6th December, 2017

**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).*

**Agreements and Follow-up Actions agreed at recent Historic Conference**

The national ‘Way Forward’ conference for Lutheran Aged and Community Services was held in Adelaide on the 13th and 14th October 2017. See photo below:



Photo: Angela Rogers

The conference was attended by many leaders from the Lutheran Church of Australia including Bishops, Assistant Bishops, General Church Council representatives, District Church Council representatives, District Administrators, Chairs, Managing Directors and CEOs of Lutheran aged and community services throughout Australia.

The conference discussed the recommendations and issues contained in the ‘Discerning Our Future’ Report dated 8th September 2017. The conference continued a collegiate approach to planning the strategic future of Lutheran aged and community services that had been evident in the earlier national workshop held at Nundah, Brisbane on 15 July 2017.

In a historic first delegates to the conference agreed on a range of strategic matters

and follow up actions for the way forward. These agreements were clustered under 7 strategic agreement and action areas as follows:

Agreement 1: The **LCA** **vision and underpinning key governance principles** for Lutheran aged and community services (as set out in Report 2 of this Dialogue) be adopted by the church and all Lutheran aged & community services.

*Action 1a: This to be included as a recommendation in the Reviewer’s final report.*

*Action 1b: Peter Schirmer to advise GCC of this positive development.*

*Action 1c: All services to self assess themselves against this draft vision and governance principles and if a service considers it is not meeting the LCA vision and principles for aged & community services governance it will do something positive (like contacting another Lutheran Service) and do it now!*

Agreement 2: A concise **Lutheran Theological Ethos suite of documents** be developed by LCA, in accessible language, consistent with recommendations in Report 2 of this Dialogue, that can be used as a key guiding document in all Lutheran aged and community services.

*Action 2a: This to be included as a recommendation in Reviewer’s final report.*

*Action 2b: The LCA Committee for Ministry with the Ageing (CMA) in partnership with LCC SA to follow up and develop these documents in consultation with the sector.*

Agreement 3: The **governance standards** as set out in Report 2 of this Dialogue be the future minimum governance standards expected of Lutheran aged and community services and these standards should be endorsed by LCA and adopted by all Lutheran aged and community services.

*Action 3a: This to be included as a recommendation in Reviewer’s final report.*

*Action 3b: Peter Schirmer to advise GCC of this positive development.*

Agreement 4: **LCA Districts to continue to enhance their support,** as per action areas set out in Report 2 of this Dialogue, of Lutheran aged and community services within their jurisdiction.

*Action 4: District representatives present advised they will continue to action the specific recommendations made in Report 2 of this Dialogue relevant to their District.*

Agreement 5: **LCA national office to provide much greater support to the sector**, particularly to small and/or remote services, as has been requested by these services and outlined in Report 2 of this Dialogue (e.g. provision of ‘model’ constitutions; model governance policies; model ‘lead’ policies; an LCA branding guidance policy; support for national advocacy; governance induction support; and ongoing professional development support for Chairs and CEs etc).

*Action 5a: This to be included as a recommendation in Reviewers final report.*

*Action 5b: Peter Schirmer to advise GCC of this agreement*

*Action 5c: To develop* ***three ‘Model Constitutions’*** *that can be used as exemplars for the updating of the registering instruments of the three types of legal entities of Lutheran aged and community services within Australia. This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5c(i): Initially Lutheran Services Queensland (LSQ), LHI Retirement Services, and Lutheran Aged Care Albury (LACA) will together develop model constitutions in consultation with Matthew Turnour that they can subsequently share with other LCA aged & community services.*

*Action 5c(ii): Peter Schirmer, Executive Officer of the Church, will alert GCC about this efficiency initiative to prepare the way for the constitutions also going to the LCA Standing Committee for Constitutions for their review.*

*Action 5d:* ***Services with existing quality governance policies will share them*** *to enable the less well-resourced services to have access to, and build their suite of, quality governance policies. Key policies to share ASAP were identified as: annual responsibilities of a governing body; delegations policy; risk policy; board member selection policy; continuing education policy; board member tenure policy (ideal maximum length of stay 10 years); oversight of CEO policy; and WHS policy. This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5d(i): Peter Schirmer will investigate the possibility of developing a restricted password-entry online portal of governance policies for the Boards and chief executives of Lutheran aged and community services on which governance policies and other key governance documents can be uploaded.*

*Action 5d(ii): When and if possible, Peter Schirmer will arrange for the uploading of Appendices 26 & 27 from Report 2 onto this restricted clearinghouse as draft model documents relating to board member induction and ongoing professional development.*

*Action 5d(iii): Lutheran Services Queensland will take the lead in getting the abovementioned policies and other key governance policies to Peter Schirmer so Peter can arrange to also place them on the restricted access clearinghouse for Lutheran aged and community services*

*Action 5d(iv): Other Services who consider they have best practice governance policies will also forward their specific best practice policies to Peter Schirmer.*

*Action 5e: Together with the sector, LCA will develop a concise “****Owners Resource Kit****” consistent with statements in Report 2 of this Dialogue, that can be used with the owners/stakeholders of services to enhance their knowledge and skills in ‘ownership governance’ (the resource kit to include information on how owners can best ensure competent Boards, succession planning by Boards, questioning of Directors at AGMs etc).*

*Action 5e(i): Les Stahl will provide additional information in his final report.*

*Action 5e(ii): Peter Schirmer will coordinate the development of this resource through his office.*

*Action 5e(iii): Wendy Rocks from Lutheran Aged Care Albury will forward some information in this regard to Peter.*

*Action 5f: On behalf of LCA, together with the sector, the CMA will further refine the Lutheran ‘End of Life Support guidance statement’ into a* ***national Lutheran*** *‘****End of Life Support Policy*** *to give clearer guidance to Lutheran aged & community services in this important area of service and care. This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5f(i) Services with an existing ‘End of Life Support Policy’ or similar will forward a copy of their policy to CMA so CMA can take account of existing policies in developing this policy.*

*Action 5g: On behalf of LCA, together with the sector, the CMA will develop a national Lutheran ‘****General Diversity Inclusiveness Policy’*** *for all Lutheran aged & community services. This policy will give guidance in regard to individual and cultural respect, relevant to working with people with disabilities, people with different religious beliefs and the LGBTI, Indigenous and multicultural communities.*

*Action 5g(i) Services with an existing ‘General Diversity Inclusiveness Policy’ or similar will forward a copy of their policy to CMA so CMA can take account of existing policies in the development of this important policy.*

*Action 5g(ii) Lutheran Aged Care Albury and LHI will assist CMA in developing this Policy.*

*Action 5h: LCA, in consultation with the sector, to develop a short suite of* ***general branding guidelines*** *that could inform and assist individual Lutheran aged & community services within Australia. (It was noted that Linda Macqueen is already in the process of developing general branding guidelines and services could provide feedback when this policy is released). This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5h(i) Peter Schirmer following up this request with Linda.*

*Action 5h(ii) Services providing feedback to Linda following the release of the general guidelines.*

*Action 5i: The CMA will arrange for* ***key Lutheran policies*** *relevant to Lutheran aged & community services to be* ***more easily accessed*** *by these services by having links to these policies on the webpage of the Committee for Ministry with the Ageing.*

*Action 5j: LCA to* ***better support the Chairs*** *of the governing bodies of Lutheran aged and community services,* particularly the Chairs of small and/or isolated services, *by ensuring every chair has access to Lutheran networking & support meetings as well as professional development opportunities. This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5j(i) District Administrators to follow up with Chairs within their Districts as to needs in this regard*

*Action 5j(ii) South Australian joint chair meetings will consider inviting the Chairs of LACA, LCCSA & LDS to be part of any such joint meetings*

*Action 5j(iii) Any such joint chair meetings in Victoria will consider inviting the Chair of LACA to be part of any such joint Chair meetings*

*Action 5k: LCA to* ***better support the chief executives*** *of Lutheran aged and community services,* particularly the executive officers of small and/or isolated services, *by ensuring every CE has access to Lutheran networking & support meetings. This will be initially actioned by:*

*Action 5k(i) District Administrators to follow up with CEs within their Districts as to needs in this regard*

*Action 5k(ii) Any joint CE meetings in both South Australia & Victoria will consider inviting the CEs of LCCSA, LDS & LACA (respectively) to be part of any joint CE meetings in those jurisdictions*

*Action 5k(iii) CMA (or other appropriate LCA body) to consider the strategy of co-ordinating a formal LCA aged and community services conference every three or so years.*

*Action 5l: LCA to organise its support for this Lutheran sector* ***better at the national level*** *so that the LCA/Lutheran aged and community services can:*

* + *meet informally near the beginning of each year as a sector-wide network to discuss matters of importance to the sector (including giving guidance on priorities for national advocacy);*
	+ *circulate quickly key national policy & funding developments in aged care, disability and community services amongst all LCA aged and community services;*
	+ *co-ordinate/sponsor governance and management training, especially for small/isolated services;*
	+ *efficiently and effectively communicate with each other;*
	+ *speak with one voice at external national forums; and*
	+ *continue to access up-to-date information and policies about governance.*

*This will be initially actioned by:*

Action 5l(i): Peter Schirmer investigating the feasibility of employing a support co-ordinator to co-ordinate & support the above outcomes for Lutheran aged & community services in liaison with the CMA;

Action 5l(ii) Peter Schirmer, in consultation with the sector, overseeing an investigation about the feasibility of establishing an ongoing internet based communication sharing facility for these services; and

Action 5l(iii) Peter Schirmer, in consultation with the sector and CMA, investigating whether further support structures are warranted at the national level such as the establishment of a national Lutheran Aged and Community Services Reference Group or a national association for Lutheran Aged and Community Services.

Agreement 6: Lutheran aged & community services will sign up to participating in an **annual** **governance quality assurance system** within the LCA that is efficient yet robust and which will enable each service to provide annual assurance to each other and the church that it has effective governance processes in place, is sustainable and is compliant with LCA standards of governance. This outcome will be achieved by each service providing, on an annual basis an agreed data set to LCA, including having an annual conversation about governance with two or three suitable peers[[1]](#footnote-1).

*Action 6a: This to be included as a recommendation in Reviewers final report.*

*Action 6b Peter Schirmer to advise GCC of the above agreement and to investigate the best and most efficient way of co-ordinating this annual QA process (an obvious option being through the support co-ordinator referred to earlier in action 5l(i)).*

Agreement 7: We as a leadership group of the Lutheran Aged and Community Services Sector, agree to go forward with the Emergency Intervention protocol outlined in Report 2 of this Dialogue in the interests of the common good. Specifically, Lutheran aged & community services will sign up to a process to develop a respectful, high quality, efficient and expert mechanism in the LCA, consistent with what is outlined in Report 2 of this Dialogue, whereby the LCA, on behalf of all Lutheran aged and community services, has **emergency powers** to intervene in a service when it is imperative for the church to do so in the best interests of the wider Lutheran aged and community services sector. It is envisioned that the rights and responsibilities in relation to this matter will be outlined in a Quality Services Agreement between the legal entity of each service and the LCA.

*Action 7a: This to be included as a recommendation in Reviewers final report.*

*Action 7b Peter Schirmer to advise GCC of the above and in consultation with the sector and involved Districts, will further develop this protocol based on the guidance provided on p42 and Appendix 29 of Report 2 of this Dialogue.*

**Significance of these Agreements**

Assuming the governing bodies of Lutheran aged and community services and GCC formally adopt these national conference consensus agreements, these agreements should enable Lutheran aged and community services to flourish into the known future with governance remaining at the local level whilst ensuring greater support is available to them from both the wider church and each other. If this consensus based vision continues to be agreed and is implemented, there will also be no current need for LCA to move to restructure Lutheran aged and community services into a more District based or national type of organisation. By implementing this suite of agreements we will all be able to go forward with greater confidence that all Lutheran aged and community services are sustainable and well governed!

**Next Steps in this Review**

1. Peter Schirmer’s office will provide to all the governing bodies of Lutheran aged and community services information concerning the agreements and actions agreed to at the Adelaide conference so that all Boards may begin the process of discussing the adoption of those important agreements (*i.e this document*)
2. A final Report will be submitted by the Reviewer to General Church Council in February 2018.
3. The Dialogue Group and Peter Schirmer, in liaison with the sector and CMA, will co-ordinate a gathering of the sector in the first half of 2018 (probably sometime between March and early May) in order to both progress agreed governance enhancements and address the dot points outlined in Action 5l above.

***Dialogue Project webpage***

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.

***Dialogue Group Contact Details:***

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

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

Phone 08 8267 7300 Email: peter.schirmer@lca.org.au

Thank you to conference scribes Matt Johns and Colleen Fitzpatrick and reviewer Les Stahl for their assistance in developing this summary of the agreements and actions agreed at the recent national conference of the LCA Aged and Community Services Governance Dialogue.

A further Update is planned next February so keep an eye out for it.

For back copies of the Project Introductory Letter, Reports and/or Updates 1 to 7 please visit the website: <http://www.lca.org.au/laccs-gov-dialogue> or contact me as shown above.

Finally, thank you to everyone who has participated so positively and with such a spirit of goodwill throughout the dialogue process.

Sincerely in Christ,



Peter Schirmer

Executive Officer of the Church

1. A large service provider would have an annual conversation with three persons – say, Bishop/Assistant Bishop, a Governance expert and a sector expert such as a peer CEO. Small services may only need to converse with the Bishop/Assistant Bishop and a peer CEO from a larger organisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)