

General Proposal 1

Remove requirement for membership to the church as mandatory requirement for appointment to Synod Governing Body

That the Synod

1. amend Queensland Synod By-Law Q2.7.8 (1) (f) to:
The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointed must:
 - (i) where the person is appointed as the Chairperson, the person must be a member of the Uniting Church at the time of appointment.
 - (ii) for positions other than the Chairperson, the person is either a member of the Uniting Church, or a non-Uniting Church member who demonstrates commitment to the mission of the church and an ability to reflect on the faith and values of the church.
2. direct the Synod Standing Committee to amend charters and governing documents to ensure a balance of majority must be held by church members.

Scope

To increase the candidate pool for appointment to a Synod governing body while ensuring a majority of members on any single governing body are Church members.

Rationale

The regulatory and governance environment in which society operates today demands a range of skills and capabilities. Appropriate experience for governing bodies is difficult to be sourced solely from within the membership of the Church given the changing and increasing complexity of business requirements of Synod operations.

Queensland Synod Governing Documents

Pursuant to Queensland Synod By-Laws Q2.7.8, the current eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointed must be a member of the church.

The proposal to remove this mandatory requirement has been assessed against the Basis of Union and Manual for Meetings and has been determined not to contravene any provision or have any conflicts.

Clarification on Issues to Support Proposal

Mission and Theological Alignment

A number of governing bodies require a minimum threshold for lay and ministry agents including the Synod Standing Committee and the Remuneration and Nomination Committee. This submission does not seek to remove the mission and theological alignment but allow for the exercise of discretion on a case-by-case basis to decide to recommend an appointment of an exceptionally skilled candidate.

Note that a person is required to be a member of the Synod in Session in order to be elected to the Synod Standing Committee. To be a member of the Synod in Session, you are required to be a member of the church. This proposal does not seek to alter these requirements so Synod Standing Committee members elected by the Synod in Session will continue to be members of the church.

Previous exercise of the suspension rule

By-law Q2.7.8 covers eligibility for office including clause (1)(f) which reads *“be a member of the Uniting Church”*.

This rule has been suspended where a candidate has demonstrated skills, experience and expertise to complement the governing body or fill a current gap. Where a suspension is required, the Synod Standing Committee (SSC) has made a deliberation.

In this synodial term, the SSC has discerned and approved the suspension of this by-law on four (4) occasions including Remuneration and Nomination Committee (RNC), Uniting Education Schools and Colleges (UESC) and Finance Investment and Property Board (FIPB).

The Synod has and will continue to perform its due diligence process by way of an assessment against the policy, capability matrix and evaluation criteria before making recommendations to the SSC for all governing body appointments moving forward.

Majority rule

The Synod acknowledges that any decisions are to be underpinned by the mission, vision, values and theology of the church. Therefore, this proposal maintains need for a balance of majority be church members and be affected in individual charters for each Synod governing body.

Operational considerations

Supporting procedures and tools for governing bodies has been moved to a capabilities-based assessment. This includes a capability of *“theological and mission”*. This capability is defined as:

- Demonstrated understanding of the Christian tradition
- Appreciation of, and commitment to, the mission of the church
- Deep knowledge of theological frameworks and experience in adult education, particularly faith education
- A demonstrated ability to reflect on the faith, heritage and values of the Uniting Church in Australia and to consider the implications for the current and future work of the Synod governing body.

There are and may be circumstances where a vacancy cannot be filled within the church. The Synod Standing Committee (SSC) is empowered to suspend Q2.7.8(1)(f) subject to rigorous consideration for an exceptional circumstance. It is not best-practice governance to routinely exercise this power for non-church members considered appropriate for appointment.



Strategic implications

Fit for Purpose

Provide the structural foundations for the one church to meet the existing and emerging needs allowing communities to flourish.

Review and mature governance arrangements across Synod

Simplify processes and governance structure and increase availability and reliability of information. There is value in leveraging the knowledge and skills offered by non-church members across NFP, NGO, government, and the private sector.

Chairperson

The Synod recognises that all decisions and actions of Synod governing bodies be underpinned by theology and church mission. Therefore, the proposal seeks to maintain the requirement for membership of the church for the position of chairperson.

Operational Risks

Several synod governing bodies hold key decision-making powers. Not achieving a quorum and non-compliance of the synod governing body with its charter limits the ability to conduct its activities in a timely manner. Synod and synod wide entities rely or have dependencies on timely decision making.

Amendment to the Queensland Synod By-Laws

The amended by law does not preclude other operative provisions of by-law Q2.7.8 and other processes for ensuring the best and appropriate candidates are appointed. Rather, they allow the Synod office to respond flexibly to the current market conditions in attracting the best talent possible. Candidates will still undergo due diligence checks to ensure they meet and agree to reflect the mission and values of the Church.

Application of the proposed amended by law

The new amended by law will apply for all current and new Synod Governing Bodies and their current and new future sub-committees.

renewal

Amendment to the Queensland Synod By-Laws (cont.)

Current Reading:

Q2.7.8 Eligibility for office

(1) The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointment must:

(f) – be a member of the Uniting Church

New reading

Q2.7.8 Eligibility for office


(f) The eligibility requirements for appointment to a Synod governing body are that a person appointed must:

- (i) where the person is appointed as the Chairperson, the person must be a member of the Uniting Church at the time of appointment
- (ii) for positions other than the Chairperson, the person is either a member of the Uniting Church, or a non-Uniting Church member who demonstrates commitment to the mission of the church and an ability to reflect on the faith and values of the church.

Proposers

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