



# Presbyterian Church of Queensland

## State Moderator

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Dear Church member

## Introduction

Thank you to all from across the congregations of the PCQ who participated in Wednesday night's Combined on-line Service that was organised by the Meditation & Reflection Team (Peter Evans, Carolyn Russell, and Nathan Shannon). Thank you Peter, Carolyn and Nathan for the huge effort you put into organising the service. Your work is appreciated.

I'm writing today to let you know how things are progressing on various matters for PresCare and the PCQ.

## Sales

The Supreme Court approved the sale to Apollo Aged Care of Alexandra Gardens, Yaralla Place and Groundwater Lodge on Thursday 10 June 2021 and the sales were completed by the Receivers on Friday 11 June 2021. The Presbyterian Church will continue to provide pastoral care to those facilities.

PCQ continues to operate our Residential Aged Care facilities at Vela (Carina), and Protea (Townsville) and to hold, but not operate, the WRB facility (Corinda). Those remaining facilities have Catalyst as Landlord and remain the subject of ongoing confidential negotiations towards sale.

PresCare continues to operate under the leadership of the CEO, Wayne Knapp, reporting to the Receivers. Our residents continue to receive excellent care and are largely unaffected by the matters affecting our legal position.

## The response to the receivers

To date our working relationship with the Receivers has been excellent. I want to begin by thanking the hundreds of volunteers and ministers across our church who are working to provide the information requested by the Receivers. If your congregation needs help in gathering the information requested by the Receivers, please contact Church Offices or the Receivers directly for assistance. While this is a testing time it is a joy for me to see the way the church is rising to the occasion. As this more thorough information is provided the full picture becomes clearer. So, thank you for your efforts.

## Catalyst

Catalyst has commenced proceedings against PCQ in relation to the Townsville PresCare facility (Protea). The claim is for over \$12 million. The receiver is preparing a defence.

More claims are expected from Catalyst. Work is already underway to respond to those claims should they come.

### **Respect for individuals and our present task**

There can be a temptation in moments like this to seek to lay blame. May I suggest that response is unhelpful? There is no benefit in piecemeal allocation of responsibility. I am one of the few people with a reasonably good grasp of all that has occurred, and I do not have the full picture. I as Moderator, and we as your leaders, want the truth to come out, and we want the individuals involved to be supported as the truth comes out.

Our present task is to ensure that all relevant facts are brought to light and that all the people involved are supported through the process. I want to thank so many of you who are reaching out to provide support to the many involved in this aspect of our journey.

At times like this it is possible to feel abandoned. I want to assure you that not just the Letters Patent Officers (Trustees) and Commission of Assembly, but formal and informal leaders of the Church across the congregations and ministries of the PCQ have stepped up to play their part in seeing our Church through this difficult phase. You are not abandoned. Many people are hard at work to see that the truth comes out and the work of the Church is carried forward constructively.

We are working closely with congregations and their representatives to ensure that everything that should be brought to light is. That brings me to the difficult matter of communication.

### **Communications**

One of the great challenges that we have faced as leaders relates to communication. Given the large and diverse audience for our broader communications, we have found that any information provided more broadly than the members of the Assembly is almost immediately converted into public news stories. Those publicly published news stories have sometimes misrepresented the situation and could potentially prejudice the long-term future of the Church and its congregations. This is in stark contrast with all the councils of the church including the full Assembly. These councils have kept confidential very significant information for over 12 months.

Consequently, we as leaders have had to make very difficult judgement calls about what we say in our broader communications, and as a consequence in our communications to congregations. We have shared information fully, frankly, and confidentially with your congregations' Ministers and Elders at the state Assemblies in September and March. We would like to be more forthcoming with information to the congregations in the future. However, the extent of our communication must be shaped by the extent to which we believe there is a risk that what is intended for the congregations ends up being shared more broadly. We have taken the view that the proper forum for the detailed presentation of the issues we presently face is the courts of the church and the courts of our land. As I have said above, there may be a time for public reckoning and accountability. I do not wish to shirk that. But, mindful of the residents of our facilities, the more anxious of our congregants, and the risk that in promoting public discussion now we may inadvertently prejudice litigation, I ask all congregations and all members to respect this view, in the knowledge that the Ministers and Elders who represent you in the State Assembly have been receiving and will continue to receive full and frank reports from us.

The 29 May 2021 Assembly noted the formation of a group to facilitate the presentation of a distinctly congregational voice to the Supreme Court regarding various matters connected to the Receivership. It will be a matter for the next Assembly whether more is asked of that group.

The formal leadership of the Church will continue to act in the best interests of the congregations and is working collaboratively with that informal group.

### **The future of the church**

I am one of many that feel let down by some of the ways the culture and governance structures of the Church have previously operated. There is a need for review and possibly renewal. Robust debates have begun informally, along with the formal PCQ Review implemented by the Assembly. That is a good and healthy thing. Our future will be different. God willing, our culture, and governance will be healthier.

I invite all congregations to begin to think about what our future together might look like.

### **Concluding comment**

This is a difficult time. As I have foreshadowed in earlier correspondence, I wish I could say that there isn't more pain to come, however there will be. What is showing through, though, is the character of our people. A visitor to our Assembly made a point of mentioning this to me at the Assembly he attended in March. He was commenting on everyone doing their part to ensure other speakers were treated well. This is but one example of the importance of each of us responding with grace, understanding, and patience. Please continue in prayer that we together as members of our denomination will show ourselves to the Queensland community as lovers of God and others. May the way we deal with one another, and the way we respond to the challenges we face, commend the gospel to our neighbours, friends, relatives, and work colleagues.

Signed on behalf of the PCQ Letters Patent Office Bearers: Phil Strong (Moderator), Stuart Hoadley (Clerk), and Paul Cotton (Treasurer).

Your brother in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Strong', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev Dr. Phil Strong

Moderator