



# #realunitingchurch

## Report from North Queensland Presbytery

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### Context

Covering almost one third of the geographical area of Queensland, the North Queensland Presbytery is not just a large rural presbytery. With major cities like Townsville, Cairns and Mount Isa, the North Queensland Presbytery contains within its bounds a range of varying contexts of ministries; urban, rural and remote.

The North Queensland Presbytery is also subject to major disruptive weather events with seasonal floods and multiple year-long droughts, all of which often dictate the effectiveness and timeliness of ministries within its bounds.

### Report

The focus within the North Queensland Presbytery has been around developing an emerging Presbytery-wide vision and direction. This has involved major changes in the focus and character of ministry in many of our congregations.

The creation of the Cassowary Coast Uniting Church out of the Innisfail, Tully and Mission Beach congregations has brought about a unifying vision and has enabled cooperative strategies which are reaching beyond the original scope of the previous town-based congregations into a more regional approach that is engaging smaller communities within the bounds of the Cassowary Coast.

There has been a determined focus on providing presence in the emerging growth corridors within the Presbytery, particularly south of Cairns and north of Townsville. Renewal of ministry in both locations is hoping to bring new focus and strategic thinking into these key areas of future ministry and growth.

The renewed focus on an effective and wide-ranging consultation process with congregations has resulted in giving both the congregations and the Presbytery the tools to think more strategically about the direction and ministry assets required in each of our congregations.

There is also a renewed focus emerging on lay leadership training and equipping people for ministry (something that has been neglected for many years). The appointment of a new lay education coordinator, coupled with recent changes at Trinity College Queensland, has enabled three new people to undertake a Period of Discernment and will in a few years' time raise up a number of well-trained and ministry-equipped lay people able to bring long-term stability within the ranks of our ministry team. This is particularly important within our identified growth areas.

The recent challenges brought on by Cyclone Debbie have also raised issues around how we and Central Queensland Presbytery can cooperatively support each other, both in times of emergency and in future mission development particularly in our western rural and remote areas. Key achievements/initiatives.

Something you want to report on in more detail. Please include identified outcomes where relevant.

## Priority Directions

### 1. To be Christ-centred, at prayer, and listening.

At all levels of the Presbytery and in all the mission undertaken within the bounds of the Presbytery, there has been an increasing encouragement to undertake this mission in the context of Christ-centred prayer. This is most obvious at our Presbytery meetings and in the growth of a number of prayer groups within the congregations.

### 2. Discipleship

As part of a renewed focus on lay leadership training, there is a focus on how we grow our laity through discipleship. Many congregations have renewed Bible study and prayer groups and the Presbytery is providing resources as required or requested.

### 3. Leadership

Currently the Presbytery has three people undertaking a Period of Discernment. There are also two people candidating for ordination. With the 'rebirth' of Trinity College Queensland, a number of intensive courses are planned for the training of lay preachers and pastors. There also has been some church council training to orientate new church council members to the polity and ethos of the Uniting Church.

### 4. Connecting with communities

North Queensland congregations, on the whole, traditionally have been very well connected within the communities they serve. This is being enhanced by embryonic discussions on the local level with UnitingCare in order to reinvigorate the presence of the church in both its congregational and agency forms.

### 5. Youth, children and families

While there are ongoing logistical difficulties in maintaining youth and children's camps and events, a number of congregations are targeting families in their mission plans. This has come with varying

degrees of success. Many rural communities have an 'age gap' between 17 and 35 years as young people move to larger regional centres for training and employment.

## Proposal

It is proposed that the 33rd Synod receive this report.

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