

# Report for 31st Queensland Synod October 2014



## Report from **Synod Chaplaincy Commission**



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### Context:

The Synod Chaplaincy Commission has the responsibility for oversight and development of chaplaincy within the Queensland Synod. The Commission has oversight of the placement of approximately 85 chaplains and works with over 250 volunteers across seven chaplaincy sectors. The Commission has placed a particular priority on the development of chaplaincy within the Synod, enhancing the processes by which chaplaincy and chaplains are supported together with seeking to enhance the profile of chaplaincy across the life of the church. The Commission continues to work with presbyteries in supporting and caring for chaplains. It continues to seek new and appropriate ways to engage chaplaincy and has embarked on a strategic review of its work.

# Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

## Enabling a demonstrated commitment to the shared Call and Vision

- Chaplaincy is a ministry which seeks to express God's love in action. Chaplaincy provides hope to those people often living in isolation and works for justice with those who are marginalised. The Chaplaincy Commission continues to offer ongoing support for all chaplains as they seek to live out the call of the church to be in the world sharing God's continued promise for all creation.
- Chaplains share and witness to their faith beyond the work of the church through both government and non-government agencies. Hospital chaplains work in the public and private hospital systems engaging with people who are encountering life-altering changes. Prison chaplains develop relationships and share hope with those on the margins of society. Police chaplains work with police on the front line and defence force chaplains work with the armed services as they engage in often difficult and dangerous situations. Our aged-care chaplains continue to offer the love of Christ to those people who are asking the big questions of life. School chaplains help in the faith formation of some of our youngest members. These are but some of the ways that chaplains engage with the call and vision of the church.

## Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

- The Chaplaincy Commission continues to discern new ways in which we may offer to support the work of the church through our chaplains. At the time of writing this report we have engaged in a strategic visioning process to help us re-examine our priorities and the best way to support chaplaincy into the future.
- Engagement in new chaplaincy spaces such as the new public children's hospital (the Lady Cilento Children's Hospital) to be opened in November in South Brisbane provides the Commission with opportunities to renew the call to be the church in new ministry spaces.

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# Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

## Promoting a discipline of prayer and spirituality (individual and corporate)

- Chaplaincy Sunday continues to be a key way in which the Commission resources the wider church to understand the role and work of chaplains. The Commission encourages not only the understanding of chaplaincy but seeks to challenge members of the church to pray for chaplains and their ministry in an ongoing and committed way.
- The Commission's engagement with Pastoral and Spiritual Care of Older People (PASCOP), an organisation focussed on developing training and resources for those involved in chaplaincy within the aged-care sector, will see resources developed and training identified that encourages and resources the expression of spirituality as part of the life experience of people.
- All committee meetings are done in a spirit of prayer and meetings are always commenced with focussed biblical themes.

## Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

- continue to resource Chaplaincy Sunday as an annual event in the life of the wider church and to develop a culture of prayer which supports chaplains and the Chaplaincy Commission
- continue to be a member of PASCOP in partnership with our Uniting Church agencies in order to help determine policy and direction for those who spiritually care for older people through our chaplaincy networks.

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## Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

### Developing sustainable mission orientated organisation (way of being) for the Church in Queensland

- The Chaplaincy Commission has recently engaged in a strategic visioning process which targets both existing missional areas and identifies new priorities. This is a significant piece of work that we hope to complete by the end of 2014.
- The work of the Commission is to respond to the ever-changing nature of missional opportunities as new chaplaincy spaces open up and others are closed or shelved. In the past 18 months we have seen the closing of the Whitsunday tourism chaplaincy, a missional area with a long history whose time had come to an end. A long-term focus has been on the possibilities of mining chaplaincy which has proved to be a complex area of work. A refocus on this area is one of the strategic decisions that will flow from the strategic visioning process currently underway. The Lady Cilento Children's Hospital is a new mission area and is expected to open at the end of 2014. This presents the Commission with a new and exciting way to be involved in hospital chaplaincy targeted at children and their families.
- The Commission's strategic visioning process will review how we resource chaplaincy in terms of recruitment, training and ongoing support. As the chaplaincy sector continues to grow across the state it is important that we have adequate support and structures to enable chaplains to meet the high standards expected by the church and the community.

## Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

- The Commission is committed to its strategic visioning process and will be seeking input from the wider church. The Commission hopes to have finalised this process in 2015 and to report to the meeting of the 32nd Synod.
- The Commission will look at the significant re-shaping of the role of the Synod Chaplaincy Coordinator now under the role of Associate General Secretary. With this new role now in its second year it is important to determine if this has been the most effective way to continue to promote and support chaplaincy across the state.

# Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

## Facilitating renewal of leadership for the mission of the Church

- Chaplaincy Affirmation Days continue to provide a point of professional development focus.
- With the formation of Trinity College Queensland the Certificate IV in Pastoral Care has moved into that entity. This program will continue to provide training in pastoral care skills and engage people in formation in chaplaincy theory and practice. The Commission will continue to have input into the ongoing development of this course.
- The various chaplaincy sectors continue to provide their own training and development opportunities.

## Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

- The ongoing development of training needs is part of the strategic review that will help us to determine what courses need to be offered for chaplains as they develop their professional skills into the future.
- The need to have ongoing input into the Certificate IV in Pastoral Care with this course now under Trinity College Queensland.
- The Commission is seeking new members on the committee to help it engage with the challenges that chaplaincy will face in the future.
- Further training for Commission members is part of the strategic review that will help the Commission ensure that members are well resourced as they engage this broad area of ministry.

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# Responses to our Priority Directions since last Synod

## Engaging in opportunities for intentional, open community connections and partnerships

Chaplaincy has continued to develop its ecumenical work, particularly in the areas of police, health and aged-care chaplaincy. Excellent working relationships with other churches enables the fulfilment of chaplaincy goals in expressing the love and care of God through presence alongside and the journey with another in their life's circumstances.

## Working towards our Priority Directions in the future

Opportunities to work with ecumenical partners especially in the area of hospital chaplaincy are ongoing. The Commission is part of the Queensland Multifaith Health Care Council which is proactively seeking ways to engage health care chaplaincy across the public health sector.

## Key achievements/initiatives

- The Commission has worked hard on processes around chaplaincy placements.
- The chaplaincy project officer was a key initiative that arose since the last Synod. A part-time worker was engaged but unfortunately this person resigned from the role in May. The Commission is keen to ensure that the work of chaplaincy is well supported and will look to the strategic review to guide them in the best use of the resources available.
- The Certificate IV in Pastoral Care which was under the Commission until July 2014 is going from strength to strength. Fourteen people have graduated and another 13 people are currently enrolled. This has been an important part of ensuring that chaplains meet an accredited training standard. It is fundamental for both paid and volunteer chaplains as they move into public chaplaincy spaces like public hospitals and prison chaplaincy as well as the new expected standard within church agencies such as Blue Care and UnitingCare Health.

## Challenges/risks as we progress:

- The need for committed people to serve on the Chaplaincy Commission is one of the key challenges that the Commission faces at the moment. Without a well-resourced Commission the Synod cannot continue to face future chaplaincy challenges.
- The ability to respond to the changing nature of chaplaincy in ways that help resource the church is an issue. The Commission contends that without the return of a full-time chaplaincy coordinator to continue to support current chaplains in placement, to promote chaplaincy to the wider church, to recruit new chaplains, to explore new chaplaincy opportunities, to keep abreast of new developments in chaplaincy and to raise the awareness of chaplaincy in the wider community, chaplaincy will not continue to develop in new and healthy ways across the life of the church.
- With the migration of the chaplaincy educators to Trinity College Queensland it will be important to ensure that chaplaincy education is meeting current and future requirements. This could be addressed through a chaplaincy presence on the Board of Christian Formation.
- As the Synod continues to address strategic issues for the life of the whole church it will be important that the voice of chaplaincy is heard and that the issues surrounding chaplaincy are well understood. It would be useful for the Commission to have more opportunities to be involved in the strategic processes of the Synod Standing Committee either by representation or by co-option.

## Contact for Report questions:

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