

VIABILITY AND STRUCTURES ADVISORY GROUP

PURPOSE

Standing Committee established the Viability and Structures Advisory Group (VSAG) to:

1. Review the reports presented to recent General Synods and Standing Committees by DFATF
2. Consider particular tasks in resolution R47/17 of the 17th General Synod
3. Consider generally the work done in recent years at bishops' meetings, provincially and in other ways to address the challenge of the viability of the structures of this church
4. Consider how this work links with and should be connected with the work of other Commissions, working groups and networks, and the bishops' meetings.

MEMBERSHIP

Archbishop Kay Goldsworthy
Bishop Richard Condie
The Reverend Greg Harris
Dr Leanne Beagley, and
Bishop John Stead (Convenor)

ACTIVITIES

Following the review and consideration of earlier work undertaken since General Synod in 2014 VSAG reiterated the following advice to the Standing Committee:

1. That a Financial Advisor be based in the General Synod Office to support Dioceses on a more regular basis than the members of DFATF can
2. That Bishops have a "Personal Financial Advisor" in a similar way as they have a Legal Advisor (the Chancellor)

VSAG felt that a focus on developing visionary church leaders, bishops and ideally next-generation bishops required by the future, could have a significant impact. Both ordained and lay leaders should be intentionally equipped and enabled through the establishment of a holistic continuing leadership development program.

The members of VSAG recognised that the Theological Educators Network could have aspects of such a program on their agenda. However, this was not a current primary focus of the Theological Educators Network work. DFATF is the body most interested in seeing such a program developed; they had written to VSAG that, "in the first instance, the Church should invest wisely in carefully diagnosing its leadership development needs and designing an approach that recognises and leverages the good practices/training already in place." VSAG acknowledged that the New Bishops Program made a valuable contribution but would be complemented by an intentional program for developing emerging leaders both ordained and lay.

VSAG held a 'Mobilisation' meeting in November 2019, that meeting clarified the thinking about the need and characteristics of a Senior Leadership Development program. It would:

- address where lack of competency disables rather than enables the growth of the church (its vitality)

- focus on competency, leaving the development of character and the articulation and development of conviction to a more localised approach; taking into account that there are differences in theology and ecclesiology
- develop the skills associated with the exercise of oversight and team leadership
- develop an understanding of the consequences of failure to develop and apply the correct skills, abilities and mindset
- be an opt-in program, addressing identified areas for development
- have a user pays approach
- require ongoing coaching and on the job practice – 10% training and reading, 20% formal mentoring and support, 70% informal, on the job experience and Senior Leadership coaching
- have an impact which would magnify over time as people experienced the program

VSAG reported to the Standing Committee at the end of 2019. The Standing Committee asked for further work to be conducted, including a project funding application for consideration and to “have as a goal to bring about greater gender balance in leadership roles where possible.”

At the Standing Committee meeting in November 2021 the Chair of VSAG presented a report which said in part:

At the same time the advisory group was working in this area, the Safe Ministry Commission was developing a response to *Royal Commission Recommendations 16.5, 16.44 and 16.45 – Professional Supervision, Professional Development and performance appraisal.*

In light of the work being undertaken by the Safe Ministry Commission it was noted, that:

The draft guidelines are not limited to safe ministry issues and form the basis of a more general national policy on professional development.

It seems best for the Safe Ministry Commission to continue to take forward the development of national guidelines for professional development. The national guidelines should *address matters of governance and corporate leadership* as recommended by the advisory group in its report to the May 2019 Standing Committee meeting.

The following was resolved:

The Standing Committee:

1. received the report of the Chair of the Viability and Structures Advisory Group dated 19 October 2021
2. noted that national policy and guidelines for professional development has been progressed by the Safe Ministry Commission
3. disbanded the Viability and Structures Advisory Group
4. referred to the Ministry and Mission Commission ongoing responsibility for questions relating to the professional supervision, professional development and performance appraisal of ordained and authorised lay ministers.