

8th September 2017

**Update 6: LCA Aged Care and Community Services Governance Dialogue**

 *(A project of the Lutheran Church of Australia to enhance mission, governance & leadership in aged and community services within LCA).*

**Report 2 (The *‘Discerning Our Future’ Report)* is now out!**

This report contains updated recommendations and identifies key issues for discussion within all relevant church bodies and all Lutheran aged care & community services organisations. It is the essential pre-reading for the national ‘Way Forward’ conference in Adelaide on the 13th and 14th October 2017. This report has been emailed out today to everyone on our mailing list for this project.

Report 2 needs to be read in tandem with Report 1 to get the full benefit from Report 2. This is because Report 2 builds on but does not repeat much of the information contained in Report 1. (Report 1 was released on 15 May 2017. Both reports can be found on this project’s webpage - see below for details).

**Summary of Report 2**

This Report is only 48 pages in length but is supported by 66 pages of appendices. There is also an Executive Summary of the Report that is only 4 pages long.

The Report begins by providing additional contextual information for this Dialogue including summarising the trends in eight of these service areas within Australia and activity in six other national churches. In the spirit of Christian honesty this Report also surfaces some critical ‘undercurrent’ conversations that have been shared in the corridors of this Review but not raised very much publicly. These ‘elephant in the room’ dynamics include:

* The potential negative aspects of our missionary zeal and our love of ‘independence’, that is, we can sometimes become wrapped up in our own view about what is ‘right’ and not be sufficiently respectful of others if they hold a differing view - or we can focus too much on our local or personal needs and not see the advantage of collective thought and action;
* Differing views as to how the church should manage risk; and
* Differing perspectives as to how to view these services in the context of future ‘church’ (some may see these services as the missionary Lutheran ‘church’ of the future, not just a mission and ministry arm of the Lutheran church).

The Report identifies 15 areas of possible consensus achieved through over 30 consultations and a full day workshop in Brisbane in July. These agreement areas include the Lutheran Church’s detailed vision for these services as well as 15 ‘quality improvement’ recommendations in regard to governance.

The Report also identifies five important governance issues where majority consensus has not yet been achieved. These include structural arrangements, emergency protocols, selection of and ‘length of service’ for governing body members and branding policy.

In relation to the first issue (structural arrangements) the Reviewers conclude that at this phase of the Dialogue the Lutheran aged care and community services sector is generally not yet ready to nationalise these services or amalgamate them into District level services (excepting Queensland which already has a District-wide service). This is despite the foreseeable government policy and funding trends for these services being fairly clear – viz the majority of funding and both governance and operational policy for these services will increasingly emanate from national agencies. It is also despite widespread predictions that many small services are not likely to survive financially in the future. The Report provides seven basic structural options for consideration as well as providing guidance on a ‘way forward’.

In terms of the remaining four issues (emergency protocols, selection of and ‘length of service’ for governing body members and branding policy), the report indicates that to a large extent the best way forward on these matters depends on resolution of the ‘structural issue’ question.

The Reviewers also share their opinion that the church would fail to meet its twenty first century obligations in regard to governance if it did not at least provide:

* practical written guidance as to the mission and ethos for these services;
* an enhanced ‘LCA Standards of Governance’ document for these services;
* a national LCA aged care and community services branding policy;
* a Quality Service Agreement for use with all Lutheran aged and community services;
* a national governance support & oversight function/unit; and
* ongoing dialogue regarding changes required to ensure future sustainability and quality of these Lutheran services, including discussing the merging of governance functions of some of the smaller services.

Report 2 has been written as the essential ‘pre-reading’ for the next gathering of stakeholders for this project – the ‘Discerning our Future’ Conference in Adelaide in five weeks time on the 13th & 14th October.

This very important conference will provide final guidance to the Reviewers by discussing three topic areas:

1. 15 Recommendations thought to have widespread support;
2. Five issues yet to achieve consensus (the abovementioned five issues); and
3. A ‘Way Forward’ Implementation Plan post-conference.

Following the conference the Reviewers will write their ‘Way Forward’ report of recommendations for General Church Council.

***Next Steps***

1. ‘The Way Forward’ Conference on the 13th & 14th October.

Make sure your Lutheran aged & community service is represented at this important upcoming conference. Similarly, if you are a part of a Council or Committee of the church that is actively involved in aged & community services make sure a representative of your group can contribute to this gathering. (If you never received an invitation to this Conference you can access a copy of the invitation, eligibility and how to register details etc via this project’s webpage – refer link below).

The format for the upcoming conference in Adelaide is different to the workshop held in Brisbane on July 15. In Brisbane the prime task of the workshop was to ‘flesh out’ the key issues and possible areas of agreement in relation to this project – so there was much small group discussion work. Adelaide will be different. The prime purpose of the Adelaide conference is to achieve majority consensus on the ‘way forward’. Accordingly for most of the Adelaide conference it is anticipated we will remain in one large plenary group (facilitated by Les) as we discuss and arrive at areas of consensus on the 15 draft recommendations and key issue areas raised in Report 2.

1. A final Report will be finalised by the lead Reviewer and submitted to General Church Council in early 2018.

***Dialogue Project webpage***

When uploaded, information and copies of all key documents associated with this project can be found on the project’s webpage at <http://www.lca.org.au/laccs-gov-dialogue>. Check out Project Updates, Reports 1 and 2 and spiritual and other resources submitted to the project to date. New Items on the project webpage include:

* Report 2.

***Dialogue Contact Details:***

* for ‘Dialogue Group’ or LCA level enquiries contact Peter Schirmer,

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 (Dialogue Group members are: Nancy Fox, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Matt Johns, Nathan Klinge, Clare Seligmann and Mel Zerner).

* for Lead Facilitator Les Stahl: Mobile 0438 601 021.

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 Further Updates are planned on a regular basis so keep an eye out for them.

For back copies of the Project Introductory Letter, Reports and/or Updates 1 to 5 please visit the website: <http://www.lca.org.au/laccs-gov-dialogue> or contact me as shown above.

I look forward to dialoguing with you again, this time in Adelaide, on the 13th & 14th October.

Sincerely in Christ,



Peter Schirmer

Executive Officer of the Church