



34 SYNOD 2019

Report from the
General Secretary

The General Secretary is appointed by the Synod to carry out the responsibilities of the executive officer as outlined in Regulation 3.6.3.4

To ensure that the General Secretary is managing these executive functions appropriately, the Synod Standing Committee has outlined the key areas of responsibility to be addressed by the General Secretary at this time. Attachment A is a dashboard report from the General Secretary which outlines these general functions, key performance indicators, major achievements since the last Synod and a focus on future activities.

This report also introduces you to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in the Synod office. Without this dedicated team, the work of the General Secretary could not be done. It is this team which takes the heavy lifting in delivering the services of the Synod office to the broader church. The Synod office structure and the names and photos of the members of the ELT are attached at B.

We have worked together with senior leaders in the Synod office to develop our strategic plan for Synod office activities. The focus for the next period is in working with bodies across the life of the church to ensure that everything we do adds value to our life together. That plan is attached at C. You will note that our mission is to service the mission of the Uniting Church in Australia. Everything we do is focused on supporting all of us to be a healthy, flourishing and missionally engaged church.

Ask me anything!

The attached report can be viewed as a snapshot of the activities of the Synod office. However, that means it's abbreviated. The Executive Leadership Team would be delighted to take questions on any of the activities which may not be explained fully in this type of reporting.

As part of the approach to the accountability of the General Secretary we are inviting you in various ways to "ask me anything". There will be a drop box for questions at the Synod meeting, there will be a capacity for questions in the Synod app and of course we would welcome questions from the floor.

For a narrative version of mission activities across the life of the Synod you may also be interested in the Annual Report on Mission Implementation Strategies. This will be produced at around the same time each year. The current report can be found here:

<https://ucaqld.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Mission-implementation-report.pdf>

Challenges/risks as we progress

Royal Commissions

The impact of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety and the forthcoming Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has meant that the way we have and will operate as a church in the world has foundationally changed. Our own sense of ourselves and our capacity to allow people to grow to a life in Christ is challenged.

As a church we have always responded to caring for the most vulnerable in our community. We recognise the call of Christ to be a light to the world in these ways. This call is constantly upon us and is an imperative of our faith.

However, we cannot ignore or minimise the stories of how as an institution we have sometimes failed to notice and condemn abusive practices within the life of the church. The stories of the devastating impact such failures have had on survivors of abuse within all contexts of the church are sobering. Those failures still remain with survivors now. They are not historical but are their lived reality every day.

Our call to repentance as the body of Christ is to humbly own our past and always plan for a safe church for all people in the future.

Working together in Christ

As we imagine our life together in the future, we must ask ourselves who we want to be in the world and how we might participate most fully in the mission of God. This does not happen automatically, but as the deep and truthful exercise of our discernment as a church.

This Synod we are being asked to work together to start to imagine what this might look like in the long-term future. As our communities change, what is it that we can offer that releases the redemptive life of Christ to the world? What is it about the Uniting Church that can add something unique about God's call to us?

The whole-of-Synod discernment process will sow some deep foundational work for our distinctive life in Christ and we can only do this with your active participation. In this regard particularly, never hesitate to ask the hard questions. This can only add to the strength of our foundations.

We are resourcing this process so that everything we do together at this Synod in Session will find fertile ground. Now is the time to sow for the next period of our life together.

Together with the Executive Director of Strategic Resources, Peter Cranna, I am bringing a proposal to reimagine the principals that sit behind the Mission Development Fund. In short, the General Proposal asks us to recognise that we have stewardship responsibility for the future of the church and proposes a way we can do this using existing resources.

Proposals to the 34th Synod

I bring a Minute of Appreciation for the retiring Chair of the Disaster Relief Committee, Rev Kaye Ronalds.

Contact for report questions

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General Secretary's Report



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

To assist the **General Secretary** in performing her role the **Synod Standing Committee** approved the following high-level functional responsibilities:



1. Build vision and strategy to enable the Synod to thrive

KPI

- Undertake environmental scan
- Develop strategy that the Synod Standing Committee is confident will build the vision
- Build appropriate frameworks to guide the delivery of the vision (Discipleship, Leadership, Communities, Youth children and families, Prayerful listening church, Growth transition innovation)
- Create performance dashboard

Achievements

- Embedded strategic planning in the Synod office
- Strategic frameworks apply across Synod office activities
- Improved reporting and accountability of Synod office
- Working with Presbyteries to assess resourcing and service delivery needs
- Whole-of-Synod planning – design completed and delivery underway
- Supported whole-of-church events, Easter and Country Madness, Unite, Inspired Disciples and Chaplaincy Affirmation Days
- CAP Project Officer appointments have been made

1. 34 Synod in Session

Targeting younger church leaders: theme based on the abundant generosity of God: shortened session: opportunity to discern and participate in the whole-of-Synod strategic planning: governance recommendations from the SSC will be presented.

2. Whole-of-Synod Strategic Vision 2021-2025 (aka Project Plenty)

Commenced consultation and engagement process within the church.

3. Leadership development

A collaborative approach between Strategic Mission, Moderator, People and Culture, and Trinity College Queensland will see the consolidation of plans to deliver a mature leadership development portfolio.

4. Focus on strategic presence of church

Strategic Mission to work with Presbyteries in particular to imagine appropriate church presence across Queensland.

5. Focus on healthy ministry strategy

Associate General Secretary to build enterprise-wide scaffolding to ensure consistent, seamless approach to ministry matters. Processes will support every council/board which has responsibility for ministry oversight.

6. Focus on First Peoples

Second version of Covenant Action Plan (CAP) will be resourced and developed. Cultural awareness remains a strategic learning priority.

Future focus

2. Communications and marketing

KPI

- Implement Information and Technology Strategy and roadmap
- Implement Communication Strategy
- Engage the SSC to establish key messaging around the vision of the UCA in Queensland
- Safe Ministry Training compliance reporting
- Continuing Education for Ministry (CEM) learning agreements

Achievements

- Synod report on Mission Implementation Strategies published September 2018
- Rollout of quarterly *Journey* magazine
- Improved online engagement social, video and web (1000+ unique posts)
- Increased intentional marketing strategies across Synod enterprises
- Improved delivery and success of major events
- Continuing business transition to SharePoint and Office 365
- Delivered on 2018 communication strategies
- ULearn (learning management system) live on 4 February 2019

1. Building a learning organisation

The learning management system will continue to be enhanced as it responds to requests for online training and identified learning needs from Synod office, Presbyteries and governing bodies.

2. Communications and Marketing

Strategic communication plans to support major activities such as Synod in Session, Project Plenty, Easter Madness etc., and strategic marketing plans to support commercial objectives of enterprises e.g. awareness, brand, enquiries, applications and revenue.

3. Increased relevant and reliable information for decision-making

Sugar CRM upgrade and expansion will form a core repository for information.

Office365 – SharePoint rollout will deliver a cloud-based document collaboration platform to improve document access and sharing.

Information hub (extranet) will improve the exchange of information between Synod entities.

Web redesign for Synod office and Synod enterprise to enhance awareness of who we are and what we do.

4. Moderator supported to provide public leadership in community development

The Moderator will be supported to profile the life of the church in Queensland communities such as RI in schools, other issues requiring a whole-of-church response and through community organisations such as Queensland Community Alliance and ecumenical activities.

3. Board, governance and oversight bodies

KPI

- Develop a governance framework for Synod governing bodies
- Develop and implement strategy for Synod-wide discussion and consultation re implementation of proposed arrangements
- Develop implementation and change plan – including succession planning in key areas
- For SSC, boards and committees arrange operational support to ensure:
 - Policy advice and reporting to enable appropriate decision-making
 - Accurate and relevant information to inform decision-making
 - Communications that ensure alignment of objectives

Achievements

- Governance review consultation completed
- SSC endorsement of next steps in By-laws and governance review approach
- Separation of FIP Board and Audit and Risk Committee
- Centralised coordination of support to Synod governing bodies
- Governance capacity development approved
- Incorporation of skill assessment and skill ratings into nomination process
- RNC consideration of eligibility of remuneration to Synod governing bodies
- Ongoing engagement and oversight of schools improving. Providing bi-annual governance training for school and college boards and standardised board selection process.

1. Rollout of governance recommendations – as approved by SSC

At this Synod the SSC will bring three recommendations based on this work. Ongoing work on the role and responsibilities of governance bodies will continue.

2. Workplace Health and Safety Act – Review of Person Conducting a Business Undertaking

This significant piece of work will cement external regulatory expectations around our whole-of-church governance responsibilities.

3. Child care centres – effective governance strategy

We are resourcing the improvement in governance capacity and coordinated compliance.

4. Schools and Residential Colleges Commission (SRCC)

We have consolidated the work of the SRCC in developing governance understanding across the schools and residential colleges. Schools strategic framework and engagement plan has been developed and will be implemented.

5. Policies approved – will be monitored and evaluated

Redress recovery, foreign visas, Treasury, fundraising, candidate's financial hardship, use of church property for same gender marriage, privacy, WHS, Synod office delegations, financial management, information management, risk and compliance.

6. Royal commissions

Support and resource engagement in the National Redress Scheme, the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability.

4. Stakeholder and relationship management

KPI

- Implement a stakeholder management strategy
- Identify and resource priority areas
- Communications across the church that ensure alignment
- Improved Net Promoter Scores in Pulse Survey
- Improved customer satisfaction results from Service Level Agreements

Achievements

- Continued implementation of Stakeholder Management Strategy
- First performance measures survey undertaken for Internal Service Level Agreement
- External Service Level Agreements finalised
- Intentional and aligned visits of Synod office staff and Moderator with Presbyteries, schools and agencies
- Strategic Presence working group to trial approach with the Mary Burnett Presbytery
- Communication strategies in place to manage risk

1. Pulse Survey 2

Planning for the next pulse survey to be taken in the second half of 2019 to measure customer satisfaction of Synod office services.

2. Continued rollout of whole-of-Synod strategies

- *Strategic presence.* Resource the church to make the best decisions about expressions of church presence and ministry based on relevant data and insights.
- *Multi and cross-cultural church.* Explore and communicate what it means to be an integrated multi and cross-cultural church.
- *First Peoples.* Facilitate intentional first and second people's engagement.
- *One church.* Curate an environment in which to facilitate one unified Christ-centred identity for the whole church.
- *Healthy ministry.* Oversee and shape a consistent, well-informed, integrated ministry across the life of the church.

3. Induction of office bearers within the Queensland Synod

Create a set of consistent adaptable materials to be used for inducting all people bearing office in the name of the Uniting Church.

4. Improved ecumenical, interfaith and governmental relationships

Support the Moderator to improve the UCA's standing in significant areas of influence in government, community and church life.



5. Contribution to the UCA national activities

KPI

- Recognised priority areas for Synod involvement in supporting national activities
- Regular reporting and alignment of national activities to SSC vision
- Participation in national UCA activities as appropriate

Achievements

- General Secretary attendance at Assembly Standing Committee meetings
- Attendance at regular General Secretary/Associate General Secretary meetings
- Collaboration with South Australian Synod on leadership development
- Participation in National Insurance collaboration program
- General Secretary representation as a member of UCA Redress Ltd
- General Secretary and Strategic Mission team participation in National Assembly 2018
- Hosted Uniting Women conference in 2018
- Agreement to resource National Safe Church Unit

1. Consultation with Assembly on Project Plenty

Ensuring alignment between Assembly and Queensland Synod strategic planning.

2. Member of regulation review task group

Initiating a foundational review of the regulations to determine purpose, approach and recommended steps forward for contemporary national governance.

3. Hosting National Assembly in 2021

Preparation for this event to be initiated and resourced in 2019.

4. Continuing conversations around the role and resourcing of UAICC

Participation in the national conversation while reviewing and supporting local First Peoples and covenanting projects.

5. Nominee to national task group responding to Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Oversight, advice and information-sharing.

6. Proactively supporting further work on national purchasing collaboration

Continue to release Synod office resources to explore further collaborative opportunities. Financial licensing, audit, fleet etc.

7. Safe Ministry Unit

Continued participation in the development and delivery of this national project.

6. Strategic resource management

KPI	Achievements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent financial management of U.C.I.S • Improved Treasury financial performance (Net interest margin) • Improved Strategic Property Management (highest and best utilisation in accordance with Synod strategic vision) • Resource allocation aligned with Synod strategic vision • Grow funding and bequests in line with the fundraising strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of budget against maturing budget models. Treasury Policy updated • Finance team review conducted .New financial reporting strategies in development • Property Strategy Phase 1 (ranking of non-agency property for development purposes) • Fundraising and bequests strategy and DGR accreditation for scholarships and identification. Publication of bequests and grants • Sale of Shalom Christian College and Shalom transition program • Improved cost structures and utilisation of Alex Park and Raymont. Significant improvements in reporting • Business plans and marketing plans in place for Alex Park and Raymont • Alex Park 2019/2020 bookings already higher than 2018/2019 • Improved utilisation of Raymont over Christmas break for external group bookings • Raymont student numbers up from 99 to 114 • Sustainable practices implemented at Uniting Church Centre 60 Bayliss Street including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar panels – savings currently tracking well against ROI • Investigations into LED lighting, improved water usage at Raymont and increased air conditioning efficiency. Savings in cleaning and gas with improved procurement practices

1. Finalise Shalom site reconfiguration

Manage property to subdivide Elders Village from title.

2. Property Strategy Framework

Property strategy Phase 2: Documentation and education across Queensland Synod around property development proposals; input into the Strategic Presence project; develop the overall property framework.

3. Advanced Treasury and Finance strategies and operations

Continued review of Treasury assets and utilisation including debt, liquidity, Australian Financial Services Licence (AFSL) requirements and Fringe Benefits processing.

4. Support of presbyteries and congregations

Continued support of the Combined Presbytery Mission Pool and the investigation and introduction of a shared bookkeeping resource.

5. Continued improvements in Alex Park and Raymont Residential College utilisation and cost structures.

Improve and develop the marketing, assets and utilisation of the Synod's Mission Support Enterprises.

6. Auchenflower site master planning – 2020/2021

Review the potential of the site to adequately cater for Synod enterprises and services in the medium to long term.

7. Strategic people management

KPI

- Resourcing for faith and discipleship
- HR placements that reflect best practice and improved efficiency
- Learning and development strategies that support the vision and ensure succession
- Models for all ministry development, performance and appraisals for ministry staff
- Synod office attendance at strategic priority training sessions
- Development of schedule of activities to reinforce team values

Achievements

- Next Gen Arise/Activate
- Learning and Development Framework (LDF) for Synod office approved
- LDF delivered to ELT/SLT and emerging Synod office leaders
- LDF capabilities mapped to ELT/SLT positions
- Placements review project commenced
- Trinity College Queensland business transformation program on track
- Nine values/culture workshops held across the Synod office

1. Board of Christian Formation (BCF) strategic oversight

Continued focus by Trinity College Queensland on innovative models of formation and ministry development. Oversee integrated ministry strategy consistent with Assembly guidelines.

2. Healthy ministry strategy

Create a shared understanding of the whole-of-church responsibility for safe ministry practice and ensure compliance. Operationalise integrated ministry strategy. Facilitate an integrated approach to youth ministry across the Synod. Resource the church in discipleship strategies.

3. Maturing the Leadership Development Framework

In collaboration with relevant stakeholders promote leadership framework, assess and run graduate and executive leadership programs, participate in the Uniting Leaders project, and develop and implement the Women in Leadership project.

4. Continued development of placements operational model

An integrated and informed office approach to support the placements process.

5. Rollout of Learning Management System

After initial evaluation and adjustment based on lessons learned, Ulearn will be rolled out with access given to all Synod office employees, Presbytery offices and Queensland Synod ministry agents.

8. Synod office operations

KPI

Achievements

- Financial performance to budget
- Staff and resource management to deliver Synod operations (to budget)
- Improve business development and performance (Trinity College Queensland, Raymont Residential College, Alexandra Park Conference Centre and other innovative enterprises)

- Alignment of Synod business to annual strategic planning and budget
- Improved Information Technology relationships with strong customer service focus
- Operational plans performance monitored and reported
- Ongoing development of Senior Leadership Team who work to KPIs
- Resourcing within budget
- Portfolio project management driving and improving decision-making
- Strategic marketing and business support for Trinity College Queensland, Raymont Residential College and Alexandra Park Conference Centre

1. Budget and reforecasting

Maturing budget processes to enable strategic reforecasting and reporting.

2. Simplification and prioritising of ambitious planning process

Review of business planning to reduce ambitious expectation and concentrate on delivery of prioritised projects.

3. Optimise IT assets, resources and capabilities

Ensure that the information systems and infrastructure platforms are fit for purpose and deliver a balance between risk, cost and usability.

4. Optimise communications and marketing capabilities

Ensure communication and marketing activities and efforts are best practice and innovative with brand, enterprise development and customer experience. Ensure communication and marketing investment decisions are strategically aligned and properly focused.

5. Robust project evaluation and review process

Ensuring programs and project proposals are assessed against key selection criteria and regularly reviewed against business case.

6. Investigate development of innovation program for the whole of Synod

Resourcing a whole-of-Synod think tank to continue to challenge the church around our future planning needs.

Future focus

9. Risk management

KPI

- Enterprise Risk Management
- HR and Payroll functional and compliant
- Synod office completion of compulsory (regulatory) online training
- Entity records (property register, ABN and ATO registrations)
- Safe Church/Safe Ministry (resources, support and compliance)
- National Insurance Program
- Complaints management that supports resolution

Achievements

- Enhanced reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee
- Major review of one business area conducted by internal audit, and several management assurance engagements undertaken
- Synod-wide risk register reviewed
- Synod office risk management system in place and reviewed
- Maturing records management systems in place. SharePoint being rolled out for various Synod governing bodies
- Closure of Queensland's IRS Scheme and participation in National Redress Scheme
- Property register maintaining ABN and ACNC information
- Contemporary insurance portfolio and participation in the Uniting Church National Insurance Program
- Safe Ministry resources support with early reporting systems
- Congregational inspection program on track
- All legal claims against church identified and appropriately managed and reported to SSC
- Managed reputation risk in relation to PMSA, SGM, Redress, Shalom closure

1. Developing compliance management frameworks

Synod oversight of external regulatory compliance expectations will be matured.

Synod oversight of internal compliance frameworks and consequences will be embedded in policy.

2. Maturing of risk management systems

Identification and mitigation of risk will be reviewed and realigned as required against Synod strategy.

3. WHS to be a key focus for maturing risk systems

Intentional, planned development of maturing WHS to be rolled out and communicated widely. Transition from outsourced to internal delivery of workers' compensation claims management and rehabilitation/return to work plans (Workcover and SAAP claims).

4. Board maturity and alignment

Governance of Synod governing bodies a strategic governance and educative focus. Identification of governance understanding and risk management as governing body core skills, with assessment of core skills as part of nomination process.

5. Succession planning

Acknowledging key person risk and identifying and training successors from across the whole of the Queensland Synod.

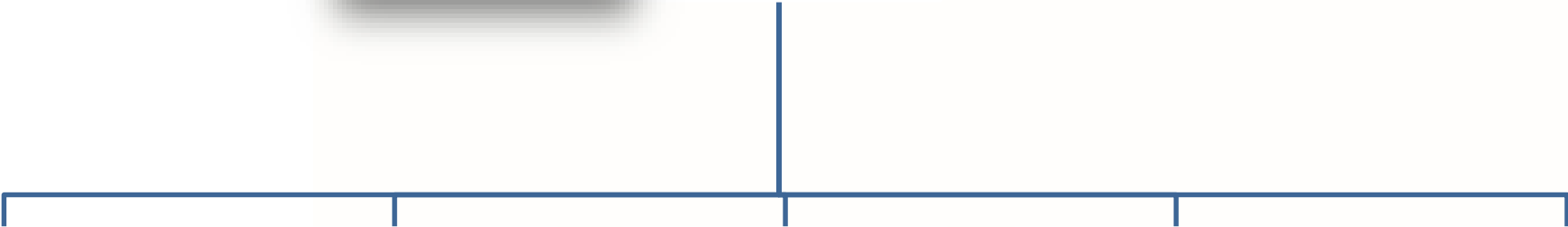
Synod Office Reporting Structure – EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



General Secretary
(Heather den Houting)



Moderator
(David Baker)



Associate General Secretary
(John Ruhle)



Executive Director Shared Services
(Paul Willett)



Executive Director Risk & Assurance
(Natalie Verdouw)



Executive Director Strategic Resources
(Peter Cranna)



Executive Officer Shared Services & Event Management
(Kellie Broderick)

