

## 12.1 PLACEMENT OF CHAPLAINS - WA

Regardless of whether a chaplaincy or a congregation, a placement follows the guidelines described in 2.6 (PLACEMENT AND APPOINTMENT) of the Regulations.

However there are some differences which mean that the PRPC needs to establish a framework when chaplaincy placements are entered into now that the Chaplaincy Working Group no longer exists.

In a congregation placement, a JNC is established of which two members are Presbytery representatives. Because chaplaincy placements are often in non-congregation settings, it seems appropriate to give some direction as to how we go about having some say in the process. A fact of life is that most chaplaincies are in settings where the appointing body has an established selection process. Running a JNC in this environment would not be possible, although I am mindful of Reg 2.6.7 (a) which says; *Where the body in which a Minister, Youth Worker or Lay Pastor is to be placed is neither a Congregation nor Presbytery, the principles set out in Regulation 2.6.6 shall be followed as closely as possible.* Reg 2.6.6 is about the establishment of a JNC.

With this in mind, let me propose a direction that might be achievable given the variables of the complex industrial climate we now seek to navigate with our rather outdated Placement model as described in the Regulations.

### **Chaplaincies in Uniting Church Agencies/School**

All agencies/schools that seek a chaplain would firstly need to have that chaplaincy recognised as an approved placement by the PRPC. The Board or Council of those instruments would seek that approval and prepare a profile for the PRPC.

Where agencies and schools have an established selection pattern, the PRPC recognise this fact, but make it clear that the Synod/Presbytery will nominate two representatives to any selection committee, and that those representatives will have expertise in that particular field, and/or have management responsibilities within the Synod/Presbytery structure relative to filling a placement.

### **Chaplaincies in inter-church, community or government settings.**

Reg 2.6.3 (a)(iii) states:

*A Synod may from time to time declare that certain positions which are not under the jurisdiction of the Church (but which require the regular discharge of the duties of the ministerial office) are approved placements in which the ministers or ordinands may serve...*

However this would imply that to declare it an approved placement, the Synod/Presbytery has significant input into the shape of such a placement for it to be approved. This is not the case in many of the chaplaincies that the UCA engages with in hospitals, prisons and inter-church settings such as Council of Churches WA. The position descriptions for these are often done outside of the Church and we are asked to tender or make application for such positions. Therefore, unless these positions are in settings where they have a lot of UCA input to the point that we can clearly say that

they are UCA placements, duly recognised and able to be celebrated by a service of induction by the employing body, there is a case for the Church to be cautious in declaring a position a Placement in these settings. The interface between placements and a salaried position in chaplaincy settings outside of the UCA environment is getting more and more difficult to engage with. The current example of this blurred boundary is Fiona Stanley hospital, where a chaplaincy program exists without any input from the organised religious churches. We have two chaplains there who are doing the ministry to which they are called, but are not in placement. The Church has no input into the selection process. The same will happen in other hospital settings and prison settings over time. This is the future of ministry outside of a denominational setting.

Is now the time that we recognise this and no longer seek to create placements in settings not familiar to our practices of selection/ call and the establishment of JNC's? This does not mean that ordained ministers seeking to serve God in those settings are not part of the church, but it does mean they are not in placement, something that will require us to rethink what we mean by a call to ministry. However, our Regulations still recognise ministers working in this non placement setting. Reg 2.6.1 (b) (iv) says:

*Active Service*

*Regularly and faithfully exercising the duties of a Minister (see Reg 2.2.1) in a situation other than (i), (ii) or (iii) above, with the approval of the Placements Committee on the recommendation of the presbytery....*

Let me summarise:

With disbanding of the Chaplaincy Working Group, the PRPC needs to inform our agencies and schools that when a chaplaincy position is vacant then they must inform the PRPC , write up a Position Description/ Profile for the PRPC to approve. Once we approve it, then the placement body be informed that at least two of its selection committee must be Presbytery representatives as described above.

With chaplaincies in inter-church, community or government settings, wherever possible, we seek representation on any selection panel with one or two Presbytery representatives. If that is not possible then we do not call those chaplaincies approved placements, and therefore that they not be subject to the practices of the UCA., but be seen as common law positions. However the PRPC recognise that should a minister apply for such a position as a secular position, that they be seen as ministers in active service as per above. Therefore they will still be subject to the Code of Ethics, but be responsible to its employer in every other occupational matter.

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