

AGENDA 2.1.7

Ecclesiastical Discipline Review

(See also the Report to General Synod of the Ecclesiastical Discipline Review Team, Agenda Item 14.1, p307, and Appendix 1: GCB's Preliminary Response to the EDRT Report, Agenda Item 14.1.1, p333.)

PROPOSED MOTION

Submitted by General Church Board

PROPOSED THAT General Synod:

1. Notes the GCB's preliminary response to the recommendations contained in the independent Ecclesiastical Discipline Review Team's (EDRT) report as presented in the 20th Regular Convention of General Synod's Book of Reports (Agenda Item 14.1.1, p333).
2. Authorises the General Church Board to establish a Steering Committee, consistent with the EDRT report recommendation 2, with the first phase of its work to:
 - a. focus on scoping the work and associated resources required to implement the recommendations; and
 - b. have due regard to the GCB's advice relating to each of the recommendations;and
for the General Church Board to submit the Steering Committee's initial report on the scope and associated resourcing to the in-person sessions of the 20th Regular Convention of General Synod;
3. Requests the General Church Board to submit any necessary proposals enabling the implementation of the report's recommendations, based on the Steering Committee's initial work, for the General Synod's consideration at the 2022 in-person sessions of the 20th Regular Convention of General Synod; and
4. Requests that the Steering Committee consist of LCA members who are independent of any current matters before the Tribunal and PSD, nor with any responsibility for the PSD, and include people with theological expertise or knowledge of legal or judicial matters as well as the Royal Commission into the Institutional Abuse of Children.

REASONS FOR PROPOSAL

At its Convention in October 2018 the LCA General Synod adopted the following resolution: The General Synod requests the General Church Board to undertake a review of the LCA's overall Ecclesiastical Discipline Adjudication and Appeal's provisions, policies and processes including a review of the PSD and related policies, procedures and practices, in response to concerns raised in congregational and district pastors conference proposals submitted to this Synod on matters related to the discipline and judicial system of the Church.

That the review be conducted by people with no involvement in allegations against the PSD nor with any responsibility for PSD. Those undertaking the review to be members of the LCA and include high level theological expertise and knowledge of police and judicial matters as well as the Royal Commission into the Institutional Abuse of Children. That submissions to the review be sought from interested parties.

The Review Team has completed the review and its report to synod, with 40 recommendations, is included in the Synod Book of Reports.

The GCB has determined that, because this is a substantive matter, the consideration of the report and recommendations will be on the agenda of the in-person sessions of the Convention of Synod scheduled for late September/early October 2022.

However, the GCB has formed a view that, because of the far-reaching nature of the report's recommendations, it is important that further progress is taken over the next twelve months. It therefore is seeking General Synod's adoption of an enabling process to prepare a report that outlines the scope of work and the associated costs that would be required to implement the recommendations as they've been tabled.

The GCB's preliminary response to the recommendations will provide guidance to the Steering Committee in its work.

The Steering Committee's first report will assist the GCB to submit considered proposals to the in-person sessions of the Convention of General Synod in 2022, and the delegates will be well served in its decision-making on those proposals by understanding the implications and resources required to implement them, if adopted by the Convention.

If the proposals are adopted, it is envisaged that post the in-person sessions of the convention of General Synod in 2022, the Steering Committee's focus would move to overseeing the implementation of the scope of works, timing and costs approved by the General Synod in 2022.