



Report from

# Bremer Brisbane Presbytery



# Report

Bremer Brisbane Presbytery says its purpose is *'creating healthy Christian communities, living God's mission'*. God has begun work in Bremer Brisbane in reorganising and regenerating congregations and this will be a focus in coming years. In Christ the best is yet to come!

## About our Presbytery

The Presbytery of Bremer Brisbane is one of seven Presbyteries within the Synod of Queensland. The Basis of Union states the function of a Presbytery is to *'perform all the acts of oversight necessary to the life of the church in the area for which it is responsible...in particular oversight of the congregations in its bounds'*. Bremer Brisbane Presbytery says its purpose is *'building healthy Christian communities, living God's mission'*.

The Presbytery includes the West Moreton District of South East Queensland, the regional city of Ipswich and the western suburbs of Brisbane. It is bounded by the Great Dividing Range in the west, the Brisbane to Sydney railway line in the East and the Queensland New South Wales border to the South. The Presbytery also includes the Brisbane, Bremer, Lockyer, and Teviot Valleys.

The Presbytery is the home of many important public and private facilities within the state. Within Bremer Brisbane we have Wesley, Ipswich and St Andrews Ipswich hospitals, the Police academy at Darra, the Amberley Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base, as well we have seven correctional facilities in Bremer, additionally there are 5 residential colleges in the University district. At just over 8,000km<sup>2</sup> Bremer Brisbane is only 5% of Queensland's area but contains just over 500,000 people which is just over 10% of Queensland's population. The growth areas of Ripley, Springfield Lakes and Bellbird Park are maintaining a population growth of 10% annually.

The average age of Uniting Church Congregations in the area is approximately 62 years, however the median age of the general population is approximately 34 years, and there are only 12.4% of the population aged 65 and over. The government projection is the population in Bremer will double in the next 30 years primarily in the areas around Ipswich.

Bremer Brisbane comprises 31 congregations and 3 faith communities, 23 are suburban congregations/faith communities, and 11 rural congregations/faith communities.

The Presbytery has the diversity of inner city, suburban, regional city of Ipswich, new developing areas such as Ripley and areas west of Ipswich, and rural communities.

In 2017, the Presbytery discerned to focus on four mission priorities: Discipleship (Youth and Children and Evangelism), Community Engagement (with other UCA agencies, engaging with first peoples and community groups). Leadership (encouraging networks, resources and finances for growing leaders) and Sustainability (Identifying Church models and mission and strategic locations).

While each of these areas have been engaged with, it would be appropriate to say that more energy has been put into Discipleship, Leadership and Sustainability; Discipleship largely due to the work of the Discipleship facilitator, Leadership with the organising of courses and events, and Sustainability due to the declining nature of a number of congregations.

Perhaps the greatest work of the Presbytery in the next 5 years will be about sustainability and strategic locations. In 2019 a paper was adopted that forms a basis for reorganising the presbytery. You can find that paper here: <https://bremerbrisbane.org.au/wp-content/uploads/8-Sustainability-and-Strategic-Locations.pdf> We would appreciate the broader church's prayers for this. At the time of writing this report, the Holy Spirit has already begun to reorganise and regenerate a number of congregations...so stay tuned, because in Christ the best is yet to come!

## Project Plenty

The work of project plenty across the Queensland Synod is important to its life and future. During 2019, there was a sense of expectation as a Presbytery engagement session took place. Initial input and feedback was good. However, due to Covid-19, 2020 has shown almost no ministry agents or congregations across the Presbytery genuinely engaging with the Project Plenty process. It is concerning that as we head into our Synod meeting that congregations have not had the opportunity, time and energy to engage with the second half of the process. More time is needed to understand the implications and strategies being suggested.

## Challenges/risks as we progress

This SWOT analysis was presented to Synod Standing Committee in August.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of growing congregations willing to resource the Presbytery.</li> <li>• Multicultural/CALD Ministry.</li> <li>• A growing Young Adult presence.</li> <li>• Community Programs.</li> <li>• Since Covid-19, a renewed collegiality and sharing of resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UC Ministry Agents trained in Church Planting/Regeneration.</li> <li>• Unwillingness/inability to make decisions about declining and dying congregations.</li> <li>• Consultations that do not lead strongly toward changed outcomes.</li> <li>• Allowing Supply Ministry to last too long.</li> <li>• 'Silo' ministry.</li> <li>• No genuine Strategic Plan</li> </ul>

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanding Communities (eg, Ripley).</li> <li>• Prison Ministry.</li> <li>• Multicultural-Intercultural.</li> <li>• Sustainability and Strategic Locations work.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial enterprises.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwillingness of congregations to share assets for future ministry.</li> <li>• Declining finances.</li> <li>• A misunderstanding of the responsibilities of the councils of the church.</li> <li>• Assembly making further movement on SGM.</li> <li>• A culture of non-performance driven review of Ministry Agents.</li> </ul>

## Proposals to the 35th Synod

It is proposed that the 35<sup>th</sup> Synod receive this report.

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