

New Presbyteries Information Paper

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Executive Summary

This document provides a high-level proof of concept, outlining possible ways in which the new presbyteries proposed for consideration by the 39th Synod could work in practice. It clearly delineates between the basic requirements the Synod can determine in establishing new presbyteries, and the myriad of operating decisions and policies that are rightly the decision of each new presbytery.

The paper outlines issues and potential models for staffing, groups of congregations, delegations and office and administrative tasks. It also explores potential agenda items for the first meeting of each new presbytery. In each case, example solutions are presented for presbytery consideration. These solutions are not for Synod decision.

1. Introduction: A Proof of Concept

The 39th Queensland Synod of the Uniting Church will consider a General Proposal to reshape presbytery life, operating models and priorities. Included in that General Proposal is a re-alignment from seven existing presbyteries to three new presbyteries.

The Synod, under Regulation 3.5.6, is charged with establishing new presbyteries, setting their name and bounds, arranging first meetings, nominating a chairperson, and other things that meet, in the words of the regulations, the basic requirements of each new Presbytery.

The proposal to restructure into three new presbyteries has prompted considerable discussion regarding the practical operation and governance of the proposed arrangements. This has been especially true of the proposed Greater Regional Queensland Presbytery, whose extensive geographic footprint would cover a substantial portion of Queensland and present unique opportunities and challenges.

This document sits alongside the General Proposal to help answer some of those questions. The General Proposal itself addresses the Synod's responsibilities to establish the presbyteries and meet their basic requirements, while this document attempts to outline ways in which the new presbyteries, if established, *might* function in practice.

All the content of this document relates to matters that are rightly the decision of each Presbytery, not the decision of the Synod. This document is therefore intended to be simply a proof of concept; a description that demonstrates some ways in which the new presbyteries *might* operate. It is not a proposal, and the matters within it are not for the decision of the Synod. Members of the Synod are encouraged to view this document in that light: a proof-of-concept exploring matters that will ultimately be for the decision of each new presbytery.

The document explores topics such as the Presbytery's approach to governance, staffing, delegations, policies, office and administration. Again, each of these are matters for presbytery decision, and outlined here simply to show that the approach to three new presbyteries is a viable, achievable model.

The document also intentionally excludes some matters. It is not a detailed operational design, nor a detailed transition plan. It does not propose names or identities of staff or office bearers, or

detailed position descriptions. All of these matters will be given further consideration during transition and implementation planning (pending the decisions of the Synod) and ultimately by each new presbytery in its startup phase.

2. Presbytery Responsibility

The General Proposal to be considered by the 39th Synod addresses only the matters covered under Regulation 3.4.6, including, where appropriate, delegating authority to the General Secretary. The proposal addresses:

- The names of the new presbyteries (including a mechanism for each presbytery to choose its own name once established)
- Bounds of the new presbyteries
- Mechanism to determine the time and place of its first meeting
- Mechanism to meet the basic requirements to establish a new presbytery including interim staffing, high-level budget, transfer of financial and property resources, and the appointment of a person to convene, constitute and preside over the presbytery until it elects a Chairperson.

Beyond those basic matters that serve to establish the presbyteries, all other decisions are the regulated responsibilities of each new Presbytery. Those responsibilities include oversight of ministers, congregations and faith communities, promoting the wider work of the church, selection and oversight of candidates, ordinands and lay preachers, matters relating to placements, administration and other matters as prescribed by the Synod. As outlined earlier, it would be inappropriate for the Synod to make decisions on behalf of the Presbytery related to the ongoing exercise of these responsibilities.

3. Staffing Options

The General Proposal authorises the General Secretary to appoint interim ministry and administration staff for each Presbytery, on a short-term and/or supply basis until such time as the presbytery determines its staffing. The proposal outlines a staffing model upon which the three-presbytery design is based, in order to achieve the desired outcome of more effectively supporting congregations and leaders for the growth and renewal of the church. Ultimately, however, each Presbytery will discern its own staffing requirements within the budget process under the related Presbytery Resourcing Proposal.

Every effort should be made to ensure staff are distributed geographically across each Presbytery. Consideration could be given to whether a physical office or a hybrid working arrangement is most suitable, given the different contexts within each proposed presbytery.

In the short term, total staff size available is:

- Greater Regional Queensland Presbytery: Up to six full-time-equivalent (FTE) ministry and two FTE administrative staff
- Wide Bay Brisbane Presbytery: Up to five FTE ministry and two FTE administrative staff
- Southern Queensland: Up to five FTE ministry and two FTE administrative staff

Within this total staff capacity, a potential staff model is:

Greater Regional Queensland Presbytery

Role	Responsibilities
Presbytery Minister (Strategic)	• Team Leader • Strategic Leadership • Synod Liaison • Presbytery Standing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Mission Development)	• Mission planning • Church Planting • Renewal and revitalisation • MC3 and Synod MAT Liaison • Congregation Life and Witness Consultations • Liaise with congregational groups • Presbytery Mission Resourcing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Pastoral Formation)	• Pastoral care • Pastoral Relations Committee • Uniting Formation Network liaison • Continuing Education incl Phase 3 • Period of Discernment • Placements liaison • Ministry vitality of call • Discipline/ Complaints/ Concerns
Presbytery Minister (Younger Generations)	• Coordinate and support Presbytery younger generations initiatives

	• Congregational support for younger generations ministry and leaders • Synod younger gen liaison
Presbytery Chair	• Undertake Presbytery Chairperson duties, likely on a part-time basis.
Group Coordinators	• Coordinate groups of congregations • Pastoral care • Support congregation consultations and ministry vitality of call processes, participate or chair JNCs Likely on a part-time basis.
Remote Ministry Specialist	• Coaching and support for congregations in remote and isolated settings • Liaison with Remote Area Bush Chaplaincy
Administration Lead	• Office Manager • Synod Liaison via PSU • Exec Support for Ministry Team
Administration Officer	• Administration Functions • Safe Church administration • Event and meeting organisation

Wide Bay Brisbane Presbytery

Role	Responsibilities
Presbytery Minister (Strategic)	• Team Leader • Strategic Leadership • Synod Liaison • Presbytery Standing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Mission Development)	• Mission planning • Church Planting • Renewal and revitalisation

	• MC3 and Synod MAT Liaison • Congregation Life and Witness Consultations • Liaise with congregational Groups • Presbytery Mission Resourcing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Pastoral Formation)	• Pastoral care • Presbytery PRC • Uniting Formation Network liaison • Continuing Education incl Phase 3 • Period of Discernment • Placements liaison • Ministry vitality of call • Discipline/ Complaints/ Concerns
Presbytery Minister (Younger Generations)	• Coordinate and support Presbytery younger generations initiatives (eg Easter Madness and Day Camp) • Congregational support for younger generations ministry and leaders • Synod younger gen liaison
Presbytery Chair	• Undertake Presbytery Chairperson duties, likely on a part-time basis.
Group coordinators	• Coordinate groups of congregations • Pastoral care • Support congregation consultations and ministry vitality of call processes, participate or chair JNCs • Likely on a part-time basis.
Administration Lead	• Office Manager • Synod Liaison via PSU • Exec Support for Ministry Team
Administration Officer	• Administration Functions • Safe Church administration • Event and meeting organisation

Southern Queensland Presbytery

Role	Responsibilities
Presbytery Minister (Strategic)	• Team Leader • Strategic Leadership • Synod Liaison • Presbytery Standing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Mission Development)	• Mission planning • Church Planting • Renewal and revitalisation • MC3 and Synod MAT Liaison • Congregation Life and Witness Consultations • Liaise with congregational Groups • Presbytery Mission Resourcing Committee
Presbytery Minister (Pastoral Formation)	• Pastoral care • Presbytery PRC • Continuing Education incl Phase 3 • Uniting Formation Network liaison • Period of Discernment • Placements liaison • Ministry vitality of call • Discipline/ Complaints/ Concerns
Presbytery Minister (Younger Generations)	• Coordinate and support Presbytery younger generations initiatives • Congregational support for younger generations ministry and leaders • Synod younger gen liaison
Presbytery Chair	- Undertake Presbytery Chairperson duties, likely on a part-time basis.
Group coordinators	• Coordinate groups of congregations

	• Pastoral care • Support congregation consultations and ministry vitality of call processes, participate or chair JNCs • Likely on a part-time basis.
Administration Lead	• Office Manager • Synod Liaison via PSU • Exec Support for Ministry Team
Administration Officer	• Administration Functions • Safe Church administration • Event and meeting organisation

This represents just *one possible* staffing model, with each newly formed presbytery able to determine its own staffing priorities and arrangements within the budget process. The proposal before the Synod allows the General Secretary to establish interim staffing until each presbytery makes and enacts its own staffing decisions.

4. Governance and Meetings

Presbytery Governance

Each presbytery will determine its governance structure in accordance with regulations. At a minimum, the presbytery will need to appoint members to regulated committees such as Presbytery Standing Committee, Pastoral Relations Committee and Property Committee (or variants like Mission Resourcing Committee, Presbytery Leadership Team, Pastoral Relations/Standing Committee, as have previously been approved or enacted) together with office bearers and chairpersons for each committee. (Reg 3.7.2)

Presbytery-appointed members for Synod committees and bodies (such as MC3, Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements, Presbytery-Synod Interface) will be appointed as per normal regulatory processes. The proposal under consideration allows for Synod Standing Committee to vary appointment processes to ensure regional Queensland areas are suitably represented on such bodies.

Presbytery Meetings

Each presbytery will determine its own cadence, mode and locations for Presbytery meetings, with Regulations requiring a minimum of two meetings each year (Reg 3.5.4). Consideration could be given to one or two extended face-to-face meeting/s and additional virtual meeting/s each year, with each presbytery establishing meeting cadence to suit own context and communities. As outlined below, groups of congregations could meet on other occasions for the purposes of developing community, pastoral support, shared worship, consultation and other responsibilities delegated by the Presbytery.

Recognising the size and scale of the proposed Greater Regional Queensland presbytery, careful consideration will need to be given to determine the best location/s for presbytery meetings, and to ensure that sufficient budget provision is made for related travel costs. Travel time, too, will be a key consideration that feeds into decisions about how often, and for how long, this presbytery meets in person. Hybrid or online meetings are a potential answer but must consider the wide variety of experiences when it comes to stable internet access in regional and remote Queensland.

5. Model Policy and Delegations

Policy Library

Each presbytery will be provided with a library of policies and processes for approval at its establishment. Such a library will be developed during the transition and implementation phase, taking its cues primarily from existing presbytery policy documents that address matters such as congregational consultations, ministry reporting and vitality of call processes, workplace health and safety, safe church, human resources policy, staff policies, congregation and leadership support policy and practice.

Delegations

Each presbytery will be provided with a delegations document for approval at its establishment. Such proposed delegations will be developed during the transition and implementation phase, taking its cues primarily from existing presbytery delegations, together with adjustments to provide for more effective collaboration and cooperation as outlined in the presbytery capacity proposal. Example approaches to delegations may include:

- Standard delegations to committees/governance groups of the Presbytery
- Standard delegations to Synod / Synod office / other bodies, particularly to enable greater degree of support and collaboration on matters such as workplace health and safety, safe ministry, human resources, finance, and property management
- Delegations and relevant referrals to the Combined Presbyteries Resourcing Committee (if established by 39th Synod under the Presbytery Resourcing General Proposal)
- Scalable delegations to congregational groups and other entities
 - Defining scalable delegations: a set of delegations that may vary according to the capability and capacity of the body receiving the delegation
 - Demonstrated capacity: administration, finance, management, leadership, strategic direction, scale and scope of work, number of staff
 - Examples or suggestions for scalable delegations to be considered by presbyteries will be developed during the implementation and transition period and may include scalable delegations to groups

6. Groups (previously called zones) of Congregations

Central to the General Proposal is the increased and intentional use of geographic or other groups of congregations within a presbytery. Described in this way, groups are intended to be an expression of the presbytery's local presence and help to connect and coordinate congregational and ministry life. While in the past zones have been utilised by larger, regional presbyteries, under the proposed new arrangements, groups will be important for all presbyteries to consider. Groups could be geographic in nature, or could network together groups of congregations operating in similar contexts (e.g. congregations operating in tourism communities, or natural resources communities).

A group of congregations may have, as part of its life, the following:

- Worship
 - Combined worship services within the group
 - Pulpit or leadership exchanges
 - Sharing skills (e.g. music, lay preachers, younger generations leaders/initiatives)
- Pastoral Care
 - Joining together for combined prayer events
 - Shared approaches to pastoral care across congregations
 - Training and support
- Governance
 - Office-bearer support
 - Organising training for incoming office bearers or church council members
 - Church council chairs in a support network
 - Arranging and/or participating in Congregational Life and Witness consultations
- Group Gatherings
 - Worshipping together
 - Training and education opportunities
 - Sharing of upcoming activities within congregations
 - Social gatherings
 - Context for Presbytery or Synod consultation or liaison

Other possible tasks each Presbytery could consider for groups includes:

- Helping arrange Continuing Education for Ministry opportunities

- Supporting lay-led congregations
- Participate in JNC progresses, including representing the Presbytery during JNC conversations
- Support Presbytery Property officer with property inspections
- Select and financially support people to attend Presbytery meetings.

Each group could be supported by a designated Group Coordinator. A Presbytery may opt to use some of its staff resource to pay Group Coordinators, in which case a position description might pick up some elements of other Presbytery roles. A Group Coordinator role may be part-time, in combination with another placement.

Remote area bush chaplaincies could be included in geographic groups.

Potential Groups

To give examples of how groups might work in practice, each presbytery could consider the inclusion of the following groups.

Greater Regional Queensland

Group Name	Description
Far North	The coastal and hinterland communities of far northern Queensland, from Cape York to the Cassowary Coast
North	Coastal communities of north Queensland and inland area from Ingham to Mackay
Central	The communities of central and western Queensland (Rockhampton – Longreach and surrounds)
South	Coastal and inland communities from Gladstone to Childers and with communities of south-western Queensland
Muth arrak	Communities in the Muth arrak network

Wide Bay Brisbane Presbytery

Group Name	Description
Sunshine	Maryborough and Hervey Bay, including the Sunshine Coast and south to Elimbah
Northside	Brisbane northern suburbs from Caboolture to the Chermside-Kedron area
Central	Brisbane City and inner-ring suburbs

Southern Queensland Presbytery

Group Name	Description
Gold Coast	Gold Coast and hinterland communities
Southern Brisbane	Southside Brisbane suburbs with Redlands and Logan City Council areas.
Western	Congregations west of Beaudesert Road, including Ipswich, hinterland and eastern Darling Downs

7. First Meeting Agenda

Under the General Proposal, the task of organising the first meeting of each new Presbytery is delegated to the General Secretary (including appointing a chairperson). The first meeting of each new Presbytery is critical for both the decisions and establishment requirements that must be approved, but also for beginning the hard work of establishing community, relationships, and the culture of the new Presbytery.

Consideration may be given to an extended meeting period for the first meeting of the newly established presbyteries in order to accommodate these various needs. While the agenda for the first meeting/s will be further developed, items for consideration may include:

- Celebrate the new Presbytery in worship
- Forming and sharing in community
- Elect office bearers including Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
- Agree governance committees and elect members (Regulation 3.7.2)
 - Presbytery Standing Committee
 - Pastoral Relations Committee

- Property Committee
- Determine frequency and mode of meetings, including the date and location of next meeting
 - Presbyteries may consider meeting twice annually, including one in-person and one using remote/distance/digital meeting methodology
- Consider and adopt a policy and delegations matrix for the new Presbytery, commencing discussion with a standard/model policy and delegations matrix common to all three presbyteries
- Prioritise staffing including preferred roles/functions, recruitment process, and timeframes

8. Office and Administration

Each new presbytery will determine its approach to administration and office operations to support the presbytery.

Office Locations

Every effort should be made to ensure staff are distributed geographically across each Presbytery. Consideration may be given as to whether a physical office or a hybrid working arrangement is most suitable, given the different contexts within each proposed presbytery.

Some existing presbyteries are the responsible body for office space, but the primary driver for office location should be its nature, size and the distribution of congregations within the presbytery.

Administration, Finance, Property, IT

One of the elements of the proposal encourages a closer integration between presbytery administration and Synod office support services. Each presbytery is encouraged to collaborate with the Synod office to explore benefits from working more closely on administration, finance and book-keeping, property management, record keeping and human resources. There is also opportunity to take advantage of greater buying power of the Synod in the IT area. This would also facilitate easier communication, file sharing and flow of timely and accurate information between Presbyteries and Synod.

The transition and implementation project will explore these topics, making recommendations for each presbytery to consider.

9. Conclusion

This information paper demonstrates that the proposed three-presbytery model is capable of practical implementation and provides a viable framework for the future organisation of presbytery life within the Queensland Synod.

The paper does not seek to determine the detailed structures, policies or operational arrangements of the proposed new presbyteries. Rather, it provides a proof of concept by outlining potential approaches to matters including staffing, governance, meetings, delegations, groups of congregations, and office and administrative arrangements. These examples demonstrate that the proposed model can provide both the necessary framework for establishment and sufficient flexibility for each Presbytery to respond to its particular context, needs and priorities.

Should the Synod resolve to establish the new presbyteries, the matters necessary for their establishment will be addressed through the subsequent transition and implementation processes. The ongoing task of determining their governance, ministry priorities, staffing and operating arrangements will rightly rest with each new Presbytery. This aligns with Jesus' sending of the disciples in Luke 10 – not with excess of provision, but with trust in God's sufficiency and a focus on the work at hand.

Accordingly, this paper is presented as supporting information to assist members of Synod in considering the General Proposal.