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AUC Executive Committee
Conference & Division Presidents, Secretaries and CFO's
Conference Aged Care CEO's
Conference Education Directors
CSR Church Governance Reference Group
CSR Aged Care Reference Group
CSR Schools Reference Group
CSR Consultative Forum
Conference Departmental Directors
National Education Council
School Principals

22 October 2020

Church Structure Review Update

Reviewing the structures of the church in Australia has been a discussion since the early 2000's. In 2014, after being asked to look further into the church structures, the Australian Union Conference commissioned the Avondale Business School to look into the feasibility of a church restructure in Australia. In their report to the AUC Executive Committee in November 2015, it was suggested that if the Conferences and Union chose to continue with a church restructure process it would require a 'long-term commitment that (would) culminate not just in the structure changes, but also organisational culture, which (would) ensure the sustainability of the changes'. At this same meeting the AUC Executive Committee resolved to seek the services of a change management facilitator to arrange focus groups to identify the main issues driving the need for change. This was seen as the next logical step to complement the Restructure Report from the Avondale Business School.

Seventh-day
Adventist Church
Australia

In 2017 the AUC project team held focus group sessions across Australia to gauge what the stakeholders wanted to achieve from the Church Structure Review. From this, the 'Listening Tour Report' was presented to the AUC Executive Committee in November 2017, where it became clear that in order to advance the church, operational and structure changes needed to occur. The recommendations from this report can be summarised into three main categories; the first was to help local churches become better, the second was to look at creating single entities for the Aged Care and Schools companies and the third was to review church structures with a view to create a more efficient church with less layers of administration.

The AUC Executive Committee received this report and resolved to continue to explore the recommended options with the goal of 'doing Church better'.

To address the recommendations from this report the AUC set about commencing work on a framework to support and assist local churches, and this work continues today under the working title of Quality Adventist Churches (QAC).

To evaluate single entities for Aged Care and Schools, the AUC formed steering committees and later reference groups for Aged Care and Schools to allow them to specifically focus on the single entity options for each. A feasibility study for a single Aged Care entity was completed in the latter half of 2018 and the Aged Care CEO's are currently working on a suggested strategy for a single Aged Care entity before providing options to the Aged Care Reference Group on how a single entity could be structured. The Schools Reference Group, in consultation with Education Directors, has also spent time looking at information on the feasibility of a single Schools entity and possible legal structures which would best benefit Adventist Education in Australia.

To continue the exploration of the church structure recommendations, the AUC Executive Committee formed a sub-committee, called the Church Structure Reference Group, to guide this work. In conjunction with this, the AUC held consultations between February and April 2018 with conference executive committees to discuss the 2017 report and sought support to continue exploring the above recommendations. Since then the Church Structure Reference Group has been exploring potential church structure options and to assist with this work, the AUC Executive Committee agreed to engage Allegra Consulting to help with the process to investigate which potential structure models would obtain the greatest benefit for the Church in Australia. As mentioned in a previous communication, various potential structure models were presented to the AUC Executive Committee in November 2019 and they decided on the three structure models which have been presented over the last few months.

The next step in the process was to consult with conference executive committees and boards in early 2020. This was to be followed up by consulting extensively with employees and lay members in town hall meetings, which due to Covid 19 have been placed on hold. In order to increase the dialogue, the Church Structure Review team is striving to present some of this information through emails, posts on Facebook and Q&A Zoom meetings, so that the process can continue to progress. Once travel restrictions ease, town hall meetings can recommence, and the consultations will continue. In the meantime, data is being collected and work is being undertaken on the possible structure models so that the best and most accurate information can be presented at the town hall meetings.

The three reference groups are doing work on their own recommendations, however, they come together in the form of the Church Structure Review Consultative Forum to ensure that their vision, goals, responsibilities and structures are aligned so if and when any changes are recommended to the respective Executive Committees and Constituency Meetings, it will be a joint effort and any transition will be completed as smoothly as possible.

The progress of the Church Structure Review has been steady and continues to move in a positive direction. Each step of the process, whether it has been reports or consultations, has been used as a reference and has allowed us to get to this stage of the process. As the Church Structure Review continues to consult and gather data the process will continue to develop and eventually get to a stage where it has fully explored each option. As stated before, this process is a long-term commitment, and the Church Structure Review understands that as time progresses the wants and needs of the church will evolve, this is why the need for continuous consultation is imperative until a final recommendation is made.

Please continue to pray for the Church Structure Review process. The church in Australia is on an important journey and there is a lot of work to do. Pray that as a church we continue to focus on why this process began, to make our church better by being more efficient, relevant, aligned and most importantly, more missional.

If you would like to receive these updates on the Church Structure Review via direct email please send an email to structurereview@adventist.org.au and you will be added to the mailing list.

**Warm Regards from the Church Structure Review Team
Jorge, Michael, and Peter**