Report for
32nd Queensland Synod
May 2016

Report from

Schools and Residential Colleges Commission

Context

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission is the body established by the Uniting Church (Queensland Synod) to be the link between the church and the affiliated schools and colleges. The commission seeks to encourage these organisations to fulfil the objects under which they were established and ensure that they remain mission-focussed, furthering the mission of Christ in their context.

The commission is chaired by Rev David McGregor and comprises Peter Campbell, Mike Millard, Mike Hennessy, Noela Lister, Dr Marilyn Healy and Neil Ballment. The commission is supported by an executive officer, Dr Daniel Pampuch (who replaced Elaine Rae in early 2015).

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission currently engages with:

Four Property Trust schools: The Lakes College (Mango Hill); Calvary Christian College (Springwood and Carbrook); Shalom Christian College (Condon, Townsville); and The Scots PGC (Warwick).

Two UCA schools: Moreton Bay College (Manly West) and Moreton Bay Boys College (Manly).

Four Presbyterian and Methodist Schools Association schools: Somerville House (South Brisbane); Brisbane Boys College (Toowong); Sunshine Coast Grammar School (Forest Glen) and Clayfield College (Clayfield).

Three ecumenical schools: Unity College (Caloundra); Emmaus College (Jimboomba); and Jubilee Primary School (Gaven).

The commission also engages with the boards and principals of ***five residential colleges***: Grace College (UQ); Emmanuel College (UQ); Kings College (UQ); Cromwell College (UQ); and The John Flynn College (JCU, Townsville).

Additionally, the executive officer has been called upon to provide support for Raymont Lodge Residential College and Wontulp-Bi-Buya which currently do not sit within the purview of the commission.

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission's purpose is:

- To serve Uniting Church schools and residential colleges and our wider church through sharing information, providing well-researched advice and advocating externally
- To strengthen governance across our portfolio, relationships among affiliates, and to emphasise mission
- To support the learning and training networks of boards, executive staff and chaplains.

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission has developed a Directions Paper 2016–18 which articulates its vision, purpose, values, focus and priority going forward.

Our identified priorities

In terms of the 31st Synod eight priorities, the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission supports the following priorities:

Worship gatherings – the unchurched

Schools and residential colleges provide an excellent link between those yet to find a faith and the church. All Uniting Church schools provide Christian education classes for students and all schools have chaplains (or are in the process of securing one) to provide pastoral support and guidance.

Faith sharing

Chapel services are run at all schools and provide an excellent platform for students to engage in prayer and formal worship. Students begin to understand the culture and traditions of a formal church setting. If a child makes a faith commitment, they can readily understand and participate in the life of a congregation as well as understand the stories, metaphors, terminology and sacraments due to the input they received from a Uniting Church school.

Church planting

While church planting is not the focus of schools or colleges, Calvary Christian College has been able to use the Carbrook site to set up a satellite congregation of the Logan Uniting Church.

Unity College has set up a faith community on the Sunshine Coast and is looking at more formal structures to continue into the future.

Developing church planters/Formation for ministry

For those with a faith, Uniting Church schools provide a good training ground in terms of building leadership skills and affording the opportunities for young people to build confidence in their faith and determine their life vocation. The commission gave awards this year to students who actively impacted their community and were motivated by their Christian faith. It was humbling to hear the testimony of young people who were proud of their faith, impacting their community and planning to be pioneers of faith in the future.

Resource sharing

All schools are engaged in a range of service and mission activities within and without their communities. These activities range from fundraising events for charities through to international mission trips to developing countries, providing on-the-ground practical support and care. Schools such as Shalom provide educational opportunities through its boarding program to some of the remotest Indigenous communities, and as such play an important role in bridging the gap.

Children, youth, young adult ministry as a priority

Schools and residential colleges provide a variety of programs and services to children and young adults across Queensland. One of the interesting developments since the last Synod has been the Active Faith program which sees the three local congregations in close proximity to the University of Queensland provide pastoral and spiritual support to the Uniting Church university residential colleges.

A full run-down of the activities of each school and college is provided in a “Report from Schools and Colleges” document which will be made available at the 32nd Synod and hosted on the Synod website.

Report

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission is rather unique in the Australian setting. Schools either sit under a broader educational ministry banner or are directly dealt with by the Synod. Where the Queensland Synod has sought ***to build and strengthen its ties with schools and colleges***, other synods are moving to a more arm’s-length approach. These synods are seeing themselves as more of a resource to call upon, or seek only to speak into the chaplaincy and religious education space. A case in point is South Australia which has set up a model where schools are all separately incorporated.

Elaine Rae (previous executive officer) did an excellent job building relationships between the individual schools and colleges and the Synod. Prior to her time, these relationships were not actively maintained and as a consequence the strength of connection was lost with many organisations. Under Mrs Rae’s care, not only were many of these connections strengthened, but also formalised and resourced. To this end when two schools, Shalom and The Lakes College, experienced financial and management distress, the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission was able to play a vital part in their turnaround, setting up structures and processes for their ongoing survival and success.

With the retirement of Mrs Rae, the executive officer role was taken on by Dr Daniel Pampuch. Dr Pampuch is an experienced principal and has served on school and association boards at a state and national level. This new appointment coincided with a move within the commission to see:

- a broader understanding of what it means to be part of the Uniting Church in Australia as a movement with a shared identity amongst all schools and colleges
- the development of long-term strategic planning for schools which looks to long-term stability and strength
- the culture of boards more closely reflect Uniting Church DNA;
- the development of documents and resources to bring schools and colleges into a closer, more consistent alignment with the Uniting Church; and
- the provision of support and services to schools and colleges which reflect the value-add approach of being connected to the Uniting Church in Australia.

Compared to other synods, Queensland is active and engaged with its schools and colleges. The commission sees young people as essential to the future of the church. As such, having vehicles such as schools and colleges to train up young people in terms of their education, character, and faith is essential. There is no doubt that a continued revisiting of these relationships between schools/colleges and the church needs to occur, and a continual calibration required. Sustaining and building these relationships will challenge schools/colleges and the church to be relevant and impacting to new generations.

Key achievements/initiatives

Since the last Synod the following achievements have occurred:

Relationship building

- All schools and colleges have had regular visits by the executive officer
- Networking lunches have been held for business managers and key financial staff
- Executive officer and Synod staff attendance at numerous openings, special events, etc.
- Principals and board chairperson lunches held at the end of each year
- Development of an Ecumenical Chaplains' Network
- Individual principal support: transitioning, community tragedies, etc.
- Connected with congregation and presbytery ministers associated with schools and colleges.

Governance

- Development of a Governance Matrix and tracking spread sheets
- Constitution development and approval processes
- Appointments and council member reviews across all schools and colleges
- Induction of new board members (upon request)
- Delivery of Governance Training Packages.

Support materials

- Development of a Board Handbook and associated core policies
- Development of a Statement of Mutual Intent
- Redevelopment of the Principal's Handbook and Guidelines
- Redevelopment of all commission collateral: guidelines, booklets, brochures
- Development of the 2016–2018 Directions Paper.

Professional development opportunities

- Industry KPIs and dashboard workshop for business managers and senior leaders
- Promotion of four governance workshops held by the Synod
- Redevelopment of UCA induction package through Trinity, hosted on OLE
- School presentations: 7 Habits, Next Generation Leadership, etc.

Direct support

- Served as the Approved Authority for Schools
- Participation in 5-year cyclical reviews
- Participation on principal and senior executive selection panels
- Working with Chaplaincy Commission to secure and place chaplains in schools
- Intersection with the Royal Commission.

Networking

To ensure the linking of the Uniting Church with broader educational groups, the executive officer is a member of:

- Independent Schools Queensland – education committee
- Independent Schools Heads of System Group
- National UCA Affiliated Reference Group
- Ecumenical Heads of System Group.

Challenges/risks as we progress

Valuing relationship

There are a range of views held by the church regarding schools and colleges. Some see schools and colleges as a vital mission of the church, while others wonder why the church seeks to “play in this space”. Over the past four decades, the Synod has sometimes appointed people to maintain these relationships and come alongside these ministries and at other times released schools and colleges to operate in isolation. To be able to speak into these spaces, the church has to be consistent in its interactions and the value it places on these ministries. Otherwise, the church risks losing its connection to these organisations and an opportunity to develop mutually reinforcing and sustaining relationships. If the Uniting Church is to grow closer to these organisations we need to invest the time and resources into the relationship and seek to value-add.

Church community in the 21st century

The *Basis of Union* states that “through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith”. Uniting Church schools and colleges provide a unique point of connection with a generation of students and their families and afford the opportunity to build relationships and speak truth into the lives of others.

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission works with some 18 organisations covering approximately 17,500 students and some 1000 staff. If families are included, the connection through schools and residential colleges is with perhaps 60,000 people.

In this transient 21st century such connections will become increasingly important to building and sustaining relationship long enough to be of impact. This unique missional opportunity can be

enhanced by providing excellence of service and opportunity for children to experience sacramental worship, receive Christian education and, God willing, to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Schools and Residential Colleges Commission is supported by one full-time staff member and part-time secretarial support. It is imperative that this valuable missional arm continues to receive the necessary resourcing it requires.

Issues to be addressed

The future projects:

1. Separate responsibilities for residential colleges and schools
2. Increased financial modelling for schools
3. Development of core suite of policies for schools and residential colleges
4. Development of formalised training packages for board members
5. Employment of board recruitment officer and development of governance register
6. Development of Uniting Church in Australia religious education materials for schools
7. Develop Stage 2 and 3 of Induction to the Uniting Church Schools and Colleges material through Trinity OLE.

Proposals to the 32nd Synod

That Synod accepts this report and notes the seven future projects listed above.

That the Synod notes that Rev David McGregor will step down as chairperson of the Schools and Residential Colleges Commission at the conclusion of the 32nd Synod after six years of faithful service.

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