



Renewed placements process Frequently Asked Questions

As from 1 January 2018 the Queensland Synod is introducing a revised “optional dual track placements process”. This innovation comes as a result of a decision of the 31st Synod and after extensive consultation with ministers, congregations and presbyteries across the Synod.

Why are we doing this?

Through the consultation a number of concerns were identified that included:

- The current process tending to breed a measure of dependency and a lack of clarity by facilitating the triangulation of relationships (between the Placements Committee itself, the various placement Joint Nominating Committees (JNCs), and the ministers asked to have conversations with those JNCs. It was suggested that each party could easily begin to blame the others for any perceived shortcomings in the process.
- Ministers and JNCs reported a sense of power imbalance and vulnerability to manipulation, particularly when information about placements/ministers coming available was, correctly or not, perceived to be denied to them.
- Inefficiency in terms of time that the process takes.
- The current process being subject to unnecessary rigidities e.g. that where a conversation happened between a JNC and a minister but didn't bear fruit at that time, it could not be re-visited later.

What are the intended improvements?

These include:

- JNCs and ministers reporting a greater sense of empowerment
- ministers (although this may also apply to congregations) reporting a greater capacity to discern new ministry opportunities
- a decrease of triangulation between the Placements Committee, placements and ministers (the end of the blame game)
- more transparency in communication and discernment (what is critical here is not simply the reality, but perceptions of that reality)
- reducing the time spent during the placements process, and
- better profiles and improved use of profiles.



What values underpin the renewed process?

- We are a community which seeks to work in a way that supports and encourages people.
- The call to ministry is tested and evaluated by a collective wisdom and allows for an individual experience to be tested by the broader church.
- We value all expressions of faith in community, from congregations to chaplaincy, from city churches to rural and remote locations, and want to ensure that our systems resource those different contexts appropriately.
- We are prepared to take innovative risks to allow for the fuller expression of God's call to the body of Christ.
- We want to be able to identify and manage for the risk of unethical, unhealthy or inappropriate behaviours.

What are the major innovations?

The major innovation is that JNCs and ministers will have the ability to opt into the decentralised placements process.

When choosing this pathway:

- JNCs will be given access to a list of all ministers available for a new placement (i.e. those in the third or subsequent year of their first placement, or fifth and subsequent year of any other placement) and be able to request, through the secretary of the Placements Committee, a discernment conversation with up to three ministers.
- Ministers will have better access to information about all vacant placements, together with better processes to request, through the secretary of the Placements Committee, a discernment conversation with up to two JNCs.
- JNCs will have greater freedom and streamlined processes to advertise vacant placements.

What resources will support the process?

A dedicated placements website will be launched before 1 January 2018. This website will provide access to:

- templates for congregational and ministry leader profiles
- other documents used in the placements process
- documentation that explains the policies and processes that guide the placements process in Queensland
- a training package for JNCs.



How will the process work?

1. The Presbytery is advised that a placement is to be vacated. This is usually done by the departing minister advising the Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) of acceptance of another call or an intention to retire. Ministers are normally required to give three months' notice of intention to vacate a placement.
2. The Presbytery and the congregation/s jointly decide whether or not to fill the vacancy. This decision will recommend:
 - a. if the placement should be filled, and if so, whether the placement will be a Presbytery, congregation or other body placement
 - b. if the placement is to be filled by call of the congregation, other body, the Presbytery or the Placements Committee
 - c. which specified ministry may best suit the ministry and mission emphases of the congregation, i.e. Minister of the Word, deacon, pastor, youth worker, lay pastor
 - d. if the placement is to be full-time or a fractional time component (Regulation 2.6.6 (a)).
3. As soon as the decision is made to fill the vacancy, the Presbytery notifies the secretary of the Placements Committee. The secretary will include a notification in Uniting News of the existence of the vacancy. Eligible ministers wishing to express an interest in the vacancy will be directed to the Presbytery Minister.
4. A placement profile is prepared by representatives of the congregation. The placement profile template approved by the Placements Committee is to be used.
5. The profile is approved by the church council and Presbytery and forwarded to the Placements Committee (Regulation 2.6.6 (b)).
6. A Joint Nominating Committee is established (Regulation 2.6.6 (c)). The congregation shall appoint two to six members to the JNC¹. The Presbytery shall appoint at least two members.
7. The secretary of the Placements Committee presents the completed profile to the Placements Committee and publishes the profile to the Placements Committee database.
8. The JNC meets for the first time. At this meeting it participates in the training module, familiarising members with the responsibilities and processes. The JNC decides whether to utilise the optional decentralised process. Note: unless a JNC chooses to utilise this process, they will automatically utilise the centralised process.
9. Decentralised process
 - 9.1 The chair of the JNC advises the secretary of the Placements Committee that the JNC will use the decentralised process.
 - 9.2 At this stage or at any point in the decentralised placements process, the JNC may seek approval from the secretary of the Placements Committee to advertise the vacancy. The application to advertise will be dealt with according to the process for advertising placements.

¹ The congregation is responsible for appointing the members. This may be done at a duly convened meeting of the congregation (Regulation 3.5.1). Alternatively, the congregation may delegate this responsibility to the church council, or the church council may bring a recommendation of names to a meeting of the congregation.



- 9.3 The secretary will provide password access to the ministerial profile database.
- 9.4 At any stage after receiving access to the database, the JNC may request a conversation with up to three potential matches.
- 9.5 Acting on the delegated power of the Placements Committee, the secretary of the Placements Committee will give approval to conversations being initiated with the potential matches, provided that for each minister:
- 9.5.1 The minister is not currently involved in conversations with another placement.
 - 9.5.2 The minister is at least in the third year of their first placement, or the fifth year of any subsequent placement.
 - 9.5.3 The JNC is not currently involved in conversations with other ministers.
 - 9.5.4 The minister has not served in a placement in that congregation at any time, nor have they had significant participation in that congregation during the past ten years. Where these criteria are not satisfied, the secretary will refer the request to a meeting of the Placements Committee for discernment about recommending a name.
- 9.6 Where the minister has provided a recent profile, the secretary will notify the minister that their name has been forwarded to the JNC.
- 9.7 Where the minister does not have a recent profile, the secretary will arrange for the minister to complete one. When received this will be forwarded to the JNC.
- 9.8 A minister available for placement (Regulation 2.6.2 (b)) may request access, through the secretary of the Placements Committee, to the database of congregations seeking a minister. After accessing the database the minister may request to have a discernment conversation with up to two JNCs (Regulation 2.6.6 (g)(iv)).
- 9.9 Acting on the delegated power of the Placements Committee, the secretary of the Placements Committee will give approval to conversations being initiated with the potential matches, provided that for each minister:
- 9.9.1 The minister is not currently involved in conversations with another placement.
 - 9.9.2 The JNC is not currently involved in conversations with other ministers.
 - 9.9.3 The minister is at least in the third year of their first placement, or the fifth year of any subsequent placement.
 - 9.9.4 The minister has not served in a placement in that congregation at any time, nor have they had significant participation in that congregation during the past ten years. Where these criteria are not satisfied, the secretary will refer the request to a meeting of the Placements Committee for discernment about recommending a name.
- 9.10 If the secretary of the Placements Committee receives requests from more than three ministers to enter into discernment conversations with a JNC, and all ministers are eligible, the secretary will forward all expressions of interest to the chair of the JNC with a request that two members of the JNC, one from the Presbytery and one from the congregation, develop a short list of no more than three names. If these conversations do not result in a call, the JNC may engage in discernment conversations with other ministers who were not shortlisted.
- 9.11 The church expects that, unless there are exceptional reasons that make the match inappropriate, a proposed conversation between minister and placement will take place.
- 9.12 At each meeting of the Placements Committee, the secretary will provide a report regarding those JNCs and ministers who are in conversation through the use of the decentralised process.
- 9.13 The chair of the JNC will call a meeting of the JNC. Copies of profiles of the proposed minister(s) should be circulated to all members of JNC but not copied further. Electronic files must be deleted at the conclusion of the call process and hard copies must be collected by the JNC chair and shredded.
- 9.14 Prior to the first meeting, the minister and JNC will exchange written statements outlining how each discerns the connecting points between the profiles.
- 9.15 The process continues at step 11 below.



10. Centralised process

- 10.1 If a JNC chooses not to proceed with the decentralised process, the centralised process will apply. This will be the default process.
 - 10.2 The Placements Committee will consider the congregational profile and the list of ministers available for placement. The committee may recommend up to three ministers with whom the JNC will enter into a discernment conversation (Regulation 2.6.6 (g)). In considering names, the Placements Committee will consider any names requested by a JNC or Presbytery but will not be obliged to act on that recommendation.
 - 10.3 No minister will be invited to converse with more than two JNCs at the one time (Regulation 2.6.6 (g)(iv)).
 - 10.4 Within 48 hours of a meeting of the Placements Committee the secretary will write to the minister and chair of the JNC advising them of the discernment of the Placements Committee. Letters from the secretary will convey the reasons for the proposed names and will include copies of the relevant profiles.
 - 10.5 The chair of the JNC will call a meeting of the JNC. Copies of profiles of the proposed minister(s) should be circulated to all members of JNC but not copied further. Electronic files must be deleted at the conclusion of the call process and hard copies must be collected by the JNC chair and shredded.
 - 10.6 The process continues from step 11.
11. The church expects that, unless there are exceptional reasons that make the match inappropriate, a proposed conversation between the minister and placement (initiated through either centralised or decentralised process) will take place. In making their discernment, a JNC may have conversations with each recommended minister before making a decision on any; similarly if the minister is proposed for more than one placement he/she may have conversation with both JNCs before making a decision on either.
 12. At any time a minister or JNC may decline to proceed with a conversation and must advise the Placements Committee in writing of the reason for doing so. A decision about whether to proceed to call shall be made within two months.
 13. When conversations lead to discernment that a call is appropriate, the JNC and the minister will negotiate any points of concern and the date on which the new placement will become effective. While it is not normal practice, the minister and the JNC may agree that it would be appropriate for the minister to meet the church council or a wider group of members prior to a decision to proceed to call (2.6.6 (m)).
 14. The chair of the JNC notifies the Presbytery, through the Presbytery Minister, of the decision of the JNC and seeks the approval of the Presbytery or its Pastoral Relations Committee to proceed to recommend to the congregation that a call be issued.
 15. Following approval by the Presbytery and with the agreement of the minister, the JNC recommends to a meeting of the congregation/s that a call be issued. If the vacancy has been determined by the Placements Committee to be a priority placement, or the minister to be called is an exit student, the call is issued by the Placements Committee. In this instance, a meeting of the congregation is still called to allow the congregation to express its mind. In such circumstances the resolution of the congregation should be "to request the Placements Committee to issue a call to NN".
 16. Within three days of the decision to issue a call, a letter of call is prepared by the congregation. This letter is to be signed by a person nominated by the placement and the Presbytery and the



secretary of the Placements Committee. The secretary is responsible for forwarding the letter of call to the minister. Templates for letters of call and terms of placement are available from the secretary of the Placements Committee. These are updated annually.

17. The letter of call is to include the date on which the placement is to commence (Regulation 2.6.6 (n)). It is usual that the commencement date will be no earlier than three months. There is no maximum period in which the call needs to be taken up. In considering a commencement date in excess of six months from the letter of call, consideration should be given to the needs of the minister, the placement they are leaving and the placement that is issuing the call.
18. The minister responds in writing to the placement, Presbytery and secretary of the Placements Committee within 14 days, accepting the agreed terms of placement.
19. If at some later time the commencement date needs to be altered, this should be mutually agreed between the minister, placement and Presbytery. After the alteration has been agreed, the secretary of the Placements Committee is to be notified.
20. The Presbytery chairperson, in consultation with the minister and the congregation, sets the date of the induction service.
21. The minister takes up responsibilities in the new placement by the 15th day of the month, or the 21st day of the month if an inter-synod move. Note: placements normally date from the first day of a month, but removal leave is granted (Regulation 2.7.2 (c)).

Note that placements in Presbyteries and Synod, including chaplaincy placements will follow a similar process.

What is contained in the written statements that are shared in the decentralised process?

The written statement is an innovation and is designed to focus the attention of both the JNC and the minister on the significant points of connection. Its intention is to stimulate conversation, focus attention on important issues and provide greater clarity on possibilities. Separately, the JNC and the minister will review the profiles of both the minister and the congregation and will identify between three and five areas of significant correlation. Both minister and JNC will be asked to list any comments or questions. Both documents will be shared prior to the first discernment conversation.

How can a minister be involved in the dual track?

At any time after a minister has commenced the third year of their first placement, or the fifth year of any subsequent placement, they are eligible to accept a new call.

An eligible minister may choose to be recognised as actively seeking a new placement. Out of interest, in October 2017 there were 12 ministers actively seeking new placements.

A minister wishing to actively seek a new placement should first speak to their Presbytery Minister. The Presbytery Minister will provide information about process and current placements vacancies. The minister will be required to provide an updated ministry leader profile to the Presbytery.



The Presbytery will add comments and forward the profile to the secretary of the Placements Committee noting that the minister wishes to be considered as actively seeking.

The secretary will:

- include the minister's profile in the ministry leaders' data base
- provide the minister with access to the placement vacancy database
- notify the Placements Committee at its next meeting.

A minister who is actively seeking a new placement will need to use good judgement about the suitability of informing their current placement about their situation. There is no requirement to do so.