

Regional Partnership: Riverina Presbytery Newsletter

November 2024



*The Regional Partnership is the Committee charged with oversight and responsibilities of the Riverina. We meet monthly and this Newsletter is a summary of the meeting held on **13 November 2024**.*

At each Regional Partnership meeting we begin our conversation with discussion around theology, the Church and then in prayer together. The Regional Partnership, as part of the practice of Saltbush, grounds our work and conversation within our faith rather than our faith within our work.

Message from the Chair, Regional Partnership

The Jacarandas are just losing their purple in our front paddock; they've been slightly early this year. Our daughters remember that the first sign of Advent was the tree in the church's front garden at Dubbo, followed by the news that the harvest was fully underway.

The signs of change continue around us, with our conversations (always rigorous, some angry, many hopeful) about climate and renewable infrastructure, adding to new considerations about how we might structure our church more effectively to serve the mission of God.

The proposal being considered has three new, large presbyteries across the Synod, with the intention of moving resources - people, finance and governance - into the regions. We need to be talking more, and doing more, about how we provide resources to our Congregations for ministry and mission. These proposed changes need to hear the voice of the rural and regional church, and the hopes we have in order to be the Uniting Church in the decades ahead, in our communities.

This Advent Season we are reminded that we are waiting for the return of Christ, when God brings everything to completion. While we wait, in hope, we remember that God has invested everything in us, in history and creation, in order to bring fullness of life.

Our hope always begins here: Advent leads us to Jesus Christ, God born at risk in the midst of our world. As we note the challenges before us, we hang our hats on this central hope, that God is with us, in the wonder of the angels' song, in the joy of the shepherds' witness, in the struggle of Herod's persecution, in the fear of the flight to Egypt, in every moment, every story, every heartbeat, every breath.

May God bless, your Congregation and community and whoever you call your family, for this Advent journey and the wonder of Christmas to come.

Finance Report for YTD October 2024

The YTD October Finance Reports were presented at the November meeting providing an update on the Riverina Presbytery financial performance for the Year to Date (YTD) October 2024 (FY25).

The report is attached for your information.

Discernment Summit #4 Update

The fourth Discernment Summit held on Friday, 1st and Saturday, 2nd November. Presbytery agreed to work collaboratively to bring a proposal to our Synod meeting in July 2025. The basic elements of the proposal are:

1. To dissolve our current 12 Presbyteries and form 3 new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries.
2. To recognise that changing boundaries alone is not enough. In order to be able to fulfil the prime responsibility of Presbyteries to empower our Congregations for mission and to support new missional ventures, we need to rethink our culture, staffing, committee-structures and funding radically.
3. To recognise that in order to create more effective oversight, we will need to develop new ways of meeting and connecting both locally and across the new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries.
4. To enable these new Presbyteries to be better resourced we need to:
 - Reshape how Synod Mission Support Staff are deployed.
 - Establish the Presbytery Resource Fund, already approved at our 2023 Synod meeting.
5. To move from where we are to the vision of three new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries, we need to develop a comprehensive transition plan, including building larger teams from our current Presbytery staff along with new positions enabled by the Presbytery Resource Fund, and all of this in a pastorally grounded way.

Rob McFarlane shared a **Discernment Summit #4 Briefing Note - attached for your information.**

Synod 2025 Transforming Communities

A reminder to register nominations for the 41st Synod in Session in 2025:

Date: **11th to 13th July 2025**
Venue: **Western Sydney Conference Centre**
Panthers Penrith Complex
83 Mulgoa Road, Penrith
Cost: \$165 per person

Register nominations online via this link: <https://nswactuca.eventsair.com/synod2025/noms/Site/Register>

Key Dates:

★	24 February 2025	Nominations Close
★	March 2025	Nominations Confirmed
		Registrations Open
★	31 March 2025	Proposal Submissions Due
★	26 May 2025	Report Submissions Due
★	11-13 July 2025	Synod 2025 In Session

We ask that you prayerfully discern whether you or someone you know should nominate for Synod 2025.

For further information please follow: [Uniting Church NSW & ACT Facebook](#)

Or go to the [Uniting Church Synod 2025](#) website.

Email synodmeeting@nswactuca.org.au if you have any question or queries.

Saltbush Team Update

Our next **Saltbush Gathering** will Saturday, 30th. November at Yamba. Please click here for details:

<https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/saltbush-gathering-yamba-far-north-coast-tickets-1063998430949?aff=oddtcreator>



Saltbush Advent Cafes

This Advent Saltbush will be offering three ways and times for people to join us as we ponder this sacred time together. Advent is a time of quiet centering; a time for contemplation and stillness, even amongst the fullness and distraction of our lives.

<https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au/news/advent-cafes-with-saltbush-three-ways-and-times-to-belong/>

The Saltbush team invite you to join us for any of the following.

Tuesday's Cafe on Zoom will be held each Tuesday at **10am and 7.30pm** on 26th November, 3rd, 10th, and 17th December. The themes for each week will be:

Justice (& tension) - Presence (& absence) - Joy (& sorrow) - Peace (& uncertainty).

The Zoom link for all these cafes is:

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/94738987684>

Meeting ID: 947 3898 7684



Riverina Gathering 1 March 2025

The outcome of the Presbytery Project Year of Discernment is a proposal to make new, larger, better resourced Presbyteries. This proposal seeks to make Presbyteries more effective in supporting Congregations (including greater equity of funding at Presbytery level). It will be voted on at the Synod meeting, July 2025.



This proposal has been described as the **most significant since the 1977 formation of the Uniting Church in Australia**. At our next gathering on 1 March 2025, we are allocating significant time to discuss the Synod proposal and have invited Rev. Rob McFarlane to be part of that conversation. It is vital that Congregations across the Riverina Presbytery have an opportunity to meet and discuss this proposal and its impact on our Presbytery. We ask that you please send at least **TWO** people from your congregation to the meeting on 1 March 2025.

We will also be conducting the election for the three available positions on the Regional Partnership at that time - more information on this will be distributed in the new year. Please reflect on who might serve the Riverina Presbytery through being on the Committee, as we navigate this time of change.

Please plan to arrive by 9:30am for a 10:00am start with departure planned for not later than 3:00pm. Zoom invites will be available prior to the event. Morning tea and lunch will be provided and the Presbytery travel subsidy policy will apply for one vehicle per congregation.

Please note our event in your diary:

Date: 1 March 2025
Time: From 9:30 to 3:00pm
Location: UCA Wagga Pilgrim,
10 Tanda Place, Glenfield Park.

Please let us know if you have particular needs or if you have any good news stories to share, we would love to hear from you: regionalpartnership@nswact.uca.org.au

Blessings to you all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Simon Hansford".

Rev. Simon Hansford
Chairperson, Regional Partnership

Riverina Presbytery Regional Partnership

WP 4

Finance Report as at 31 October 2024

Meeting Date:

For Noting and Approval

Executive Summary

This report provides the Regional Partnerships with an update on the Riverina Presbytery (RP) financial performance for the Year to Date (YTD) October 2024 (FY25).

The Synod Office Finance Team closed Financial Year 24 with net deficits of \$12.8k.

Summary highlights are:

- **YTD Result** was a net surplus of \$70k which is \$1.6m favourable to budget. This large variance is essentially a timing difference relating to losses on sale of properties yet to be realised, as budgeted property sales have not yet taken place.
- **Balance Sheet** – The Net Assets/Equity balance is \$14.45m with a YTD movement of \$70k.

Proposal

That the Regional Partnership resolve to:

1. Note this report.

Report

Riverina Presbytery YTD to 31 October 24

	Current Month - Oct 2024			Year-to-Date - Oct 2024			Full Year
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Actual	Budget	Variance	FY Budget
Income							
Stewardship Contribution	0	0	0	103,350	103,350	0	103,350
Distributions Received - Total	0	0	0	103,350	103,350	0	103,350
Interest Income	1,358	993	364	5,199	3,974	1,225	11,921
Interest Income: Int Fi Inv	2,504	2,747	(243)	11,599	10,989	610	32,966
Dividends & Distributions Received	0	0	0	4,000	2,500	1,500	2,500
Financial Income - Total	3,862	3,741	121	20,798	17,462	3,336	47,387
Rental Income	6,467	6,126	341	23,745	24,504	(759)	73,513
Property Income End-Total	6,467	6,126	341	23,745	24,504	(759)	73,513
Insurance Recovery Income: General	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,779
Recoupments/ Recoveries	0	0	0	400	0	400	0
Recovery Income - Total	0	0	0	400	0	400	4,779
Conference And Workshops Income	6,409	1,517	4,892	6,409	6,067	342	18,200
Other Income - Total	6,409	1,517	4,892	6,409	6,067	342	18,200
Income End-Total	16,738	11,383	5,355	154,702	151,383	3,318	247,230
Operating Expenses							
Salary & Wages Staff	1,377	6,786	5,409	6,539	27,145	20,606	81,434
S&W Superannuation	158	828	670	752	3,313	2,561	9,938
S&W Annual Leave Taken	0	415	415	0	1,662	1,662	4,986
S&W Annual Leave Provision	0	138	138	0	554	554	1,662
Ministers Stipends	18,200	10,921	(7,279)	38,284	52,847	14,562	140,215
Ministers Superannuation Expenses	2,085	1,401	(685)	4,499	5,602	1,103	16,806
Ministers Benefits	4,115	2,525	(1,590)	8,758	10,100	1,342	30,301
Ministers Annual Leave Provision	350	210	(140)	560	840	280	2,520
S&W Workers Compensation	0	0	0	1,198	1,198	0	1,198
Recruitment Fees	563	0	(563)	563	0	(563)	0
Employment Support and Supervision	315	188	(128)	504	750	246	2,250
Training & Development (Staff)	0	465	465	0	1,858	1,858	5,575
Staff Amenities	65	54	(11)	104	217	113	650
Sundry Staff Expenses	20	29	9	32	117	85	350
Payroll Congregation Cost Recovery	(8,108)	(6,688)	1,420	(18,297)	(38,348)	(20,051)	(93,655)
Employment Expenses - Total	19,140	17,272	(1,868)	43,495	67,854	24,358	204,230
Council Rates	485	780	295	2,398	3,121	722	9,362
Electricity	226	470	244	1,304	1,880	576	5,640
Gas	(1,253)	133	1,385	(525)	531	1,056	1,593
Water	36	104	67	143	415	272	1,244
Cleaning & Pest Control	0	12	12	0	46	46	138
Security Expenses	0	2	2	0	9	9	28
Property Management Fees	445	379	(65)	1,674	1,517	(157)	4,550
Other Property Costs	0	1,123	1,123	0	4,490	4,490	13,470
Survey & Valuation Fees	0	3,000	3,000	0	12,000	12,000	36,000
Repairs & Maintenance: Buildings	8,165	2,080	(6,085)	8,165	8,319	154	24,958
Repairs & Maintenance: Gardens	730	409	(321)	980	1,634	654	4,903
Repairs & Maintenance: Other	0	8	8	0	31	31	94
Repairs & Maintenance: Equipment	95	258	163	95	1,033	938	3,099
Property Expenses - Total	8,930	8,757	(173)	14,234	35,026	20,793	105,079
Other Professional Fees	0	33	33	0	131	131	393
Professional Fees - Total	0	33	33	0	131	131	393
Grants Paid (For Internal Use)	10,000	11,250	1,250	10,000	15,000	5,000	45,000
Donations (for external use)	0	8,976	8,976	0	35,903	35,903	107,708
Fundraising, Donations & Grants Expenses - Total	10,000	20,226	10,226	10,000	50,903	40,903	152,708
Computer Equipment <\$2000	0	48	48	0	192	192	576
IT Support	0	42	42	0	167	167	500
Website Development	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Telephone	0	65	65	0	259	259	776
Software Licences	0	42	42	0	167	167	500
Information Technology Expenses End-Total	0	196	196	0	784	784	2,352
Travel: Domestic	520	479	(41)	1,380	1,917	537	5,750
Accommodation: Domestic	0	116	116	269	465	196	1,394
Travel Expenses End-Total	520	595	75	1,649	2,381	733	7,144
Repairs & Maintenance: Motor Vehicles	0	88	88	25	351	326	1,053
Fuel & Oil	57	306	250	413	1,226	813	3,677
Road Side Assistance	0	33	33	521	133	(388)	400
Registration	0	175	175	0	699	699	2,096
Insurance: Motor Vehicles	0	122	122	0	487	487	1,461
Motor Vehicle Expenses End-Total	57	724	667	959	2,896	1,937	8,688
Meeting Expenses	165	142	(23)	264	567	303	1,700
Meetings & Conferences - Total	165	142	(23)	264	567	303	1,700
Insurance Premium- General	0	0	0	5,269	5,269	0	18,747
Insurance Premium- Motor Vehicles	0	0	0	1,342	1,342	0	4,774
Insurance Expenses - Total	0	0	0	6,611	6,611	0	23,521
Initiatives & Programmes	0	1,917	1,917	0	7,667	7,667	23,000
Initiatives & Programmes - Total	0	1,917	1,917	0	7,667	7,667	23,000
Loss on Sale of Assets	0	375,237	375,237	1,800	1,500,950	1,499,150	4,502,849
Postage, Freight & Couriers	20	46	26	32	183	151	550
Stationery & Office Supplies	20	54	34	32	217	185	650
Printing Expenses	106	54	(52)	118	217	98	650
Resources & Supplies	0	52	52	0	209	209	627
Food & Beverage	0	16	16	0	63	63	188
Mobile Phone	342	320	(22)	572	1,280	708	3,840
Other Expenses - Total	489	375,780	375,291	2,554	1,503,118	1,500,564	4,509,354
Operating Expenses - Total	39,299	425,640	386,340	79,766	1,677,938	1,598,172	5,038,170
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) Before Non- Operating Items	(22,561)	(414,256)	391,695	74,936	(1,526,554)	1,601,490	(4,790,940)
Depreciation: Motor Vehicle	1,067	1,333	266	4,249	5,330	1,081	15,990
Depreciation: Computer Equipment	68	66	(2)	269	264	(5)	792
Non - Operating Expenses - Total	1,134	1,399	264	4,518	5,594	1,076	16,782
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(23,696)	(415,655)	391,959	70,418	(1,532,148)	1,602,566	(4,807,722)

Key variances:

YTD October 2024 Actual vs Budget:

- **Income** – favourable to budget by \$3.3k primarily due to:
 - **Interest Income (including FTI)** – \$1.8k favourable as more interest received than budgeted.
 - **Dividends & Distribution Received** – \$1.5k favourable as more funds received from Southern Newell.

- **Operating Expenses** – favourable to budget by \$1.6m primarily due to:
 - **Loss on Sale of Assets** - \$1.5m favourable variance due to timing as properties have not yet been sold
 - **Salary & Wages and Superannuation** - \$23k favourable variance, as Admin Officer role for Riverina Presbytery was not filled till the end of October.
 - **Minsters Stipends, Superannuation, Benefits & Payroll Congregation Cost Recovery** - \$3K unfavourable variance as extra time worked.
 - **Other Property Costs** – \$4.4k favourable variance - timing difference as no YTD costs yet.
 - **Surveys & Valuation Fees** - \$12k favourable to budget – timing difference as no hazmat survey fees yet.
 - **Grant Paid (for internal use)** - \$5k favourable variance – timing differences: \$10k Seeds of Growth paid in October 24; grant for Adults & Young People Development not yet paid.
 - **Donations (for external use)** - \$35.9k favourable variance due to timing - once properties are sold commission to SMS and First Nations Initiatives will be made.
 - **Initiatives & Programs** – \$7.6 favourable variance due to timing, as payments for programs have not yet been made (ties in with Conference and Workshop Income account).

	Riverina Presbytery		
	Oct-24	Jun-24	YTD mvmt
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Cash and Term Deposits	1,244,501	1,187,188	57,312
Accounts Receivables (Current)	46,546	4,474	42,072
Accrued Income	16,139	25,582	(9,442)
Other Current Assets	0	6,611	(6,611)
Current Assets -Total	1,307,186	1,223,855	83,331
Non-Current Assets			
Fixed Assets and Accumulated Depreciation	13,080,775	13,083,233	(2,458)
Other Non-Current Assets	110,000	110,000	0
Non-Current Assets -Total	13,190,775	13,193,233	(2,458)
Assets -Total	14,497,961	14,417,088	80,873
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable	8,985	0	8,985
Accrued Expenses	36,339	34,869	1,470
Current Liabilities - Total	45,324	34,869	10,455
Liabilities -Total	45,324	34,869	10,455
Net Assets	14,452,637	14,382,219	70,418
Equity			
Contributed Equity	8,370,990	8,370,990	0
Retained Earnings	(59,751)	(46,910)	(12,842)
Asset Revaluation Reserve	6,070,980	6,070,980	0
Current Year Surplus (Deficit)	70,418	(12,842)	83,260
Equity End-Total	14,452,637	14,382,219	70,418

Key Variances:

- **Cash and Term Deposits** – \$57k increase primarily due to operating surplus, net of increase in accounts receivables and pay down of June 24 accrued expenses.
- **Accounts Receivables** – increased by \$42k as all Stewardship and Seeds of Growth invoices are issued yearly in July 24 and congregations pay monthly instalments.
- **Accrued Income** – decreased by \$9k due to settlement of Geoff Wellington true up invoice and rental income for June 24 paid in July 24.
- **Other Current Assets** – decreased by \$6.6k due to amortisation of general & motor vehicle insurance prepayments.
- **Fixed Assets & Accumulated Depreciation** – decreased by \$2.4k due to motor vehicle and laptop depreciation.
- **Accounts Payable** – increased by \$8.9k in line with trading.
- **Accrued Expenses** – increase by \$1.4k due to paydown of June 24 accruals and increase of \$20k for 50% Griffith Minister.

Name	Number	Credit Limit	Above Credit Limit	Balance Due	Current	0-30	31-60	61-90	91+
Wagga Wesley Uniting Church	C00025	-	-	7,875.00	7,875.00	-	-	-	7,875.00
June Uniting Church	C00015	-	-	5,900.00	5,900.00	-	-	-	5,900.00
Young Uniting Church	C00026	-	-	5,200.00	5,200.00	-	-	-	5,200.00
Southern Newell Congregation	C00020	-	-	3,900.00	3,900.00	-	-	-	3,900.00
Jerilderie Uniting Church	C00028	-	-	3,700.00	3,700.00	-	-	-	3,700.00
Wagga Pilgrim UCA	C000037	-	-	3,446.89	3,446.89	3,446.89	-	-	-
Coolamon UCA	C00006	-	-	3,200.00	3,200.00	-	-	-	3,200.00
Griffith Uniting Church	C00010	-	-	3,126.09	3,126.09	3,126.09	-	-	-
Deniliquin Uniting Church	C00009	-	-	2,750.00	2,750.00	-	-	-	2,750.00
Coleambally Darlington Point UC	C00005	-	-	2,700.00	2,700.00	-	-	-	2,700.00
The Rock Uniting Church	C00022	-	-	2,000.00	2,000.00	-	-	-	2,000.00
Lake Cargelligo Uniting Church	C00016	-	-	1,400.00	1,400.00	-	-	-	1,400.00
Tumbarumba Uniting Church	C00023	-	-	1,098.00	1,098.00	-	-	-	1,098.00
Boorowa Uniting Church	C00004	-	-	250.00	250.00	-	-	-	250.00
Grand Total				46,545.98	46,545.98	6,572.98	-	-	39,973.00

- All stewardship and seeds of growth yearly invoices have been issued in July 24 and congregations pay monthly instalments.

List of attachments – None

Prepared by:

Maria Ioannou
 Financial Accountant
 7 November 2024

Endorsed by:

John De Vitis
 Financial Planning & Analysis Manager
 12 November 2024

Briefing Paper

Discernment Summit 4

6th November 2024

Discernment Summit 4 – Briefing Note

The fourth of four Discernment Summits in our Year of Discernment occurred on Friday to Saturday, 1-2 November. 39 leaders from Presbyteries and 11 from Synod Mission Services (including UME) gathered. These 50 leaders (“summiteers”) shared in collective discernment to bring together the work done in the first three Summits: form, function, funding.

Presbytery leaders committed themselves, by consensus, to the most radical proposal concerning our shared life since Union. We will be working collaboratively to bring this proposal to our full Synod meeting in July next year. The basic elements of the proposal are:

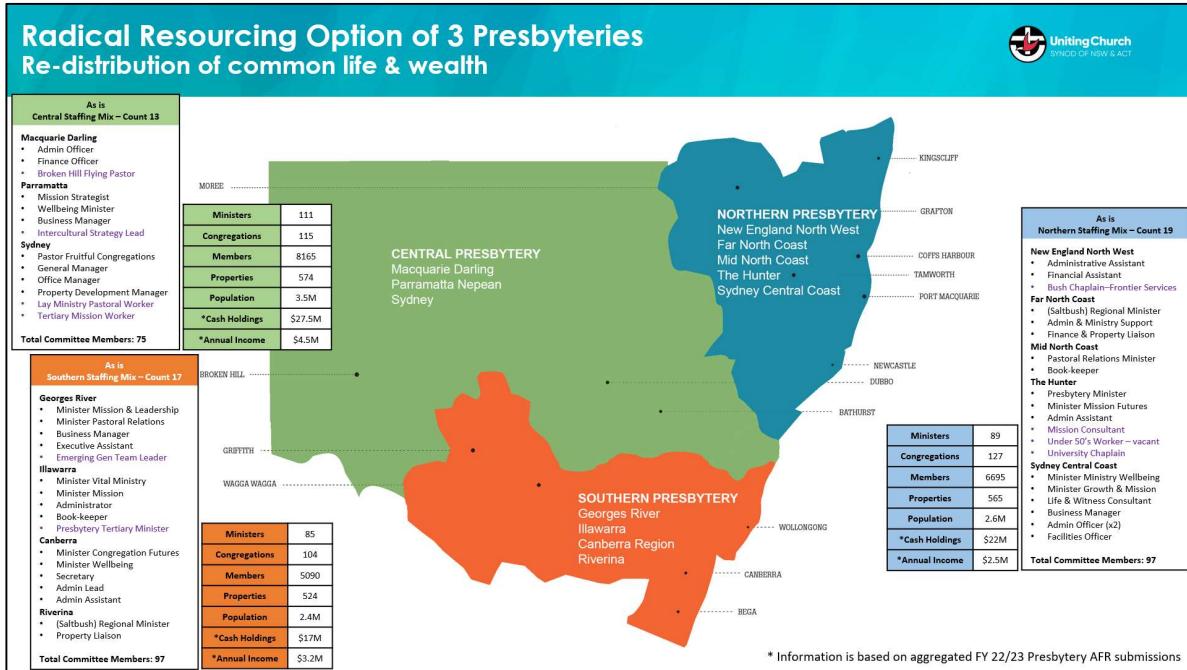
1. To dissolve our current 12 Presbyteries and form 3 new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries.
2. To recognise that changing boundaries alone is not enough. In order to be able to fulfil the prime responsibility of Presbyteries to empower our Congregations for mission and to support new missional ventures, we need to rethink our culture, staffing, committee-structures and funding radically.
3. To recognise that in order to create more effective oversight, we will need to develop new ways of meeting and connecting both locally and across the new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries.
4. To enable these new Presbyteries to be better-resourced we need to:
 - Reshape how Synod Mission Support Staff are deployed.
 - Establish the Presbytery Resource Fund, already approved at our 2023 Synod meeting.
5. To move from where we are to the vision of three new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries, we need to develop a comprehensive transition plan, including building larger teams from our current Presbytery staff along with new positions enabled by the Presbytery Resource Fund, and all of this in a pastorally-grounded way.

During the fourth Summit there were opportunities to imagine what life might look and feel like in a new, larger, better-resourced Presbytery, and create a shared understanding around a commitment to bringing this proposal to Synod 2025. Despite the challenges that will need to be addressed and overcome it was acknowledged that this work offers hope, energy and opportunity to let go of old ways and to intentionally reshape a new, fit for purpose culture of relational oversight and encouragement.

There is still much work that lies ahead, but through prayer and discernment across the year, the outcome is a testament to God at work and active in our midst. Those present at Summit 4 affirmed that “we are choosing to trust one-another, and we are fully committed to resourcing the work needed, confident that we have enough.”

A picture paints a thousand words. Please reflect on the map (refer Figure 1) of the proposed three new Presbyteries, which includes data on current roles and resources, helping to ground the vision for new, larger, better-resourced Presbyteries.

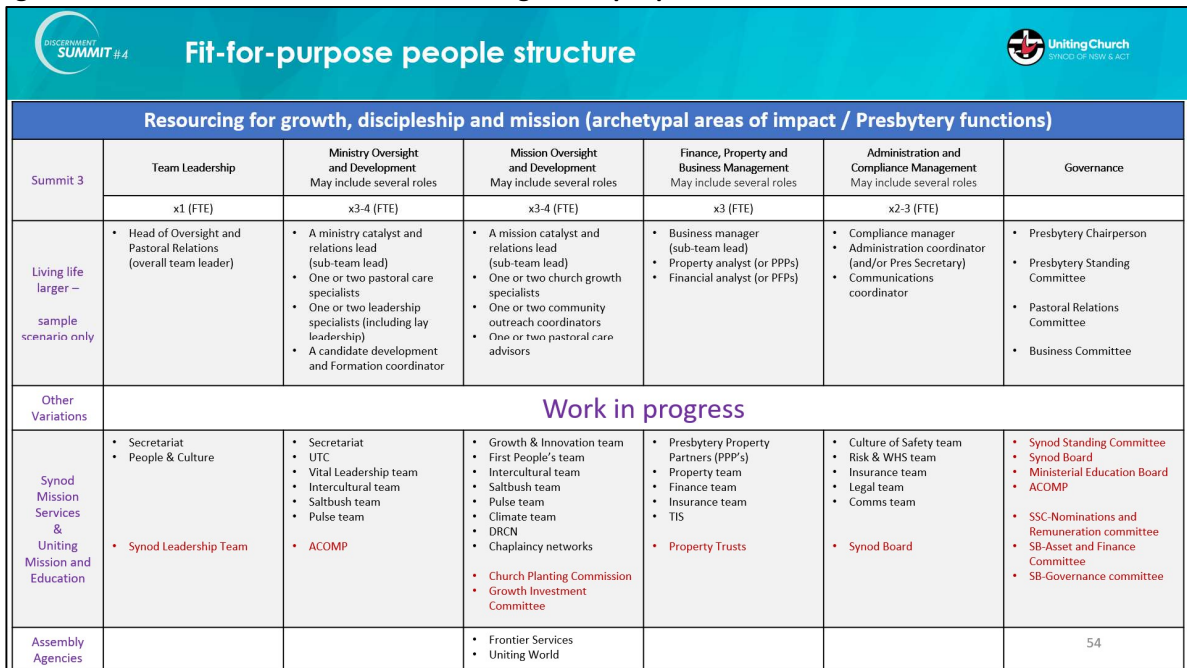
Figure 1 – an outline of the three Presbytery model that will be proposed



A key commitment of the Summit was to bring greater consistency to the functions, processes, roles and position descriptions of those performing Presbytery work (refer Figure 2). In keeping with this commitment more work will be done, in the lead up to Synod 2025, to quantify better-resourcing (staffing) of all 3 new Presbyteries across six key areas of impact:

- Presbytery team leader
- Ministry oversight and development
- Mission oversight and development
- Finance, property and business management
- Administration and compliance management
- Governance (including Presbytery chair and Committees)

Figure 2 – an indicative framework for creating a new people structure to resource the 3P model



Critical Next Steps

In the lead up to Synod 2025 we are committed to:

- Forming a PRF Committee, comprising one representative from each Presbytery, to oversee the activation of the Presbytery Resourcing Fund and associated Terms of Reference.
- Scheduling a series of virtual town halls to provide opportunities to share (with the wider church) the contextual background, rationale, known impacts, and to respond to questions arising from the proposed resolution.
- Encouraging all those nominating for Synod 2025 to attend one of these town halls.
- Working collaboratively to refine a Presbytery people structure that is fit and funded for purpose.
- Following the UCA Regulations (3.4.7). For a proposal to change the shape of Presbyteries to go to the Synod meeting, every Presbytery has to have the opportunity to respond to the proposal. We will prepare a draft proposal, including rationale and recommendations, to be considered at all our Presbytery meetings in February and March, 2025.

Noting that: Individual Presbyteries don't vote on the proposal, that's the role of all the members of Synod discerning collectively. However, it's important for Synod members to hear any responses from Presbyteries as they reflect.

Please listen to the Transforming Spirit as we journey forward together.

Prepared by

Rev. Dr Robert McFarlane

Presbytery Relations Minister & Presbytery Project Lead