



Discernment for Future Ministry Placements (DFMP)

Terms of Reference

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Discernment for Future Ministry Placements (DFMP): Terms of Reference.

1. Title

The name of the Committee shall be Discernment for Future Ministry Placements (DFMP).

2. Purpose

Serving as a sub-committee of Synod Placements Committee, DFMP shall assess the suitability of a minister for further or future ministry placement within the Synod of NSW-ACT, upon referral by the Placements Committee or Presbytery PRC. The DFMP shall determine whether the minister in question is adequately equipped and able to take up a ministry placement.

Rationale: The Placements Committee is required to 'recommend to the Joint Nominating Committee the names of Ministers considered suitable for placement' (Reg 3.7.4.2(b)(viii)). The Ministry Transition Assistance Scheme (MTAS) helps the Minister to discern their continued call and vocation, but there are few ways the church may assess the suitability of the minister's ability and capacity to continue serving the needs of the church. From time to time, there are Ministers designated as awaiting placement whom the Placements Committee either does not have confidence to recommend for conversation or have not received a call to placement despite numerous conversations. The reasons may include difficulties with adapting to changing ministry expectations and societal changes in 21st century Australia; difficulties in the minister's previous placements; the loss of a sense of vocation; declining capacity; a lack of personal development in ministry, or a distinct lack of personal insight. The issue is not whether the Minister is a faithful Christian who feels called to Ordained Ministry, but whether the Church is confident they are suitable for ministry placement at this time. The DFMP is intended to bring together combined skills in theology, psychology, the placements process, ministry practice and church governance. It shall include a representative appointed by Presbytery. A minister may be referred to the committee by the Placements Committee on the recommendation of the Minister's Presbytery PRC, or at the direct initiative of the Placements Committee.

3. Membership

3.1 A Convenor is appointed by the Placements Committee:

- For a three-year term (with the possibility of up to 2 further terms at the discretion of the Placements Committee).
- A maximum of three x 3-year terms without a three-year term break.

3.2 Up to 4 Members appointed by the Placements Committee:

- For a three-year term (with the possibility of up to 2 further terms at the discretion of the Placements Committee).
- A maximum of three x 3-year terms without a three-year term break
- The DFMP is to be supplemented by a member of the PRC or nominee of the Presbytery with oversight of this minister on a case-by-case basis.

3.3 A meeting shall have in attendance at least 3 members of the DFMP. No meeting shall proceed without the relevant PRC member or Presbytery nominee.

- 3.4 Should a member need to withdraw from a particular assessment due to declared conflict of interest, the Associate Secretary shall supplement from the Placements Committee membership.
- 3.5 The DFMP will be conducted with sensitivity and confidentiality. In appointing membership, the Placements Committee shall pay attention to the balance of personal qualities each member may bring. A balance of gender, culture, wisdom and kindness with a clear understanding of the DFMP's purpose will be essential.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

To have before it all relevant information identified in dialogue with Presbytery PRC:

- (a) Confidential comment from the relevant Presbytery PRC.
 - (b) Medical, Psychological, and other assessments, with parameters similar to those used by the Synod Selection Panel under regulation 2.3.2.4(a). Such assessments will be provided by the Presbytery PRC in consultation with the DFMP and Associate Secretary.
 - (c) Further information if considered necessary including confidential comment from the PRC and/or relevant Council of the minister's previous placement(s) with regards to the minister's leadership style(s) and skill, spiritual maturity, relational and emotional maturity and areas where improvement may be desired.
- 4.1 Meet with the minister, inviting them to have a support person present with them. The support person may not speak unless specifically invited by the committee.
 - 4.2 To have regard for, among other things, the minister's
 - (i) spiritual maturity
 - (ii) emotional intelligence
 - (iii) capacity and assessed leadership skills
 - (iv) character and personality
 - (v) theological articulation
 - (vi) placements history
 - 4.3 To make recommendations which may include one or more of the following
 - (a) that the minister continues in the Placements process with or without requiring a commitment to particular additional formational work.
 - (b) that the minister be encouraged to retire if of retirement age (alternative recommendation needs to be considered if the minister declines).
 - (c) that the minister be designated as not available for placement for a defined period (2.6.1(e)(i), with or without further work to be taken, and with or without recommendations as to limitations on the ministers exercise of all or any of the functions of ministerial office (Reg 3.1.3(r)).
 - (d) that the minister be referred to professional vocational transition counselling. (The committee shall determine at whose cost).
 - (e) that, in the case of a minister continuing in the designation of awaiting placement or not available for placement for more than two years, the Presbytery and Placements Committee proceed to concurrently work toward a withdrawal of recognition (Reg 2.10.3.(a) (ii)).
 - 4.4 To provide recommendations to the Minister, the Placements Committee, and the relevant Presbytery PRC. A copy of the report shall be provided to the Moderator and Secretary of the Synod.

5. How this process is enacted

- Any Minister may request to be considered for this process.
- Presbytery PRC or the Placements Committee may propose any minister.
- Any minister who has not received a call for at least two years under regulation 2.10.3(ii) shall enter this process.
- The Placements Committee may nominate any minister, working with the Presbytery PRC.
- The Associate Secretary shall be the conduit and arrange for the Presbytery PRC and the DFMP to engage in the review as soon as possible.

6. Accountability and Reporting

- 6.1 The DFMP is accountable to the Placements Committee.
- 6.2 In the conduct of its work, the DFMP will liaise with and be informed by the work of the Placements Committee and the Presbytery PRC.
- 6.3 The DFMP is to report to the Placements Committee when necessary.
- 6.4 Concluding recommendations made by the DFMP shall be submitted to the Placements Executive for decision and reported to the full Placements Committee. Should Placements Executive be unable to come to a consensus, the Placements Committee shall decide the recommendations in closed session.

7. Meetings

The DFMP shall convene in response to a referral from the Placements Committee.

8. Evaluation and Review

These Terms of Reference should be reviewed after the first two-year period of the DFMP's operation to assess their effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes identified in Purpose (point 2)

9. Appeal

Any Minister may appeal the process under section 6 of the Regulations. Grounds of Appeal are listed in Regulation 6.4. No appeal shall be lodged regarding any recommendations made by the DFMP.