



**Pastoral Care Council of the ACT**  
*Caring Together*

## **2017 Executive Officer's Annual Report**

This report is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements stated in Schedule 2 and 3 of the Service Funding Agreement.

### Financial Summary

The ACT Government provided the Pastoral Council with \$34,684 in recurrent funding and an additional \$6,048 in non-recurrent funding (total: \$40,732) for the financial year that ended on 30 June 2017.

### Funding

Contrary to previous advice, the Council has been informed that all current service funding agreements will be reviewed in 2018, with the tender process leading to new funding agreements commencing in July 2019. This is a year later than previously advised.

### Pastoral Care Council Mandate

It was noted in last year's report that the Council had developed a timeline for the implementation of a registration and accreditation system. The Council has initially progressed well, developing an evidence brief and subsequently a ministerial brief along with several options for how a system would work. Health Directorate and the Canberra Hospital did however express concern that the Standards as envisioned by the Council could not be met by a large part of its volunteer corps due to high cost and high demands on their time. While this was ongoing, Health Directorate also advised of a whole of government move towards the use of national standards; formally notification was received in May 2017 to replace its *Standards of Practice for Pastoral Care* with *Spiritual Care Australia Standards of Practice*. At the same time, the Council's mandate to implement "a robust and sustainable registration and accreditation system for ACT facilities engaged with the provision of pastoral care" has been rescinded.

The move to SCA Standards has however created flow-down issues. SCA Standards lacked measurement criteria; this in itself makes implementation difficult. The Board had previously established a working group to initiate a detailed comparison between the two Standards. But further discussion with Health Directorate has determined that the best way forward would be to author a set of guidelines for implantation of the SCA Standards in the ACT, which would address the deficiencies of the SCA Standards. This task will be assigned to the Standard Working Group.

### Council membership

There are currently 38 members (34 active) on the Council, with the ACT Humanist Society formally joining the Council at the last general meeting after being involved as observers for several months.

## Chaplaincy Service at the Alexander Maconochie Centre

The chaplaincy service is now in the third year of its current funding agreement although there is the option of extending this agreement. The Council submitted a proposal for a variation of the service to 2.0 FTE (mainly due to the chaplain performing large amounts of unpaid overtime). ACT Corrective Services gave its support to the proposal, but it was ultimately rejected by the Territory delegate.

## Emergency Response and Recovery

The Pastoral Care Council of the ACT administers the ACT Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network. The chaplains and pastoral carers who are part of this network provide an invaluable service during times of crisis, being deployed to disaster areas and evacuation centres to assist any persons in need. This deployment is initiated by the Community Recovery Subcommittee of Community Services Directorate.

Personnel who are being deployed have hitherto been receiving specialized training by the Rev. Dr Stephen Robinson, Senior Chaplain of the NSW Disaster Recovery Chaplaincy Network. Dr Robinson initially provided free training for our chaplains and pastoral carers to help get the ACT DRCN off the ground. We have since been asking our volunteers to travel to NSW for training (at their cost), due to our inability to provide training in the ACT. The Council initially approached CSD for a small amount of funding. This was declined on the basis that CSD's role in community recovery was to coordinate services (not fund them) and that as chaplaincy was a health-related matter, it was therefore an issue for Health Directorate to deal with. Health Directorate noted that as the expense is specifically to fill a role within community recovery, the funding should come from CSD. We approached a second time and were declined.

Although the option of the Council funding the training would not be a large financial burden on the Council in the short term, the Board has indicated that it may suspend the Council's participation in community recovery if we are no longer able to foot the bill. The Council applied for a Community Services and Infrastructure Grant in the hope that such funds could be used to fully fund training in the ACT for the intermediate future while we evaluate long term options such as building capacity to deliver the training ourselves; this application was unsuccessful.

We met with Senator the Hon. Zed Seselja on 2 November 2017 to discuss the possibility of obtaining Commonwealth Funding. Mrs Susan Miller is working on some costings; we will have an update in due course.

## Council Administration and Miscellaneous Matters

- Aboriginal Engagement Policy  
The Council has put in place an Aboriginal engagement policy as required by the current Service Funding Agreement and has also been in contact with Aboriginal service providers in an effort to recruit Aboriginal members.
- Continuity planning

Emergency handover and continuity plans have been put in place to ensure access to by the Board to the Council's documents and funds in the event that the Executive Officer is incapacitated. Efforts have been made to ensure that the majority of all documents could be securely saved to and retrieved from cloud storage, while all archived hard copy documents have been collated into one location.

- National Consensus Conference  
The Council (as well as several of its members) had representatives in attendance at the recent National Consensus Conference, where the topics discussed ranged from the definition of pastoral or spiritual care, to issues with accreditation.
- Income Tax Status  
The Australian Taxation Officer requested that the Council review its not-for-profit status (for exemption of income tax); this was completed at the end of October.
- Council website  
A new design and layout has been developed. Unfortunately, as the layout had featured the Council's Standards as a core element in the layout, the project has been put on hold.

Kevin Teo  
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*Pastoral Care Council of the ACT*