and vice versa). Any changes to presbytery approach in Queensland can feed into the Act2 discernment process but should also be undertaken with awareness that further changes to the structure of the church may be forthcoming in the years ahead.

Appendix D:

Terms used in this document

Throughout this document we have opted to use the broadest meaning of several terms. For clarity and convenience, the terms and the meaning ascribed to them within this document are:

- **ACT2:** Project of the National Assembly, assessing the future shape and priorities of the Uniting Church. Act2 is described in brief in Appendix C
- **CPMP:** The Combined Presbyteries Mission Pool is a shared funding arrangement supporting the operation of presbyteries throughout Queensland.
- **Ministry Agents:** A term encompassing Ministers of the Word, Deacons, and Pastors serving in ministry placements within Queensland
- **PRC:** Pastoral Relations Committee, a regulated governance committee of the Presbytery
- **PSC:** Presbytery Standing Committee, a regulated governance committee of the Presbytery
- **PSI:** Presbytery/Synod Interface – a regular meeting of presbytery representatives with senior leaders from the Queensland Synod and its office, UnitingCare Queensland and Wesley Mission Queensland
- **UAICC/Muth Arrak:** Muth Arrak is the Queensland regional committee of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
- **MCCRG:** The Synod's Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group. A clearinghouse of ideas, resources and relationships with multi-cultural and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) congregations and faith communities within the Synod.