

Inter-culturalism: A pathway to Renewal

Ministry and Mission Team – March 2025

renewal



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.'

All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'

Acts 2: 5–12, NRSV

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Foreword

As Chairperson of the Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group, I am pleased to endorse this Current State Report on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities within the Uniting Church in Queensland.

The report offers valuable insights into the diverse experiences and challenges of our CALD communities and provides key recommendations (considerations) to strengthen inter-cultural engagement.

I hope it lays a foundation for deepening our shared, multi-cultural life, building stronger connections and collaborative leadership.

By embracing its opportunities, the Queensland Synod can move toward a future where every culture is truly valued and empowered to contribute fully to God's mission and in the life of the Church.

May this report inspire us to pursue this biblical vision of unity in diversity, bringing renewal and growth in the years ahead.

Rev Louisa Yu

Chairperson

Multi-Cross Cultural Reference Group, Queensland Synod

Definitions

The use of words to describe this space is contested and fluid. Terms that were once self-given by groups to self-describe, can feel pejorative to the next generation or a similar group from a different area. Throughout this document we have tried to use the below words consistently, as defined.

- **CALD** – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (from the majority (English) culture). Often used as a general catch all phrase to encompass many of the below.
- **Mono-cultural** – A group with a single ethnicity, or one very dominant ethnicity.
- **Multi-cultural** – A group that contains several ethnic groups. People live alongside one another, but each ethnic group does not necessarily have engaging interactions with one other.
- **Cross-cultural** – A group that contains multiple ethnicities with a growing level of cooperation, partnership, and interaction.
- **Inter-cultural** – A group in which there is a deep understanding, interaction and respect for each culture that is part of the whole, which is reflected in decision making and leadership .
- **Trans-cultural** – Something (i.e. the gospel) which transcends cultures (can operate in all cultures), and transforms them into a better version of themselves, yet does not remove their individual identity .

The feedback from the Synod's Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group (MCCRG) is that multi-cultural is a well understood and accepted term, while inter-cultural is the aspirational aim.

Prologue

It has been my privilege to do the research for this Current State report on CALD communities in the Uniting Church in Queensland. I spoke with almost all CALD communities and ministry agents in the Queensland Uniting Church as described in the Scope. I had positive, and often significant conversations with people, hearing their pain and their passion. Along the way we discovered some CALD congregations ready to explode in mission, some travelling along happily, some needing help, and others nearing the end of their life cycle.

I was changed in the process of undertaking this research. It became clear to me through the process, that rather than the multi-cultural aspect of the Church in Queensland being a satellite issue, ***the vision of a renewed, inter-cultural church is the main game.*** In an increasingly multi-cultural society, our Anglo mono-cultural congregations are becoming an historic anomaly – an anaemic vision of the Kingdom of God. We need to work to open such congregations to the biblical vision of all tribes, nations and tongues worshipping God as one (Rev 7:9) as part of our work for renewal.

I very much hope this is the beginning of something new in the life of the Uniting Church in Queensland. The way it fits into the Synod Strategic Plan it certainly feels that way. The research phase is easy. Planning a bit harder. But it is in the implementation that the plans morph into hard, methodical work. It is then that the clean lines in such research and planning documents are revealed to be only vague descriptions of the mess of reality. As Proverbs 16:9 reminds us; *'We make plans, but God determines our course.'*

May God determine our course.

Rev Paul Clark

1. Introduction

The Queensland Synod at its 37th meeting focussed on the theme of renewal. Subsequently the Synod Office developed its new strategic plan, *Our Foundations for Renewal and Growth*, based on this same theme. The plan incorporates key foundations of mission renewal and growth, flourishing presbyteries, forming leaders, fit-for-purpose governance, and stewarding resources.

Under the foundation of mission renewal and growth, the plan commits the Synod office to accompany the Church, supporting renewed discipleship, new growth, and missional development. In its self-understanding as a multi-cultural church, this commitment extends to health, vitality, and renewal in its culturally and linguistically diverse communities and congregations.

The Mission Accompanying Team (MAT) has been tasked with establishing a Current State report on CALD communities in Queensland, with the aim of then developing a *Queensland Synod CALD Mission Renewal and Growth Strategy* for consideration by Presbyteries and Synod later in 2025.

Almost fifty individuals and congregations were contacted in late 2024. Information was gathered and recorded about the life and health of congregations and faith communities, and the opportunities and challenges facing them. This information was collated with summaries sent to each Presbytery for review. The data gathered was analysed by the MAT, MCCRG and in conversation with UnitingWorld's Mardi Lumsden.

This document, the *Current State Report*, outlines:

- What we have found in researching the current state of CALD communities in the Uniting Church in Queensland
- What we have learnt through this research process
- Some initial recommendations and opportunities for consideration
- Some initial ideas for renewal in this area, as input to the development of the CALD Mission Renewal and Growth Strategy

2. Theological Background

On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) as people from all over the Roman world heard the gospel proclaimed in their own language, a vision of the Church was enacted that encompassed people from all cultures.

This was a reversal of the division of the tower of Babel, as recorded in Genesis 11. It reveals a vision alluded to many times in the Hebrew Scriptures; that one day 'all nations would come and worship God together' (Gen 12:3, Psalm 86:9, Isaiah 2:2, 56:7, Jeremiah 3:17, Daniel 7:14).

This is an eschatological vision of humanity. How our story ends; 'Every nation, tribe, people and language' will be gathered together, united in praise of God, having not lost their cultural identity (Rev 7:9-12). It is a vision of our diversity in unity.

Christopher Watkins calls this the *transcultural* gospel. A gospel that transcends all cultures; no culture captures the gospel perfectly, and cultures do not align with the gospel equally. The gospel incarnates all cultures, transforming them into a fulfilled version of themselves. The gospel transforms Samoans into fulfilled Samoans, Taiwanese into fulfilled Taiwanese, and so on.

The implication of this is a challenge to what we often take for granted. The church's natural state is not as a mono-cultural organisation, not even many cultures in discussion, but an inter-cultural organism. In other words, inter-cultural congregations are the vision, mono-cultural congregations are anaemic outliers in the Kingdom of God.

***The church's natural state is not as a mono-cultural organisation,
but a trans-cultural organism***

As we consider the multi-cultural state of the Uniting Church in Queensland, our first challenge is to understand that the church is already multi-cultural, and at its best – *reflecting the vision of the kingdom of God* - when it is inter-cultural.

For many, including the authors of this report, this was the first shift we had to undertake in our work; to not see the Anglo, mono-cultural church as the default, but an historic anomaly in our own story.

We need to understand the church as necessarily inter-cultural for a healthy future that enables renewal. This must become the default, normalised and empowered through our work and structures.

3. Executive Summary

This Current State Report on Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities within the Uniting Church in Queensland is a foundational step toward understanding and enhancing the church's multi-cultural identity. Research conducted through extensive conversations with CALD congregations and ministry agents has revealed a rich tapestry of diversity, challenges, and opportunities that underscore the need for a renewed focus on inter-cultural integration.

3a. Key Findings

- 1. Diversity and Vitality:** The CALD communities exhibit significant geographical, ecclesiological, and ethnic diversity, with some congregations demonstrating robust growth and others facing decline. Partnership and learning opportunities exist for CALD communities in similar situations across the Synod, with just a little bit of initiative.
- 2. Leadership and Support:** Leadership within CALD communities is often driven by passionate lay leaders who are under-resourced yet deeply committed. There is a need for better training and support structures to empower these CALD communities, particularly in navigating the complexities of church governance and compliance.
- 3. Cultural Integration:** The aspiration for inter-cultural understanding and respect is evident, yet many CALD members feel marginalized or unsure about their place within the broader church structure. Education on Uniting Church polity and encouragement for cross-cultural dialogue are essential for fostering inclusivity.
- 4. Generational Shifts:** As the cultural landscape in Australia evolves, CALD congregations must adapt to the changing expectations of younger generations who may not share the same assumptions about church. Empowering these communities to envision a future that resonates with the next generation is critical.
- 5. Institutional Barriers:** Some CALD communities express apprehension about institutional structures, fearing that their cultural identities may be compromised. Building trust and ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes will be vital for meaningful integration.

3b. Potential Points for Further Consideration

See pages 28 and 29 for more details on these points.

- 1. Prioritise Inter-Cultural Development:** Shift the church's language to position multi-culturalism as mainstream and incorporate the development of inter-cultural leadership and education within ministry formation.
- 2. Enhance Support Systems:** Empower established structures to enable CALD communities to navigate church systems and provide cultural training to said structures to enhance understanding and collaboration across the church.
- 3. Foster Networks:** Encourage the formation of networks among CALD congregations to share experiences and best practices, promoting mutual support and mentorship.
- 4. Engage in Collaborative Mission Planning:** Integrate multi-cultural demographics and inter-cultural visions into church planning processes, including the planting of multi-cultural congregations.
- 5. Tell Our Stories:** Actively share the narratives and contributions of CALD members within the church to foster a sense of belonging and shared heritage.

This report serves as a precursor to a renewal and growth strategy for CALD communities within the Uniting Church in Queensland, with the ultimate aim of reflecting the biblical vision of diversity in unity. As we move forward, it is imperative that our strategies are rooted in collaboration, education, and an authentic engagement with the rich cultural tapestry that defines our church.

4. Scope & Methodology

4a. Scope

While almost every Uniting Church congregation or faith community in Queensland has some level of cultural diversity, the project was oriented to those that are primarily multi-cultural or culturally and linguistically diverse. Our project scope was:

- **In Scope**
 - o Congregations and Faith Communities that are explicitly multi-cultural or non-Anglo mono-cultural
 - o CALD congregations and Faith Communities
 - o Congregations and Faith Communities with non-Anglo ministry agents, usually engaging in a non-Anglo ministry
 - o Worship services in a non-English language that are part of a mainly Anglo congregation
- **Out of Scope**
 - o Predominantly First Nations congregations and faith communities. Such congregations are to be considered in the light of the particular covenantal relationship between the Church and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress rather than in the broader multi-cultural context. That said, some groups engaged in this process do include First Nations people.
 - o Predominantly Anglo congregations doing cultural work – like the English language classes run by Toowong Uniting Church, or the refugee and asylum seeker hub of Indooroopilly Uniting Church.
 - o Predominantly Anglo congregations considering or planning ministry with seasonal workers (e.g. Gatton UC) but not yet substantially developed.
 - o Uniting Early Learning (UEL) Centres (e.g. Jahjumbreen at Toowong is very multi-cultural)
 - o Congregations that rent space to CALD congregations from other denominations, whose relationships range from those actively seeking to partner, to a simple landlord-tenant relationship.
 - o Schools and Colleges.
 - o Agencies

4b. Methodology

- Contact was made with key personnel identified by the MCCRG and Presbyteries.
- A background to the project was given, an overview of the process, how the data would be used, and an introduction to the person collecting the data.
- A curious, open-ended conversation was entered. Notes were taken on key congregational data covering:
 - o the cultural mix of their worship and congregation
 - o the numbers in worship
 - o presence and engagement of children and young people
 - o current health and vitality
 - o range of ministries engaged in
 - o mission readiness
 - o leadership strength

- o relationship with host congregation and/or Presbytery
- o challenges, joys, hopes
- o mission plans
- o ways in which the Mission Accompanying Team may be able to assist them.
- Trends, observations, incidental statements, inferences, and hunches were also noted for later examination.
- Sometimes these conversations were held via email as this was a better method for communication when language was a barrier.
- The data was organised on a large spreadsheet, and once the interviews were complete, was further refined and gaps chased up.
- This raw data was sent to each presbytery for comment and correction.
- The MAT reviewed the data and undertook some analysis, looking for trends, opportunities, learnings, etc.
- The data was further refined and placed into tables.
- Key learnings and recommendations began to be developed for this report including via internal MAT review, meeting with MCCRG and consultation with a representative of UnitingWorld.

5. Congregation and Faith Community Data

Thirty-seven (37) communities of faith were discovered with a significant level of cultural or linguistic diversity. This represents approximately 20% of all congregations in Queensland. These communities ranged from half a dozen people meeting once a month, to a community of five different ethnic congregations worshipping at different times under one roof.

Twenty-one (21) of these Communities had a Pacific Islands heritage. Seven (7) an Asian heritage, five (5) African, and four (4) a mixed cohort with no majority ethnicity.

The communities also ranged from 'near the end of their life cycle' to thriving congregations. As such we have sought to use qualitative labels in the tables below.

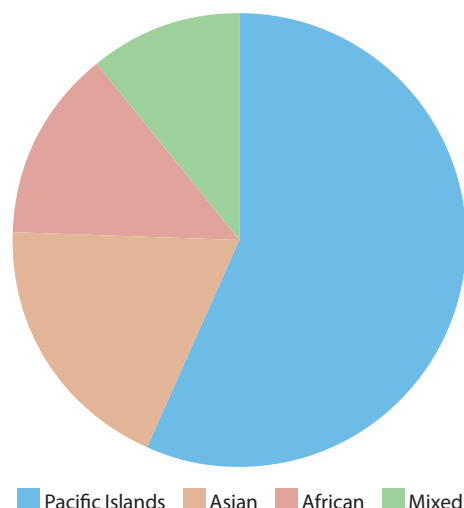
It could be that a small group exhibits the qualities of an energised, growing community, while a larger cohort demonstrate all the signs of a community in decline. Please pay particular attention to the context of each label. They are not necessarily directly comparable.

Communities also ranged from: single ethnic faith communities; ethnic worshipping communities attached to a larger majority culture congregation; to multiple ethnic communities worshipping as one church. We have sought to find some qualitative terms to group these communities, under the column 'Type' below, again they are qualitative labels.

Included below is a summary of the communities of faith discovered in each Presbytery. The colour scheme is consistent across the charts, with the 'types' defined in the third column.

Overall, we found communities in these broad categories:

Ethnic Makeup



4 Single Culture/Own building
3 Single Culture/Shared building
7 Cultural Enclaves
10 Mixed Culture Congregations
6 Main English with CALD congregation
1 Single Culture Church Plant
4 Multi-cultural Congregation
2 Special Cases

5a. Data

Bremer Brisbane Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Graceville Vietnamese Central UC Ps Phuoc Dang (0.6 FTE)	Vietnamese language Sunday morning 120, mixed age group Lots of kids	Single Culture – Own building Outward looking
Goodna Samoan Congregation Ps Lupe (0.5 FTE) with Goodna UC	Samoan language Sunday, avg 75 Almost 40% youth & children	Single Culture – Own building Mission focus
Inala Samoan Congregation Ps Faamanu Hytongue (0.4 FTE)	Samoan 2 Services English: Mostly Samoan fok, avg 15 Samoan, avg 60	Single Culture – shared building
Niuean Congregation of Ipswich UC PS Jamieson Toaputh (Vol)	Niue language Sunday 12.30pm, avg 12 Mainly one family, mixed age	Cultural enclave Faithful
Brisbane Korean Faith Community at Toowong UC Ps John Lee (0.2 FTE)	Korean language, Sunday Avg 17	Cultural enclave Faithful
Vietnamese Hope Faith Community @ Centenary UC Ps Hieu (0.3 FTE)	Vietnamese	Cultural enclave Faithful

Mary Burnett Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Hervey Bay UC Rev Willem Smith (Sth Africa, F/T)	Anglo with South African congregation once monthly (Avg 35)	CALD Minister, Anglo main, + single culture congregation
Buderim UC Rev Brian Nagel (Sth Africa, F/T)	Anglo with South African congregation once monthly (Avg 80) 40% SA in morning worship	CALD Minister, Anglo main, + single culture congregation
Maroochydore Korean Faith Community Ps Gil Park (Vol)	Korean 1st Sun – Maroochydore (6) 2nd Sun – Hevey Bay (8) 3rd Sun – Kingaroy (8)	Single culture, recovering
Nambour UC Rev Maile (Sione) Molitika (F/T)	Anglo congregation Tongan Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Bundaberg UC Rev Stuart Bosch	Anglo congregation South African Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent

The Downs Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Central Downs UC Rev Willie Liebenberg (Sth Africa, F/T)	Anglo Congregation South African Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Highfields Community Church Rev Marius Kruger (Sth African, F/T)	Anglo Congregation South African Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Warwick Killarney UC Rev Ansie Liebenberg (Sth Africa, F/T)	Anglo Congregation South African Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Dalby Jandowae UC Ps Alisi Manu (Tongan, F/T)	Anglo Congregation South African Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent

South Moreton Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Brisbane Taiwanese PS Jane Zeng & Ps Samuel Miao (both F/T)	Taiwanese Sunday 10am (Taiw/Eng) Avg 170, w/60 kids Vibrant, busy community	Single culture – Own Building Looking outward
Brisbane Fijian Samu Turagacati (Church Council Chair)	Fijian 10am Sun Eng (ave 30 Fijian + kids) 3pm Fijian (Ave 20 + kids)	Cultural enclave Faithful
South Sudanese Faith Community @ St David's Coopers Plains UC Ps Moses Leth (P/T)	South Sudanese Sun 1.15pm (40, mixed age)	Cultural enclave Faithful
Tonga UC (Logan) Congregation Ps Sione Afu (0.5 FTE)	Tongan 12 12pm (avg 50) Beenleigh UC 2nd, 3rd, 4th Sun Logan Central UC 1st Sun	Single Culture Seeking venue
Sunnybank Faith Community Rev Malcolm Coombes (Ret)	Mixed Sun 8.30 Traditional (avg 30) 14 nationalities 5.30 pm Contemporary (avg 15)	Mixed culture Rebuilding
Logan Central Multicultural Ps Sunia Nadruku (Fiji, 0.5 FTE supply)	Mixed Sun Eng (Ave 25) 2pm Asian non-UC United Methodist of Tonga	Mixed culture Rebuilding
Paradise Point UC Rev Noah Kim (F/T)	Anglo Congregation Korean Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Scenic Rim UC Rev Dr Je Cheol Cook	Anglo Congregation Korean Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent

Moreton Rivers Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Park Tongan UC Rev Alamoti Lavaki (F/T Supply)	Tongan 10am Sun (Ave 120, mixed age) Last Sun monthly youth-run English/ Tongan service	Single Culture – Own Building Looking outward
Kangaroo Point UC Rev Stanley Tuiliovoni (F/T, Fiji)	Multicultural 9am Engl, mixed (avg 65, 10 kids) 1st and 3rd Fiji (20) 4th Samoan (15) 2nd Torres Strait	Multicultural Centre Many ethnicities, one site
Bracken Ridge UC Ps Moana (Ana) Teulib-Schaaf (0.3 FTE Supply)	Mixed Sun English (avg 45)	Mixed culture Stable
Aspley Uniting 4pm Ps Namila Davui (F/T, Fiji)	Mixed Sun 4pm (Avg 40, 15 kids) Anglo, Pacific Island (Sun 9am, 80 anglo, older congregation)	Mixed culture Renewal
Kenani (Vacant)	Mixed Pacifica 10am Sunday Eng (Avg 45)	Mixed culture Energy
Zimbabwe Methodist Cong @ West End UC Peggy Chigeza (Vol)	Zimbabwe Methodist has MOU with UnitingWorld Sun 3pm (Avg 15, 7 kids)	Cultural enclave Faithful
Caboolture Uniting	Tongan 1pm Sunday (6 people)	Cultural enclave Survive
Geebung Wavell UC Rev Tevita Takai	Anglo Congregation Tongan Minister	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent
Biloela Fijian Faith Community Onny & Jone Logaivau (Vol)	Fijian Church Plant from Kangaroo Point UC 10am Sun (Avg 35, 2 kids)	Single Culture Church Plant
North Rockhampton UC (Vacant)	Anglo Tongan Cong once monthly (Avg 15) (2023/2024)	Anglo Main + Single culture congregation

Carpentaria Presbytery

Church	Key Details	Type
Burdekin UC Rev Malia Ma'u (0.8 FTE, Tongan)	Anglo congregations Malia working with other cultures and seasonal workers	CALD Minister, Anglo main, + single culture congregation
Bowen UC Tongan Congregation Vacant	Tongan: April-Nov large Sun PM Tongan Service (200+) in Catholic Church Lay led or Rev Malia	CALD Minister, Anglo main, + single culture congregation
Dimbulah Tongan Congregation Ps John Fifita (0.5 FTE, Tongan)	Tongan Seasonal 3pm Sun (200+)	CALD Minister, Anglo main, + single culture congregation
Thursday Island Ps Mosese Fangupo (F/T incl 0.5 BlueCare, Tongan)	Mixed Sun 9am Eng (PNG, Tongan, Fiji, First Nations, Thurs Island) (Avg 25, 5 kids)	Mixed culture Stable
Mornington Island UC PS Tau Williams (F/T, Cook Is)	First Nations & Pacific Islands Sun English (Avg 35) Includes food/meal & message	Mixed culture Stable
Townsville West End UC Ps John Tai (F/T incl. 0.5 UnitingCare, Cook Is)	Mixed 9am Sun (Avg 25) (First Nations, Fiji, Tongan) Renewing	Mixed culture Stable
Mission Beach Ps Nollie Uitenweerde (0.2 FTE, Sth Africa)	Mixed Sun (Pacific Islands, PNG, Avg 25) Rebuilding foundations	Mixed culture Stable
Napranum UC Rev Tevita Niurua (F/T, Fiji)	First Nations, mixed Sun 10am Eng (First Nations, Tong, Fiji) (Avg 45 + kids) Fijian service quarterly	Mixed culture Stable
Townsville Korean (Central) Faith Community Ps Gi-Young Youn (F/T)	Korean Sun 11.30 (Avg 45, 20 kids)	Single Culture Church Plant
Cairns Korean (Emmanuel) Ps Young Hun Weon (F/T)	Korean Sun 11.30 (Avg 50, 15 kids) PS Young has been present 23 years	Single Culture Shared building
Cairns Emmanuel Ps Netani Bolatolu (0.6, Fiji)	Multicultural Sun 9am Eng (Mixed, avg 80, 20 kids) Sat 9am Bhutanese (50) Sun 5pm Fiji (35) Sun 2.30pm Cook Is (50, 15 kids) 1st Sun 10am Samoan (large community)	Multicultural centre Many CALD groups, one site

Edmonton UC Ps Gewa Au (0.5 FTE, PNG)	Mixed 9am Eng (avg 50, some kids) (Anglo, Cook Is, PNG) 12pm Cook Is (Avg 20) 3pm Cook Is (Avg 35)	Multicultural centre Many CALD groups, one site
St Andrews Mt Isa UC Ps Ueli Otomuli (F/T incl 0.5 UnitingCare, Tongan) Ps Otomuli concludes Easter 2025)	Multicultural 9am Sun Eng (Mixed, avg 50, 10 kids) 3pm Sun Tongan (Avg 12) Monthly Fijian (Avg 25)	Multicultural centre Many CALD groups, one site
Kirwan UC Rev Esteban Lievano (Argentina)	Anglo Congregation Tongan worship recently started once a month	Anglo Congregation CALD Agent

6. Key Learnings

The process of conducting research interviews revealed a number of key learnings:

- The people we spoke with appreciated the contact. We had many mutually uplifting conversations leaving the impression that it would not take much mentoring or continued contact to stir more energy.
- Gifted/well trained leadership is important to generate healthy communities.
- Most communities doing CALD ministry were led by CALD leadership. Is there some reluctance or ignorance from Anglo agents to work in this space?
- Inherited cultures and resources tend to continue. Although it is easier to disrupt a community than to grow one.
- Ecclesiology of CALD communities is significant for unity. Getting different ethnicities to work from a similar *polity* and *ecclesiology* is crucial. There is significant opportunity with improved education and training in this area.
- CALD communities are often under resourced compared to communities in the majority culture, but had an abundance of passion, which is often missing in the majority culture congregations.
- Some CALD communities are still operating from a 'Christendom' mindset, with a strong assumption that people should go to church. Where this ethic remains in the surrounding culture, communities of faith remain strong. Where the mindset is changing to a post-Christendom one of 'You *don't* go to church' – communities of faith are struggling and aging. Communities with the Christendom mindset did not know how to reach a post-Christendom world, which includes their children and grandchildren. Education and mentoring in ministering to a post-Christendom world is crucial now while many congregations remain strong .
- Some CALD communities fear the 'Institution,' often seeking to fly under the radar, so they can do things as they always have. This comes from a few areas:
 - o Structures at home can be more authoritarian than here, so it is assumed that communities will have to fall in line with leadership.
 - o Some of their interactions have been ones where they have got into trouble, or confused, trying to follow the Australian way.
 - o They have heard about UCA openness to sexuality and other 'liberal' theology, and sense that their more traditional theology will cause conflict.
 - o They have not understood or experienced the Uniting Church's desire to have their input, and therefore do not realise the capacity they have to speak and be involved in decision making.
 - o Despite being in a different context, there is some clinging onto inherited ways as 'the way,' good for all times, places, and people. Some were heard saying, 'We are Methodists,' proclaiming that *heritage* as their true selves.
 - o Sometimes the institution has been dismissive and heavy-handed with them or has not taken the time to understand their cultural story and demonstrate understanding to their satisfaction.
 - o A simple reluctance to want to engage.
- Empowering the relationship between the majority and other cultures by valuing one another's stories, spending time together, and championing certain individuals and ideals may have significant impact in bringing greater integration.
- Some CALD communities are doing ministry with 2nd and 3rd generation members well. There is opportunity for mutual learning, including from the experiences and failures of the wider Church in this area.
- Increased capacity within the Synod office in awareness and understanding of the difficulties CALD communities face dealing with compliance could generate significant outcomes.

- Anglo/mono-cultural congregations should be seen as the anomaly rather than the mainstream in most communities. A focus on educating our Anglo-majority congregations how to be open and inviting to reflect the diversity of their community would bring renewal.
- We felt and experienced the passion and hard work of those ministering and leading in CALD communities. We want to affirm and encourage them.
- Given the complexities of many CALD people sending income 'home' to support their families, them often being underemployed because of education and other disadvantages, many CALD communities of faith are led by part-time ministry, and often lay leadership. Often these leaders go above and beyond, and what they lack in training they make up for in passion – yet the struggle with under formed ministry leadership working part-time is real. How we resource this area of the church that is 'punching above its weight' in terms of healthy congregations, is a serious question for consideration.
- Is our church planting focusing on planting in multi-ethnic areas, with an inter-cultural vision?
- There is a greater diversity of cultural groups represented in the Uniting Church than even the MCCRG realized, and the geographical spread was not what was at first expected. Carpentaria Presbytery, for example, is leading the way.
- The MCCRG has been encouraged by the findings and challenged in its work to help tackle some of the findings of this paper.
- It is often the default position that *multi-cultural* means *Pacifica* in the Uniting Church. The abundance of South African connections was an unexpected finding.

7: Queensland Census data

As of 2021, 1 in 5 Queenslanders were born overseas. This is less than the Australian average of 1 in 3, but it is on the rise.

The most common overseas birthplaces for Queensland in 2021 are listed below;

Country of Birth	% of total population
New Zealand	4.0
England	3.7
India	1.4
China	1.1
Philippines	1.0
South Africa	1.0
Vietnam	0.5
Scotland	0.4
Germany	0.4
USA	0.4
PNG	0.3
Taiwan	0.3
Malaysia	0.3
Fiji	0.3

We note that the biggest CALD groups in the Queensland Uniting Church come from Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, PNG, Korean, and South Africa – many of whom do not rank on this list. Some of these groups may come through New Zealand. Aligning the list with the percentage of Pacific Islander and Korean people who are Christian, the figures make more sense.

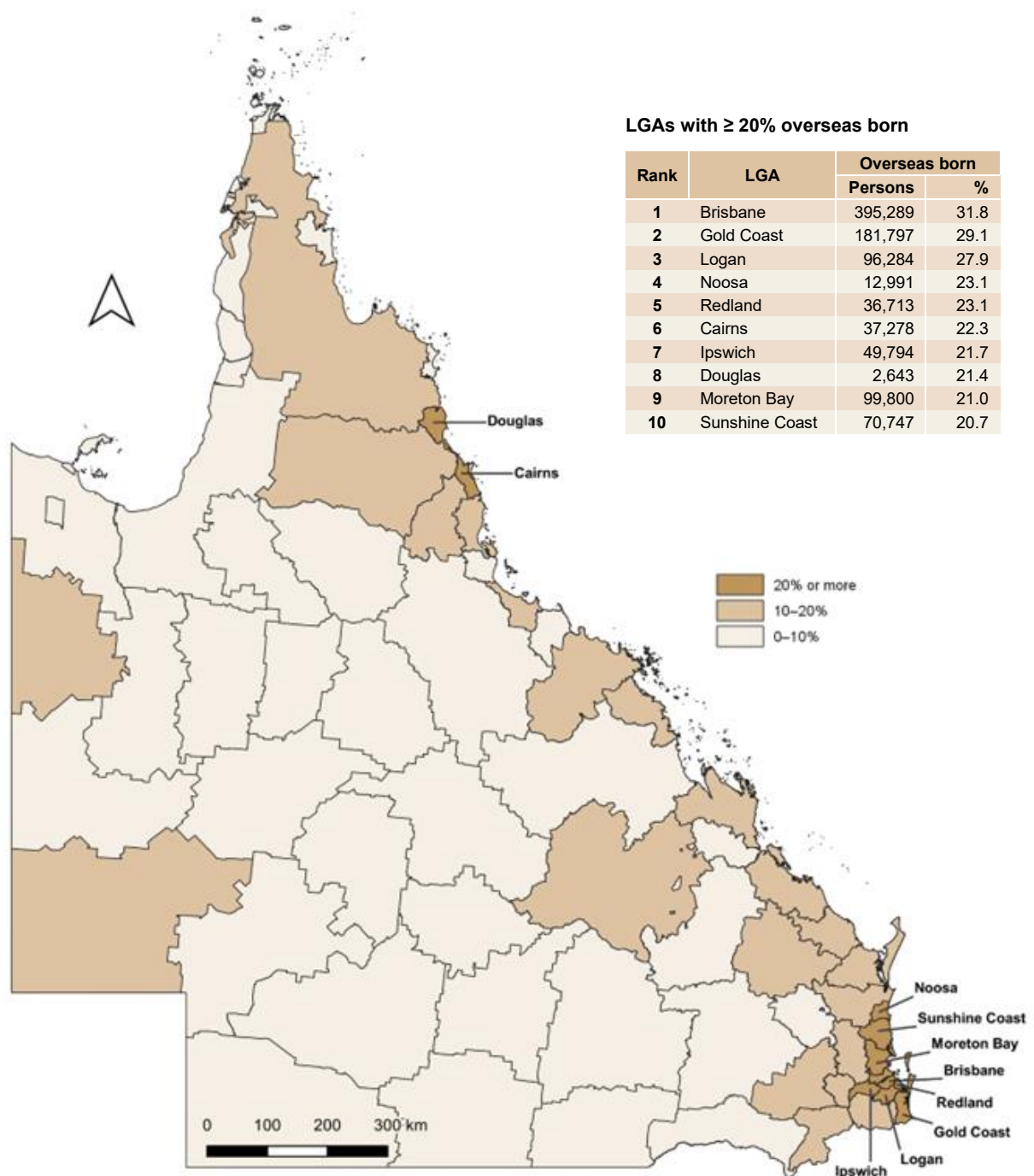
There are also certain places – i.e. Cairns, where groups like the Cook Island people congregate, which demonstrate that knowing local trends is also important in engaging well with other cultures.

Four areas with significant increases in the number of over-seas born residents between 2016 – 2021 were:

- Fraser Coast 17.8%
- Lockyer Valley 16.0%
- Cairns 10.6%
- Townsville 5.8%

The following figure shows the distribution of overseas-born persons across Queensland. This chart follows the concentrating of CALD congregations found across the Presbyteries fairly well, and the 20% figure of CALD communities of faith aligns well with the 20% of Queensland being overseas born.

Figure 2 Overseas-born persons by local government area, Queensland, 2021



Source: Map produced by Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Queensland Treasury.
Data sourced from ABS Table Builder Pro, 2021 Census.

The information in the next section shows that the Department of Immigration is incentivising immigration to the Cairns and Townsville regions. These areas are of particular interest for the Uniting Church, to ensure we have some focus on encouraging inter-cultural ministry in these areas.

We can breakdown this data for each Local Government Area (LGA).

Local Government Area	No. Born Overseas 2016	% pop	No. Born Overseas 2021	% pop
Aurukun	27	2.1	17	1.5
Balonne	263	6.0	272	6.3
Banana	1,174	8.2	1,126	7.8
Barcaldine	163	5.7	148	5.2
Blackall-Tambo	85	4.5	89	4.7
Boulia	23	5.4	27	5.9
Brisbane	346,352	30.6	395,289	31.8
Bulloo	22	6.2	21	6.2
Bundaberg	11,108	12.0	12,942	13.0
Burdekin	1,418	8.3	1,501	9.0
Burke	23	7.0	26	6.2
Cairns	33,699	21.5	37,278	22.3
Carpentaria	143	7.3	132	6.3
Cassowary Coast	3,998	13.9	4,223	14.5
Central Highlands	3,039	10.9	3,263	11.7
Charters Towers	664	5.6	730	6.2
Cloncurry	265	8.7	311	8.5
Cook	575	13.6	638	14.1
Croydon	11	3.7	13	4.9
Diamantina	18	6.2	31	11.7
Doomadgee	23	1.6	37	2.7
Douglas	2,352	20.1	2,643	21.4
Etheridge	55	6.9	49	6.9
Flinders	75	4.9	90	6.0
Fraser Coast	14,162	14.0	16,685	15.0
Gladstone	8,921	14.5	8,428	13.3
Gold Coast	157,183	28.3	181,797	29.1
Goondiwindi	631	5.9	638	6.2
Gympie	5,342	10.8	6,160	11.6
Hinchinbrook	1,052	9.7	988	9.0
Hope Vale	15	1.6	14	1.4
Ipswich	39,009	20.1	49,794	21.7
Isaac	2,098	10.0	2,127	9.6
Kowanyama	17	1.8	16	1.5
Livingstone	3,651	10.1	3,990	10.1
Lockhart River	12	1.7	22	3.4
Logan	82,883	27.3	96,284	27.9
Longreach	252	6.9	279	7.7
Mackay	13,472	11.7	14,486	11.9
Maranoa	900	7	899	7
Mareeba	3,570	16.6	3,866	16.9
McKinlay	58	7.3	40	4.8

Local Government Area	No. Born Overseas 2016	% pop	No. Born Overseas 2021	% pop
Moreton Bay	83,392	19.6	99,800	21.0
Mornington	37	3.2	28	2.7
Mount Isa	3,015	16.1	3,053	16.3
Murweh	297	6.9	332	8.4
Napranum	19	2.0	18	2.0
Noosa	11,270	21.6	12,991	23.1
North Burnett	982	9.4	1,035	10.3
Northern Peninsula Area	80	2.9	64	2.3
Palm Island	47	1.9	25	1.2
Paroo	67	4.1	85	5.1
Pormpuraaw	32	4.3	18	2.9
Quilpie	49	6	42	6
Redland	33,203	22.6	36,713	23.1
Richmond	46	5.8	33	4.3
Rockhampton	7,494	9.4	8,184	10.0
Scenic Rim	5,716	14.3	6,467	15.0
Somerset	2,977	12.1	3,389	13.5
South Burnett	2,966	9.2	3,192	9.7
Southern Downs	3,639	10.4	3,724	10.3
Sunshine Coast	57,556	19.6	70,747	20.7
Tablelands	3,121	12.6	3,464	13.2
Toowoomba	18,807	11.7	24,059	13.9
Torres	238	6.6	262	7.7
Torres Strait Island	178	3.9	137	3.3
Townsville	25,588	13.7	27,071	14.0
Weipa	398	10.2	404	9.9
Western Downs	2,388	7.1	2,673	7.9
Whitsunday	5,189	15.4	6,073	16.3
Winton	53	4.7	59	5.2
Woorabinda	14	1.5	10	1.0

The below is the LGA with more than 15% of population born overseas, 2021 Census data.

Local Government Area	No. Born Overseas 2016	% pop
Brisbane	395,289	31.8
Gold Coast	181,797	29.1
Logan	96,284	27.9
Redland	36,713	23.1
Noosa	12,991	23.1
Cairns	37,278	22.3
Ipswich	49,794	21.7
Douglas	2,643	21.4
Moreton Bay	99,800	21.0
Sunshine Coast	70,747	20.7
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Toowoomba	24,059	13.9
Fraser Coast	16,685	15.0
Mackay	14,486	11.9
Noosa	12,991	23.1
Bundaberg	12,942	13.0

There were several Suburbs across Brisbane where the number of overseas born residents was great than 50%. All these suburbs, except Brisbane City, are in the southern part of the city.

1. Robertson 59.1% (China, India, Taiwan)
2. Stretton 58.7% (China, Taiwan, New Zealand)
3. Rochedale 57.7% (China, India, South Korea)
4. MacGregor 57.6% (China, Taiwan, India)
5. Sunnybank 56.3% (China, Taiwan, India)
6. Pallara 55.8% (India, New Zealand, Philippines)
7. Calamvale 55.2% (China, India, Taiwan)
8. Runcorn 53.6% (China, India, South Korea)
9. Brisbane City 52.9% (China, South Korea, India)
10. Sunnybank Hills 52.5% (China, Taiwan, India)

Keeping abreast of demographic data in this area may help us make decisions about where to plant future churches, and where to engage congregations to reach beyond their own ethnicity.

8: Changing Immigration Arrangements – Townsville/Cairns

In November 2019, the Australian Government announced changes to the immigration program aimed at boosting immigration to regional areas.

Specific areas are given incentives that make it easier for certain skilled migrants to immigrate to those areas.

Major cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and **Brisbane** do not receive any such incentives. While this does not stop immigration to these areas, it does limit immigration due to lower applicant eligibility. Immigration to such cities tends to be limited to those with higher skills, who can pay their own way, usually from more affluent countries.

In major Regional Centres, like Perth, Adelaide, **Gold Coast** and **Sunshine Coast** some incentives are offered for certain immigration types, i.e. certain occupations in short supply.

Regional centres and areas receive the highest incentives for overseas migration. In Queensland this includes many areas outside Brisbane. **Logan, Scenic Rim, Ipswich, The Downs, North Lakes/Mango Hill and north, Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay, Central, North & Far North Queensland** are specifically named.

Anecdotal evidence from the Multicultural Community Centre in Brisbane – suggests that because of increasing house prices, areas like the Gold and Sunshine coast were becoming out of reach except for people immigrating from wealthier areas such as UK, USA, China and South African. Those from Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa were having to aim further afield.

The Townsville Migrant Support Group advised that in addition to the above, the Cairns and Townsville regions were part of the Federal Government's Designated Area Migration Agreement. They are the only localities within Queensland to receive such designation, a factor that has already seen immigration in the area increasing.

We can therefore expect immigration to North and Far North Queensland to increase, especially from Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Migration to the Sunshine and Gold Coasts, and associated areas will likely continue from South Africa, the UK, USA, and China.

Other areas may not be heavily incentivised for continued growth, but the historic reality of established communities attracting additional immigration will likely mitigate any significant slowing.

9: Case Study: Easter Madness/Day Camps

One area where we see the church proactively engaging in the inter-cultural space, and learning by doing, is in youth and children's ministry.

When events like Day Camp, Easter Madness and Ba De Ya have only captured attendance from Anglo young people, they are different events than when young people from our CALD communities have also attended.

For a start, the numbers from CALD communities very quickly overwhelm those from the majority culture. This reflects the relative demographic health of our CALD communities, where whole families – three generations – are more likely to be in attendance.

Often cultural groups will stay in siloed groups at camps with young people perhaps not having been shown how to interact and integrate. There may be some value in additional planning for this area – for example with the inclusion of very intentional cultural ice-breaker activities as a helpful, appropriate, and even biblical thing to do. Perhaps the vision of being an inter-cultural church has not been widely enough proclaimed across the church to have been considered on their agenda.

CALD communities certainly bring, passion, energy, and enthusiasm for the gospel to such events, a factor which is widely appreciated. While Anglo children may have imbibed a message that the church is in decline and defeat, CALD young people often come feeling that Christianity is a common view, is growing, spreading and something worth celebrating. It's been wonderful to see the connections made at camp continuing in the months afterwards with CALD bands and music groups, for example, visiting majority Anglo congregations to bring life to their worship.

The presence of cultural differences between young people at camps such as Easter Madness has also brought difficulties. Most of the majority culture youth would fit the mould of being 'church kids' who fit the expected behaviour well, while the CALD young people have a much broader background and see camp as a chance to experience freedom and test boundaries. The leaders see this as a great problem to have as it shows they are reaching beyond the walls of the church.

Children and Youth Ministry is one domain where CALD people have been significant leaders with prominent profiles. Rev Fa Matangi, Rev Faye Talatonu, Lysani Pallay and now Fernando Torres have played significant roles with our younger people. This perhaps reflects that CALD congregations are having a bigger impact on younger people. As often in the church, what is happening with young people is at the cutting edge of the future trends of the church. We would do well to continue to pay attention to this space, and resource them to learn and then teach the rest of the church.

10. Future Opportunities/Connections

In the process of our work we discovered inter-cultural opportunities already happening, being worked on, or being planned for the future. This is but a sample:.

Tuvalu

The Australian Federal Government has made an agreement with Tuvalu, to slowly repatriate their people to Australia in anticipation of the impact of Climate Change on their Island nation.

The Australian government has identified that faith is a significant aspect of Tuvalu life: 86% percent of their approximately 10,000 population are members of the Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu (the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu – EKT).

Therefore, they are looking for ways to empower the establishment of EKT congregations in Australia, with EKT pastors, to facilitate this transition.



UnitingWorld has a long history with the EKT church and have been approached by the General Secretary of the EKT church to help with this re-settlement. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is aware of this and asking if the Uniting Church, through UnitingWorld, can assist this process.

The details and plans are still in the early stages. Initial thinking is that one presbytery, possibly in Queensland given that there are two hundred Tuvalu PALM workers living in Logan, will pilot a scheme to establish an EKT congregation and supported community, to produce a blueprint for ongoing support.

Even the relationship between the Uniting Church and the EKT church is yet to be defined. This is an exciting project for the Uniting Church to be a part of, even if the circumstances for its need are quite tragic.

Dostana

The Dostana – Queensland Synod relationship was formalised with approval of the *Dostana Constitution* at Synod Standing Committee on 29 May 2020.

Dostana fosters an ongoing partnership with the Church of North India Diocese of Amritsar. Dostana fundraises on behalf of UnitingWorld, and through UnitingWorld, it financially supports a girls' hostel in Amritsar run by the Diocese. From time-to-time Dostana runs immersion visits to the Diocese to visit the hostel and other projects run by the Diocese and UnitingWorld, as well as sharing in life and worship with congregations.



The most recent immersion was in October 2024 for three weeks, with ten participants including the Moderator Rev Bruce Moore who visited Amritsar, Srinagar and Delhi.

Dostana is always on the lookout for potential future trip participants. There is a desire to have a good mix of clergy and lay people on the trips and it is hoped that in future student ministers might be able to join. The enthusiasm and energy of the church in North India needs to be experienced. Hopefully, some of it rubs off on us.

CHAT Training

Scott Downman was recently employed as the Academic Dean at Trinity College Queensland. Scott brings a wealth of experience in the multi-cultural space, having lived as a missionary in Thailand for a decade, completed his PhD in Anthropology and working for Interserve.

He was engaged in the development of the **CHAT** (Cultural Hearing Asking Telling) program for Scripture Union and is now prototyping a version of this for Churches. He was also part of the development of the Course "**Changing Lanes Crossing Cultures**" for Interserve, which is another great resource in this space.

Scott will be delivering a new course at Trinity College in 2025 - Ministry in a Culturally Diverse Context – which will be a great resource, and we will be utilising his skills and experience in the Formation space both for Candidates and Agents already in placement who want to improve in these areas. This is a serendipitous moment for us as a church.



UnitingWorld

Having UnitingWorld's Donor Relations Manager, Mardi Lumsden, and her assistant Jenny Guyatt, in Queensland, is a valuable resource to enable connections with UnitingWorld. It allows us to engage their vast experience, overseas church partnerships, and resources in the multi-cultural space. Mardi is regularly visiting congregations with a heart for mission and overseas connections across our state and brings an added dimension to this work. Engaging Mardi as a partner in this work will enhance what we plan to achieve.



Leadership: Synod/Presbytery roles

Sometimes you must proactively model and celebrate what you want to see become normal. Just as affirmative action was needed in the past to challenge the glass ceilings around gender employment, so some intention may need to be taken to find, train and empower CALD leaders who can take on roles with some profile and influence in the life of the church, to normalise CALD members being active in every facet of the church.



Multi Cross Cultural Reference Group

The Synod's MCCRG has been working and promoting the needs of the multi-cultural church for many years. We look forward to working closely with the MAT team to develop an Intercultural Mission Strategy and to help be part of its delivery.

11: Potential Actions for Further Consideration

During the process of researching this report, several areas for potential action emerged. While this report is primarily designed to outline the current state of CALD communities, it also operates as a precursor to a CALD mission renewal strategy to be developed during 2025. The following actions may be considered during the preparation of that renewal strategy.

- a. Seek to change our language as a Synod, to frame multi and inter-cultural as mainstream, alongside an intentional priority on multi-cultural stories and leadership development. This may involve helping mono-cultural congregations to see that being mono-cultural is not a successful long-term strategy.
- b. Multi-cultural renewal remains an ongoing resourced priority of the Mission Accompanying Team with appropriately gifted Mission Development Partners.
- c. Ensure inter-cultural education is a part of Ministry Formation and Continuing Education for Ministry.
- d. Give particular attention on how to best form mission ready Ministry Agents from CALD backgrounds, noting the challenges of academic learning in a second language, and other barriers to entry and success.
- e. Help Placements to be more aware and intentional about sourcing and placing appropriately skilled and gifted people into multi-cultural settlements, understanding the particular challenges of such placements.
- f. The Mission and Ministry team, in consultation with Presbyteries, roll out education and training around Ministry in the 21st Century and mentor congregations wanting to make this transition.
- g. Consider multi-cultural demographics, and the inter-cultural vision in our church planting programs. Plant multi-cultural congregations.
- h. A clear person or department be given resources and responsibility to become the expert around Visa administration support for our CALD ministry agents.
- i. The Synod Secretariat ensure they can give CALD communities of faith support in navigating the Uniting Church systems. This may involve cultural training to improve cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competency, with an emphasis on the unique needs and traditions of different CALD groups.
- j. Develop some CALD appropriate education around the ecclesiology and polity of the Uniting Church, in contrast to their home denominations and churches, that could also cover legal issues of being a church in Australia. Roll out this education across the state.
- k. If the trial is successful, roll out Scripture Union's CHAT – Cultural Hearing Asking Telling course – across the Queensland Synod, through the Mission and Ministry Team.
- l. 'Mine' the Ministry/Congregation profiles from the past 5 years to get an even better picture of the multi-cultural development across the church.
- m. Encourage the MCCRG to develop networks of similar congregations who may be able to support and mentor one another in their journey.
- n. Be intentional in sharing CALD community member's stories as part of a shared heritage through Uniting News celebrating the richness of our cultural diversity and deepening our identity as a multicultural church.

Question

If the Synod only had the resources to prioritise five of these potential action points, which five would you prioritise?

Appendix 1: Christendom V Post-Christendom Church

Christendom You should go to church	Post-Christendom People don't go to church
Church Growth is normal as people just come	Church Decline is normal as people don't come
Society aligns, supports and is sympathetic to the church	Society is misaligned, antagonistic and suspicious of the church
Discipleship: Just living in society goes a long way to shaping nominal disciples. Often the church has outsourced discipleship to society	Discipleship: The church must actively disciple its own or the world will no longer make disciples of the church. This is a relentless task
Status - Given: The church and its leaders have status in society. They rely on and enjoy this privilege. As this wanes, fighting for 'our' rights rather than the rights of those suffering, is distasteful to society.	Status - Earned: The Church has lost status in society. Credibility must be earned once again by following Jesus & the early church - loving our neighbors and enemies, etc
Evangelism: Bringing people who are nominally discipled by society, to a point of conversion and then active membership: <i>Believe, Behave, Belong</i>	Evangelism: Journeying with friends over time who know little about the faith, intriguing them with the message of Christ so they want more. <i>Welcome, Experience, Belong, Believe, Become</i>
Public Worship: Marked by the music and technology native to them - i.e. Hymn singing. Adherence to the inherited form, shape and content of Christian worship	Public Worship: Marked by the music and technology native to them, ie. post-60's music. Searching for fresh, new and authentic forms of Divine connection
Children: Expectation they will dutifully follow in their parents footsteps	Children: Expectation they will find their own faith
Community trumps Individualism	Individualism trumps Community
Submission to Authority; the expected paradigm	Questioning Authority, the expected paradigm
Pastors: Can get away with being "chaplains" to the members as the church naturally grows. Pastors the "expert" who does everything	Pastors: Can no longer be Chaplains. Must be leaders who make disciples that make disciples. Eph 4:11-13
Mission: Oversees, done by specialists. We pray and fund raise (Everyone here is Christian)	Mission: Must be done here, a task for all disciples (No one here is Christian)
Worldview: Assumed Christian framework Common Judeo-Christian story	Worldview: Pluralistic, less shared narratives, still underlying Christian foundation but unseen
Moral & Ethical influence; Given, Privileged voice, politically significant	Politics & Ethical influence: Marginal, one voice among many; grassroots compassion