



**uniting  
church**  
in Australia,  
Synod of NSW & ACT

# **Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements**

<b>Procedure</b>	Advisory Committee on Ministerial Placements
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## The role of the ACOMP member

Members of the Placements Committee have a responsibility to represent the needs of the placements and ministers within their presbytery. They also have an oversight responsibility for placement needs across the entire Synod and to ensure that the church places ministers to the greatest benefit to the life and mission of the UCA in this Synod.

The Regulations which govern the placement of ministers are 2.6.2 – 2.6.9. Specific paragraphs relating to ACOMP are:

### 3.7.4.2 Membership and Responsibilities of the Placements Committee

#### **Prior to each meeting:**

1. Be aware of the strategic vision of the presbytery in relation to each congregation;
2. Be informed about the current and pending placement needs in their presbytery and be familiar with the relevant profiles;
3. Be ready to suggest suitable names for placements within their presbytery for consideration by the Committee, after careful consideration of the available profiles and possibly after prior consultation with the PRC and/or the JNC;
4. Be able to update ACOMP on progress being made in each JNC in your Presbytery towards achieving a placement;
5. Ensure that your PRC is keeping the ACOMP secretary informed of all matters needing ACOMP's attention. Matters for the Agenda need to reach Ms Rowena Tagaloa by Thursday of the week before the meeting;

#### **At each meeting:**

1. Be ready to speak to the placement needs of all placements for which names are sought. It is very important that the particular challenges and opportunities of each placement are fully described;
2. Suggest names of ministers for consideration for placement within their presbytery, giving reasons why the match might be appropriate.
3. Be able to advise the committee of any specific personal or ministry needs of ministers available for placement within their presbytery;
4. Be mindful of the needs of the whole church, and be willing to support proposals which may meet particular needs elsewhere, even if possibly disadvantaging their own presbytery.

#### **After each meeting:**

1. Keep your Presbytery PRC informed about matters relating to ACOMP and its decisions;
2. Encourage any ministers who is on the Available for Placement list, to complete a Leadership Profile and forward it to the Placements Committee Secretary;
3. Resource and monitor that due process is being followed in the progress of each of the JNC'S in your presbytery.
4. Remember that confidentiality is to be maintained concerning the business of ACOMP in relation to individual ministers, so that information can go from the Secretary directly to the appropriate minister, congregation or council, without compromising the interests of either.

Presbytery Multicultural appointees have responsibility for advising ACOMP on matters related to specific language and specific cultural congregations and ministries, and their needs.

Synod Representatives on ACOMP have been elected or appointed because they bring insights from a particular part of the church, or they represent specific segments of the church's life which impact on the placement of ministers (e.g. UTC representatives) and they have a responsibility to contribute to the ACOMP discussion from this wider, strategic, perspective.

# Guidelines for Communication and Confidentiality

## Purpose

This paper highlights the importance of confidentiality during Placements Committee discussions. It sets out important ground rules for discussions and some strategies for applying these ground rules, with the aim of supporting Placements Committee members in their discussions.

## Context

The work of the Placements Committee requires members to discuss a range of information and issues relating to Ministers considered for placements. The information can be sensitive and requires an open, truthful, respectful, and confidential approach to ensure the best possible outcome.

The Synod recognises that within the Placements Committee it can sometimes be difficult to know what information to disclose, what not to disclose, and how to approach more sensitive topics for discussion. It also acknowledges that there can be concerns regarding confidentiality based on sensitivities to the type of issues discussed; to those that become aware of these issues through their role on the Placements Committee, and how to manage the information they now hold in the context of their everyday interactions with those discussed.

## Objectives

Providing a set of explicit guidelines for Placements Committee members is intended to alleviate these concerns; facilitate more effective discussions; and support members in navigating appropriate disclosure and mindfully managing the implications for confidentiality.

## Guiding Principles

The role of the Placements Committee is to find the best possible match between Minister and Placement to maximise the potential of positive service to the presbytery and congregations. As such, discussions regarding Ministers and placements should be open, honest, respectful and truthful. It is important that, within this context, members raise any relevant complex or sensitive information that may affect placement, whilst remaining mindful of this overarching aim.

## Ground Rules for Effective Discussions

### Self-reflection:

- Be aware of and acknowledge your own background, shaping experiences, and biases that may impact your perception, judgments and assessment
- Be willing to explore any assumptions you have made
- Be open to having your perspective re-shaped by the experience of others
- Evaluate where you can build your skills and techniques in knowing when and how to communicate effectively given the context and audience
- Ask yourself how you can build trust and openness in your communication style

### Communicating:

#### *What*

- Give an honest assessment of the gifts and graces of the minister and how they match the placement

- Give an honest assessment of the current character and context of placement and leadership needs
- Give an assessment of both matching qualities and any potential areas of mismatch
- Discuss how the minister might deal with any known challenges in the proposed placement
- Highlight anything written in the profile that you feel is relevant

### **How**

- Report accurately and support your statements with evidence that identifies the reliability, context, and sources of information:
  - 'There seems to be a pattern ...'
  - 'I know that in this circumstance this is how the person behaves in this context...'
- When expressing an opinion or acknowledging in some way either a (mis)giving or a hunch (for this may indeed be a leading of the Spirit), be explicit about this
- When broaching difficult topics, think about the phrasing of what you are trying to say. Use open questions to explore any concerns rather than making statements e.g. 'Does anyone know or have an experience of X in a multicultural setting?'
- Be explicit about what you don't know

### **When**

- Information should be communicated when it is relevant and appropriate within the
- Placements Committee meeting
- Some informal clarification on particular queries outside of the Placements Committee may be appropriate, provided prior knowledge/discussion with the Placements Committee has taken place and confidentiality is considered when doing so.

### **Considering Confidentiality**

- Preserving confidentiality is crucial. Maintaining the confidentiality of what Ministers have shared outside the meeting, as well as what is shared inside the meeting is important
- Items discussed within the Placement Committee should remain confidential within that meeting, and should not be discussed within the Joint Nominating Committee, or with other Ministers without the prior agreement of the Placement Committee and/or Associate Secretary
- Reinforce the importance of confidentiality at the start and end of each meeting
- Show courtesy and respect others' confidentiality
- If you have committed to keep something confidential – maintain that confidentiality! Tell the committee that you cannot comment because it would breach a confidentiality Be careful what third party information you pass on. Do not pass on rumours or assumptions.
- When having everyday discussions with Ministers, be mindful of whether the information is coming to you in confidence or not. Understand what your boundaries are, and be clear with yourself and others about the confidentiality of this information when you feel there is a need
- If you are ever unsure about what information should or shouldn't be shared, and haven't been able to resolve this with the individual in question, speak to the Placement Committee Executive/Associate Secretary.

In addition, please note that Placement Committee members are not responsible for communicating the decisions of the Committee and that all communication is through the Secretary.

### **Using these Guidelines**

As with any behavioural change, these guidelines will become habit through increased and regular visibility, reference, and incorporation into relevant activities and discussions. As such this document will be:

- Incorporated into the agenda at the start of every meeting
- Circulated with the other documents prior to meetings
- Included in the training sessions for Placements Committee members
- Included in the JNC and PRC information
- Included in Placement Committee Guidelines

## Conflict of Interest

It is inevitable and desirable that the knowledge and experience that members bring will be expressed in meetings of the Placements Committee. Because the church is a community created by Christ and sustained by the Spirit, it is very important for members to seek to avoid any personal subjectivity and to recognize that at times there may be an actual or potential conflict between personal interest or experience and the responsibility to make decisions for the benefit of the whole church.

Because of the nature and size of the church community and the relationships formed between members of the church there will be times when members cannot completely avoid conflicts of interest. For this reason, the disclosure and management of conflicts of interest is important.

Early in each meeting of the Committee there will be an agenda item 'Conflicts of Interest'. At that point, members should declare any real or possible conflicts of interest on matters listed on the agenda for that meeting. If a conflict arises later in the meeting it should be declared at that point.

Members should declare a conflict of interest when:

- a. Their name is under consideration for a placement;
- b. The name of a close relative (e.g. spouse, sibling, offspring or parent) is under consideration for a placement;
- c. The congregation in which they hold membership is being considered for a placement;
- d. The congregation under consideration is one in which a member recently concluded a placement;
- e. A minister under consideration for a placement is in a ministry team relationship with a member;
- f. They are aware of any other real or potential conflict of interest

In the event of (a) or (b) applying, the member will leave the room while the matter is under discussion.

In the event of (c) to (f) applying, the member may

- Choose to leave the room,
- Remain in the room but refrain from participation in the discussion and decision,
- Offer only such comment as would enable the committee to have information which would otherwise not be available to it.

At any point in the meeting the Chairperson may advise a member that s/he has a conflict of interest and / or advise a person with a conflict of interest to leave the meeting for a particular item of business.

There are a number of resources available to assist ACOMP members:

- Assembly: Placements Handbook (2006)
- Synod: Exploring the Role of the JNC (2006)

**This document and its use will be reviewed on a yearly basis, or prior if there is a specific need.**