

# Sydney Central Coast Presbytery



## Life and Witness Consultation with Northern Beaches Uniting Church

May 2022 – July 2022

Consultation Team Members:

Rev Chris Goringe

Rev Liam Miller

Anton Dykman

Matthew Jones (Business Committee)

Katrina Freeston (Team Leader)



## **CONSULTATIONS ON LIFE AND WITNESS OF A CONGREGATION**

Uniting Church in Australia Regulation 3.1.4(e)

“The persons appointed by the Presbytery to undertake the consultation shall:

- i) consult with such bodies and persons within the Congregation as it determines;
- ii) report to the Presbytery and the Congregation; and
- ii) make such recommendations regarding the life and witness of the Congregation (including matters relating to placements and property) as they think fit.”

### **1. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> February the Life & Witness Committee received an email from the co-chair of the Regional Mission Council (RMC) requesting that the consultation begin around April to allow their mission planning to be completed. The initiate email was sent on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022 requesting the background information from the RMC. We received the Background Information on the 21<sup>st</sup> April and Katrina Freeston and Rev. Chris Goringe attended a RMC meeting to being the consultation on the 5<sup>th</sup> May. The team attended worship at all four sites and the combined service, between Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> May and Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June. They attended Crumbs Discipleship Group (combined sites), Little Footsteps Playgroup, School for Seniors, and the Afternoon of Music (Balgowlah), A team meeting and a yoga class (Manly), Freshwater Fellowship and Cromer Craft. They also held conversations with Rev. Mata Hiliau and Rev. John Barker

### **2. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW**

#### **2.1 LOCAL CONTEXT**

While the Northern Beaches Uniting Church has properties at Manly, Balgowlah and Freshwater, the former Manly Council area excludes Freshwater but will be cited here. The whole area now forms part of the Northern Beaches Council. The former Manly Council area is 17km North-East of the CBD on Sydney’s Northern beaches. It is situated on a promontory with beaches on three sides. The original inhabitants were the Gayemagal people.

The commercial centre of Manly is The Corso, a paved mall the length of the main street with restaurants and cafes. Shops extend from there to neighbouring streets. There is a ferry service to Circular Quay and other wharves around the harbour, and a bus service including the Hop-Skip-Jump free bus service operated by the Northern Beaches Council. The suburb of Manly is home to a public primary school and selective high school, Balgowlah has two public primary schools, a Catholic primary school and a public high school for boys, and Freshwater has one Catholic and one public primary school. Cromer has one Senior Campus and 3 Primary Schools in area.

While there is a smaller proportion of 15-29-year-olds than in Greater Sydney, this deficit is less marked than in most of the North Shore and Northern Beaches. Around 35% of residents of the Manly Council Area were born overseas consistent with Greater Sydney, however the vast majority of these were from the UK, NZ, the USA and South Africa so unsurprisingly English is the only language spoken by 80% of the population. Around 45% of over 15-year-olds have a university degree and consequently a large proportion work as Professionals and Managers and few as

Labourers. Catholicism is the most popular religious group, followed by Anglicans which have a higher proportion than the rest of Sydney.

## **2.2 HISTORY**

In July 2014 four Uniting Churches - Balgowlah, Cromer, Freshwater and Manly - came together to form the Northern Beaches Uniting Church. It has one Church Council (the Regional Mission Council, RMC) maintaining all four sites with greater missional co-operation and less administrative overlap than if they were 4 separate congregations. One of the stated primary objectives in forming NBUC was “to ensure the sustainability of the Uniting Church of Australia in the Manly-Warringah region... [by providing] a mechanism to develop and carry out mission and worship activities that the four congregations could not achieve individually” (draft NBUC governance plan document). There were initial challenges in fostering a common identity and shared sense of mission, now the focus is on encouraging each site to develop its own way of reaching out to the community it serves.

At Union:

Balgowlah Methodist Church opened in 1910 and was part of the Manly Circuit with Manly, Seaforth, Harbord (now called Freshwater) and Allambie Heights. Allambie Heights was closed, and the property sold. With the formation of the Uniting Church of Australia in 1977, the Balgowlah-Seaforth Parish was formed by Seaforth, Balgowlah Heights, and Balgowlah. Balgowlah Heights was closed and sold. Seaforth was closed but the property held and is now leased as a kindergarten. The congregations of Balgowlah Heights and Seaforth joined with Balgowlah.

Cromer Methodist Church opened in 1959 in a relocated army hut on the current premises. The congregation joined the Uniting Church on its inception in 1977. The nearest other Uniting Church was St David’s Dee Why which had been Presbyterian prior to Union. The new building at Cromer was dedicated in 1994. Since becoming part of the Northern Beaches Uniting Church, the Cromer manse has been assigned to St David’s Uniting Church Dee Why.

Freshwater was formally known as Harbord Methodist Church before it joined the Uniting Church in 1977 and the suburb name was changed to Freshwater in 2008.

Manly Methodist Church was opened in 1887, originally on Pittwater Rd and then the corner of Raglan and Belgrave streets from 1899. The foundation stone on the current site was laid in 1924. At the appointment of Rev. Dr. Rayward as minister in 1927, records state “a period of great prosperity came to the Circuit” with services frequently amplified to large audiences in Gilbert Park. It was part of a circuit with Balgowlah, Seaforth (since sold) and Harbord (now Freshwater). When it became part of the Northern Beaches Uniting Church in 2016, it only had a handful of people and ceased operating except for the youth group. Major renovations were undertaken. Since 2020 (with much Covid interruption) Rev. John Barker, Carolyn Handley and Helen Pook have been seeking to start a variety of community outreach activities. These “missional enterprises” are now beginning to form a community around the Manly site and a worshipping group.

## **2.3 PROPERTY ASSETS**

The Northern Beaches Uniting Churches are asset rich, with over \$30m in land and buildings under the combined group’s stewardship. These assets include four current churches, two preschools, four houses and a shop.

## Churches

- Balgowlah
- Cromer
- Freshwater
- Manly

## Preschools

- Seaforth
- Freshwater

## Balgowlah shop

- Home to Lifeline Northern Beaches

## Manses

- Adrian Place Balgowlah Manse – Rented
- Waterview Street Seaforth Manse – Rented
- Woods Pde Fairlight Manse – Rev John Barker
- Frenchs Forest Manse – Rev Mata Havea Hiliau

The Cromer Manse was transferred to Dee Why to ensure that the Dee Why congregation had sufficient income to keep their full-time minister.

## **2.4 MINISTER, LEADERS AND STAFF**

### **Employed Staff**

At the time of the consultation, Northern Beaches Uniting Church employed two ministers in placement, Rev Mata Havea-Hiliau, and Rev. John Barker, who operate in a team ministry arrangement. In addition, the 2021/22 budget provides for the employment of:

Sally Watkins, Playgroup coordinator	10 hrs wk
Jeremy Koay, Music director	10 hrs wk
Bruce Richardson, Property	Casual
Stephanie La Greca, Communications	20 hrs wk
Diane Gennusa, Finance Officer	15 hrs wk
Casual ministers	60 services per year

As well as staff in Family and Outreach Ministry (noted as ‘contingency’)

### **Church Council – Regional Mission Council (RMC)**

Reflecting the governance plan’s description of the combination of the four congregations as *“a mechanism to develop and carry out mission and worship activities that the four congregations could not achieve individually”*, the Church Council of Northern Beaches Uniting Church is known as the *“Regional Mission Council”*.

At the time of the consultation, the Regional Mission Council members were:

Max Blacker, Co-chairperson & Treasurer  
Kim Reed, Co-chairperson & Secretary  
Rev Mata Havea-Hiliau, Minister in Placement

Rev. John Barker, Minister in Placement

Helen Hocking

Barbara Williamson

Glynnis Woolcock

Carolyn Handley, Co-opted – to be nominated as full member at next Congregation Meeting

Rev. Chris Goringe and Katrina Freeston visited an RMC meeting on Thursday 5th May. We were concerned that the RMC had difficulty reconsidering priorities in a previously agreed maintenance plan without unintended offence being taken by some present. At the meeting, we observed some inappropriate patterns of behaviour, which may have been reinforced by the fact that everyone on the RMC was very kind and gracious and did their best not to hurt anyone. We are aware that the RMC has already taken note of this concern and is working to address the underlying causes, as reflected in the minutes of the meeting.

### **Finance and Business Committee (FBC)**

The Finance and Business Committee supports the RMC by preparing budgets and taking operational control of property maintenance and capital works across all four original sites.

With 11 properties (4 churches, 4 manses, 2 preschools and a shop housing Lifeline Northern Beaches), and a development and major maintenance budget of \$140k the FBC plays a major role in supporting the mission and ministry of NBUC.

At the time of the consultation, the members of the FBC were:

Max Blacker

Robyn Poole

Max Blacker is (as noted above) also the treasurer of the RMC, Robyn Poole is a Real Estate Agent who we are told now attends a neighbouring congregation and manages the 2 rented manses for a standard property management fee, leaving Max Blacker as, in practise, the only member of the FBC.

The FBC directly manages maintenance of the four residential properties and leasing of two. The FBC also manages the three business leases the church has entered into.

The committee prepares annual draft budgets based on input from missional communities and property development and maintenance estimates, based on annual property inspections. Once the draft budget has been approved by the RMC the FBC is responsible for implementing the property works and provides quarterly reports of actual revenue and expenditure against budget to the RMC.

The consultation team note that this arrangement is a very significant delegation of responsibilities of the RMC to an unusually small committee. While the members of the FBC clearly have relevant skills, this delegation seems to place an unreasonable burden of responsibility on such a small group, and as such represents a governance risk.

### **Ad-hoc Advisory committee**

As the name suggests, the ad-hoc advisory committee meets as needed (generally quarterly) to discuss and make recommendations to the RMC on pertinent missional matters, such as Missional Plans for each community and budget submissions.

At the time of the consultation, the members of the ad-hoc advisory committee were:

Max Blacker

Rev Mata Havea-Hiliau

Rev. John Barker

Jane Yabsley

Helen Hocking

Marilyn Goff

David Moser

Carolyn Handley

Kim Reed

### **Safe Church Committee**

The Safe Church Committee handles implementation of Safe Church responsibilities and reports to RMC. Each of the sites have NBUC Safe Church Guideline documents. The committee consists of a Safe Church Coordinator, and the Safe Church Officers from each location.

At the time of the consultation, the members of the safe church committee were:

Stephanie La Greca - Safe Church Coordinator

Ian Lovelace - Safe Church Officer: Cromer

Kaye Lewis - Safe Church Officer: Freshwater

Kim Reed - Safe Church Officer: Balgowlah

The position of Safe Church Officer for Manly was vacant at the time of consultation.

\*\* Since publication of the report Carolyn Handley and Rev John Barker have taken on the role of Safe Church Officers: Manly.

### **Mission Teams**

Balgowlah, Cromer & Freshwater each have a Mission Team that regularly reports to the RMC. Manly have the Manly Executive Team.

## **3. ACTIVITIES OF THE CHURCH**

### **Combined Sites**

**Crumbs Discipleship Group:** Bible study group of 4-6 older men. Liam and Katrina attended on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May. The group meets weekly at 7pm, currently on zoom. Originally started out using the Alpha material to cater for a couple of new Christians in the group, at the moment, someone brings a topic or paper to discuss. They have studied books of the Bible in the past. There was lively but respectful debate among members with diverse theological perspectives. The evening started with a prayer, catch up and sharing of other prayer needs, then a discussion.

## **Balgowlah**

**Little Footsteps Playgroup:** Meets weekly at 9:30am on Mondays. Liam and Katrina attended on the 16<sup>th</sup> May. Sally is employed to facilitate the group with about 5 volunteers from the church. This is a good example of employed staff leading a competent team who just need someone to do the co-ordinating and planning. There was a warm community feel with some attendees considering attending the church. 23 carers signed in on the day with at least one child each. This included Mums, nannies, and a couple of Grandparents. Balgowlah boasts a lovely big indoor hall space with a little jumping castle set up! There is a tiny patch of grass outside that was used as well.

They have a box on the sign in table for prayer requests and are thinking of making a little spot in the church where a parent could escape for a few minutes reflection while their kids are supervised by others. They ask for a \$5 donation.

The morning started with various play-stations for about an hour, then they came together for a time of singing (secular songs except for the blessing), then morning tea followed by a story. The volunteers are mostly grandmother-age and there are enough of them to get around and talk to all the carers.

**School for Seniors:** Meets Tuesdays at 9:30am. Katrina visited on 31<sup>st</sup> May (Chris arrived in the middle). About 50 people this week. It had been very big before Covid but has been struggling to re-open. People divide into groups to do various activities: an exercise class, French class, mar Jong group, art group, card-making group, then they come together for morning tea. The day the team visited was the Cancer Council "Biggest Morning Tea" with many baked goods. Entry was by donation and raffle tickets on sale, also left-over cakes sold by the container. They have a small library of books and puzzles collected for people to borrow.

**Afternoon of Music:** On the first Saturday of every 2<sup>nd</sup> month at 4pm. Katrina attended on 4<sup>th</sup> June. There were about 30 people, mostly families with school aged children/teenagers. Those learning an instrument took the opportunity to get some performance practice in front of a friendly audience. There were about 55 minutes of performances followed by afternoon tea/dinner (including pizza). One person had stayed from Tai Chi in the hall immediately before and another enquired about using the hall for yoga classes. At least one attendee is considering attending worship.

**Healthy Living for Seniors:** Clients of Uniting are picked up from their home each Wednesday, in the bus, and taken to the church for a variety of activities including lunch.

**Wednesday Music Group:** (still closed after Covid) A weekly group to sing Christian songs and hymns. Includes a devotion.

## **Cromer**

**Cromer Craft:** Group of around 12 elderly women meeting each week at 9:30am on Tuesdays. Attended by Katrina on the 24<sup>th</sup> May. They bring their own craft activities and do

those around the table for about an hour, then they have morning tea, and at 11am they have a “God spot” – a short devotion. Not all the ladies go to the church, there are a lot of retirement villages around the area, and it is hoped the new Community Worker they are seeking to hire will help link people into this group.

### **Freshwater**

**Freshwater Fellowship:** Meets at 10am on Thursday mornings. Attended by Anton and Katrina on the 19<sup>th</sup> May. This is a group of 10 or so elderly women, one man and one younger but still retired woman (plus Stephanie, Mata, and Kit) having morning tea in the garden at the church. There was tea, coffee, and food as people sat on seats around the garden area. The group chatted socially for about 40 minutes before Mata made some announcements about pastoral matters for the congregation, and then led a prayer.

### **Manly**

Manly has started a number of “Missional Enterprises” developing communities “run by the church for the church for Christ”. The goal is to form a community with members being involved across different activities.

### **Manly Meditation Group (held each Tuesday nights)/ Godly Play training Centre**

**The Upper Room co-working space:** Space for around 6 workers to “work from home” away from home. They pay a small amount of rent for the desk and are forming a community in the warm and friendly space. Joanna McGlashan pays reduced rent to manage the enterprise in a volunteer capacity. She also attends worship on a Sunday. Another tenant, Jess Middleton, manages the social media presence. The space was fully booked before the last Covid shutdown but is in a rebuilding phase.

**New Life Gym /NBRHD Boxing** around 13 weekly boxing and strength & core programs with about 80 members (most aged under 30). Around 8 of those connect with other programs of the church.

Lead by David Vaealiki, Steven Girsang and Harrison Knew (youth programs)

**Yoga:** Lyssa Breeze, the yoga instructor, attends worship on Sundays and has formed connections with Joanna in the co-working space. There are several Yoga classes each week, one on Friday at 10am. Katrina attended on 27<sup>th</sup> May. There were 4 participants, including Joanna and Carolyn Handley in a very intimate class. Lisa is a very competent instructor, and the women stay to chat afterwards. It is a drawcard for the co-working space to have yoga classes onsite.

**Neighbourhood Meals:** the local club prepares meals, and the church distributes them to a local women’s shelter, a club for the mentally ill and Wesley Mission. This has a committee of volunteers co-ordinated by Rebecca Northam, a regular at NRBHD boxing. Some others from the boxing classes have also joined.

## **4. WORSHIP LIFE**

Representatives from our team visited services at all four sites as well as a combined service. Katrina Freeston attended Manly on the 1st May, Balgowlah on the 15th May, Freshwater on the 22nd May, the combined service at Balgowlah on the 29th May and Cromer on the 5th June. Anton Dykman attended Cromer on 15th May and 19th June.

### *Balgowlah*

Balgowlah displayed a warm and friendly atmosphere, welcoming the team member and conversing with them before, during, and after the service. The space was well arranged, with care taken to provide areas for kids (both at the front where they would have visibility, and at the back if they wanted more freedom of movement). This evidenced a thoughtfulness of various modes of incorporation and involvement those with young children might desire. There was one toddler and two teens present for this service in a total of 35 people.

The service attended was a family service, and there was a band leading music - this didn't necessarily shift the period from which the songs were drawn, but in their playing they were imbued with a level of contemporaneity. The service structure resembled a UiW service and involved the minister, band, a bible reader, and a member offering the prayers of the people.

Morning tea was held afterwards, again the mood was friendly, though people were seated at tables which can make it more difficult to mingle and might be intimidating for a visitor.

### *Cromer*

The congregation arrived early and had a familiarity and ease with one another, developed over a long worshipping life together. This extends to material support, with members providing transportation for others who are too unwell to drive themselves. People offer welcome at the door and are there to greet anyone who comes. The space was well set up to be covid safe, and the seating is comfortable.

Music tends to consist of an organ, a flautist, and a singer leading from the front. Four hymns drawn from TiS. Music is a passion of the community and a place for people to share their gifts and passions. A mix of paper and screens are employed to guide people through the service (lyrics and responses). A range of people were involved in the service, offering readings, prayers, music, welcome, and coordinating the morning tea.

The makeup of the congregation on the day was mostly of Anglo heritage and elderly, with some Tongan members. There is one family with children who have started coming, but they were absent this day. Morning tea was again situated around tables, which benefits the older members but has the same impact on mingling and initial approach.

### *Freshwater*

Freshwater has a quiet opening presence and was warm on a cold winter day. Our team member was welcomed but had to enter the church before being greeted (perhaps a by-product of the weather). There were 22 people present that day, 3 of whom were children

from the same family. It was a fairly diverse group, the majority being of Anglo background, but others from the Pacific, PNG, and East Africa.

The music was drawn from TiS and led on by a keyboard with two singers at the front (one of whom was a teenager). This service was led by the Mission Team, represented by one lay leader.

Morning tea was served afterwards, but there were not many who had gone through to the hall.

### *Manly*

The atmosphere at Manly was relaxed and casual and welcome was provided on arrival. The group couldn't meet in the sanctuary as normal due to a leak affecting the electrics but had curated a reflective space in the hall with chairs huddled around the Christ candle. There were only 6 in attendance on that day, which was said to be about half the normal gathering due to some being away and others sick.

The service was contemplative and used recordings of contemporary songs which people sung along with. Those present ranged in age, from 30 to retirees, and almost all were involved in the service in some way, sharing the various roles.

While it may be intimidating for some to enter a space with so few people, the community has grown in its short life and all who were there were welcoming, eager to share about what the church is up to and has planned.

### *Combined Service*

Held at the Balgowlah site. There were about 60 attendees including 8 children. There were only about two people attending from Cromer and two from Manly. There were approximately ten from Freshwater (the younger members of the Tongan family who performed a song as an item). The older people from Cromer and Freshwater find it difficult to get to Balgowlah as there is limited onsite parking and public transport requires catching multiple buses. The membership at Manly does not have a church background and they find it difficult to see the relevance of a traditional service.

## **5. MISSION AND OUTREACH**

### **Overall mission**

Although the four congregations of NBUC are administratively one congregation they are quite diverse and as such have four separate mission plans, which will be summarised below. Each site has an outward-focussed mission plan with realistic goals for their members. For more details on the various activities, please refer to Section 3 of this document.

### **Balgowlah**

1. Building bridges with families
  - a. Little Footsteps Playgroup
  - b. Monthly Family Service

- c. Afternoons of Music with family focus
- 2. Building up the laity (the following are subject to monthly review by the Balgowlah Mission team)
  - a. Identify groups and materials
  - b. Identify potential leaders
  - c. Use worship time to link in with group studies
- 3. Reaching out to the immediate community
  - a. Afternoons of Music
  - b. Talks/ seminars appropriate to Balgowlah demographics and visits
  - c. Continue to look at ways of supporting Lifeline and the Northern Beaches Women's shelter.
  - d. Continue with 5 leaf Eco programme
  - e. Continue School for Seniors and review current resourcing and how the school can reach a wider audience

### **Cromer**

- 1. To reach out to the neighbouring community to bring new members to Cromer UC.
  - a. A part-time Community Engagement Officer position (15hrs per week) is currently being advertised. It is envisaged that this person will engage and invite people, especially from the many retirement villages in the area.
  - b. People will initially be invited to groups such as the regular craft group
  - c. New groups such as a men's group, a music group, a drop-in coffee centre are envisaged
  - d. Cromer members will be trained in sharing their faith with a view to ultimately integrating group members into the Cromer Worshiping community.
- 2. Maintain and support the weekly craft group which meets at the church
  - a. Group currently has about 20 members
  - b. It has been meeting for many years
  - c. It draws people who are not members of the congregation
- 3. Support and grow the current and future church communities
  - a. Maintain weekly church services through use of NBUC ministers, lay preachers and other UC ministers
  - b. Maintain occasional afternoon group presentations and Christmas carols
  - c. Provide encouragement and support for new church members.
- 4. Financial support to local and overseas charities
  - a. Long term support of Ibulanku School project
  - b. Other causes from time-to-time e.g. NSW flood victims

### **Freshwater**

- A. CREATION CARE - Reclaim our Care of the earth stewardship with innovation of Community Garden Spaces. Maximise mission opportunities with identified needs and partnerships with the wider Freshwater community and church.
  - 1. THE COMMUNITY FLOWER & VEGGIE GARDEN.
    - a. During the pandemic the Community Garden was a safe gathering place to reconnect during lockdown. This was not limited to church members but also people living in High-rise apartments, houses or passing by the NBUC Freshwater.

b. There is already an existing relationship with the Albert Hall Pre-schoolers Visits to the garden, but further networks would explore partnerships with 5 Leaf-Uniting Advocacy, community workshops with Garden Club and volunteer programs with neighbours, community & local High Schools.

2. THE MEMORIAL GARDEN

a. Reclaim this Sacred Space, honouring the memories of loved ones, Creation Care seeks to honour this by developing garden sustainability and reconnect with families.

b. Pastoral Care outreach to bereaved families & support of our communities.

3. THE CHURCH/COMMUNITY STREET LIBRARY

a. A constant exchange amongst the community of books, crafts and sometimes excess fresh produce.

b. Partnership links with the local library, preschool, and neighbours.

B. FRESHWATER CONNECTIONS - Develop a Community Hub through existing congregational connections and networks with wider community. Working Collaboratively with intentional hospitality. FRESHWATER CONNECTIONS is linking the old and new mission with creative and innovative ideas & partnerships.

1. CREATIVE HUBS - ART, CRAFT, DISCIPLESHIP

a. Have ongoing community stalls with arts and crafts displays to create community connections.

2. SOCIAL & HOSPITALITY

a. Create opportunities to build relationships & linking NBUC Freshwater, Creative Hubs, NBUC Region, Church/Hall hirers.

b. Quarterly Community Hospitality, exhibition luncheons/dinners, Community Garden high teas, Launch Freshwater Connections - Christmas in July (Linking Old & New Mission)

C. WORSHIP CENTRAL - Worship is central to who we are as a church community. Our mission is to grow our capacity in lay leadership, build discipleship and grow in faith, witness and service in the name of Jesus Christ. NBUC Freshwater seeks to worship Collaboratively with the Regional NBUC and wider community. The following are existing and new mission links in worship beyond the NBUC:-

- Quarterly Combined Worship with the NBUC congregations Cromer, Manly, Balgowlah
- Quarterly Worship with the Tongan Church & hospitality to build relationship & partnership
- Easter Sunrise Community Service at McKillop Park & Freshwater Anzac Service at Church & Harbord Diggers Club
- Freshwater Carols links to Bendigo Bank, Ecumenical partnership and Sharing Jesus with 1,000+ young families
- Resource the lay leadership capacity of the congregation through training & resources
- The only UCA SRE in NBUC Region. SRE in Harbord & Curl Curl Nth Public schools. An ecumenical partnership.
- Develop discipleship Structures in Prayer Fellowship, Bible Studies, Sharing our faith, Pastoral Care Hi 5 NBUC Freshwater.
- We seek the leadership of an Ordained Minister leadership in growing and resourcing in worship, discipleship, and pastoral care.

## **Manly**

### **1 NBRHD Boxing / Fitness classes**

- 1.1 Continue to grow and develop the current exercise programs
- 1.2 Continue to create opportunities to develop relationships, e.g. Saturday morning social activities
- 1.3 Ensure the operations team, including training managers, social media manager and future support staff has support needed to grow this community.

### **2 The Upper Room Co-Working Space**

- 2.1 Continue to promote this opportunity in the local community
- 2.2 Ensure the operations team, including current volunteer coordinator, social media manager and future support staff have the support needed to grow this community.

### **3 Neighbourhood Meals**

- 3.1 Support the operations team, including the team leader, so that she is fully equipped to do well in this role
- 3.2 Support and resource the team of volunteers, to help them develop relationships and form a sense of community. Express appreciation regularly for the contribution they are making.
- 3.3 Maintain a strong relationship with the Manly Club, especially Rev. John who is seen by some as their community chaplain. Quarterly reports prepared for their Board Meetings, and regularly express appreciation to them for their partnership in providing the meals we are distributing.

### **4 New Mission Community**

- 4.1 Leadership team and minister will continue to explore mission enterprise possibilities

### **5 Worship and Spirituality**

- 5.1 Move towards a full-time minister of the word, to build trust amongst the fragile relationships being formed with the local community.  
Build capacity for a new ministry staff member that supports and focuses on the growth of new forms of worship that responds to the growth of missional communities particularly with young adults
- 5.2 Support and resource volunteers and participants, to help them develop relationships and form a sense of community.
- 5.3 Explore a more appropriate name, which expresses our mission and values in a way that attracts young adults of today.

## **6. SERVICE**

Each site of the Northern beaches Uniting Church supports a number of charitable organisations as listed below.

Balgowlah:

- Lifeline Northern Beaches
- Northern Beaches Women's Shelter

Freshwater:

- World vision child sponsorship

- Wraps with Love
- Samaritans Purse, Operation Christmas Child.

Cromer:

- Church
  - Smith family
  - Ibulanku school (Uganda)
  - Youth of South Africa
  - Donations to Fire/ Flood victims, Wayside Chapel.
- Craft Group
  - Ebbs Refuge
  - Pioneer Refuge: (Beanies, gloves and toiletries)
  - Women's Refuge
  - Northern Beaches Hospital: (Trauma teddies, baby beanies, etc)

Manly:

- Through the Neighbourhood Meals – local women's shelter, a club for the mentally ill and Wesley Mission.
- Lifeline Northern Beaches

## **7. PROPERTY USAGE**

The main income earners are the two externally managed childcare centres at Seaforth and Freshwater plus the rented manses at Seaforth and Balgowlah.

The four sites each hold weekly worship services concurrently, meaning a heavy reliance on casual preaching to cover the four services.

Using assets to fund missional activities allows the Northern Beaches project to operate. Rental income from Preschools and vacant manses, and weekly offerings have recently been supplemented with Missional Enterprises at Manly.

### **Balgowlah**

Balgowlah hosts weekly worship and currently all combined services, as parking and access has been an issue at each of the other centres. Balgowlah hosts the Little Footsteps playgroup, School for Seniors and other activities like an Afternoon of Music.

Balgowlah's property income is greater than the other three churches combined. This is on top of the Lifeline income and shows the space is well used.

Balgowlah is also home to Lifeline Northern Beaches which operates from a shop-front, next door to the Church. Lifeline has had long links to the Uniting Church however it mainly operates as a tenant on missional rent.

### **Manly**

The Manly centre is home to a number of new missional initiatives. New Life Gym is operated by Pittwater's Gym staff and systems, allowing the Gym to operate without the learning curve. "The Upper Room" is a shared workspace that was nearing capacity before the last lockdown, and is now starting to rebuild. Yoga and Meditation are also run out of the Manly Centre along with the Neighbourhood Meals project which distributes meals from the local club.

There is very little hiring of the property as the missional initiatives engage the spaces that would otherwise be let out.

Worship returned to Manly as a next step from the missional activities rather than a first step. This meant it could be moulded to the needs of the community as the other connections took place. Recent storms and flooding in Manly had made the Church unusable and worship has only just returned to the church from the Gym.

Years of underinvestment in maintenance have led to a major long-term repair program for the Manly centre. A \$700,000 construction and renovation program is underway however some funds were diverted to works at Cromer and delays in the Manly construction are starting to hinder the growth of the missional activities at Manly.

The Upper Room has been created as a shared working space. It was reaching full capacity prior to the last lockdown, however it is taking time to rebuild the rental.

The co-working space is administered by volunteers who both use the space and are members of the Manly Congregation, whilst the Gym is administratively managed through the Pittwater New Life Gym; missionally managed by Manly. New Life Pittwater collects the fees from patrons and transfers the balance after running expenses to Manly.

### **Cromer**

Along with weekly worship, Cromer's church hosts a weekly craft group and has modest hall hire income throughout the year.

### **Freshwater**

Along with worship, the Freshwater site has a garden which hosts a weekly morning tea for the Freshwater Fellowship. The Freshwater facility is hired out, with a modest contribution towards the costs of maintaining the buildings.

The Freshwater Preschool is on a separate site in Albert St, being a converted former Church and Hall. Just as with Seaforth it has been professionally set up to create a permanent facility.

### **Seaforth**

Seaforth has been converted into a full-time childcare facility and is by far the largest contributor to the income of the combined congregation group. As with Freshwater this facility is purely used for funding mission, and there are no links between the congregation and the preschool.

As an initial contributor to the Uniting Energy Project, the combined congregations will hopefully see a reduced cost of energy, and a reduced carbon footprint for the group, working towards the Synod's zero emissions goals. This project is in its infancy, however the Northern Beaches Treasurer, Max Blacker, is heavily involved in the Presbytery project.

## **8. FINANCIAL POSITION**

Whenever congregations are grouped together there will be questions of financial equity and fairness. In a way the smaller congregation at Freshwater has given up the funding from its childcare centre to fund not only worship at their site, but outreach and missional work at Manly and Balgowlah. Northern Beaches financial situation is definitely a situation where the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts.

The main source of income is long term commercial rental of two childcare centres, the Lifeline Northern Beaches building, which includes an Op-Shop, and rental of two unused former manses. This income is very stable and predictable, allowing for long-term planning. The Freshwater kindergarten produces \$145,000 per year in rental while the Seaforth property produces double that, with \$327,000 budgeted for 2022 at that site.

On top of this Lifeline pays \$25,000 for use of the shop in Balgowlah and 107,000 is received for the combined rental of the Adrian Place and Waterview St Manses. These incomes are stable and allow for long term budgeting and planning.

As with most congregations, offerings have been under pressure due to the Covid lockdowns and periods without face-to-face worship. Offerings alone would not support a full-time minister at any of the sites, however Balgowlah being the largest centre could possibly stand alone financially, based on the income from offerings and the Lifeline site, but it would be a close call and would not have funding for Music ministry and other support. Offerings at other sites cover the cost of casual preaching and contribute to the upkeep of buildings. General offerings in 2017 were \$143,000 and quickly dropped to between \$103,000 and 108,000 per year between 2018 and 2020, dropping below the \$100,000 mark with the onset of Covid.

At Manly a number of "Missional Enterprises" have started which also contribute to income. The conversion of the hall to a Gym space and the "Upper Room" shared workspace produce both a connection with the community and are building their own income streams. Meditation has also been introduced, and some monetisation has been investigated. The "Upper Room" was nearly fully booked before the last lockdown and is currently rebuilding patronage. With the stop-start nature of the last two years, along with the flooding in Manly, the results produced from these new initiatives are to be commended.

The “Missional Enterprise” model is also unique in that once seeded, they can end up contributing to the costs of running the congregation and are less of a drain on overall congregation finances. That being said, Rev Barker’s position is still funded by rental income from the Manses and Preschools.

With a large property portfolio comes a large maintenance budget. This is especially poignant with older buildings. Maintenance costs approach the level of offerings and the combined congregations are in the middle of major restoration and upgrade works at Manly, having already upgraded Balgowlah.

The Financial situation allows for two ministers and a number of part-time lay staff to be employed. Additional staffing or an additional part-time ministry position would need to be worked in with the long-term capital works program. Lay positions could be consolidated to afford another ministry position, however the cost of ministry and housing requirements may make it more effective to have lay workers in missional roles.

There have been concerns about the time it is taking to fund upgrades at Manly, and other sites. Borrowing from UFS may be an option to not only accelerate capital works, but if structured over sufficient time could unlock more money towards mission on a day-to-day basis rather than waiting for the works to be completed from free cash flow. The secure nature of rental income would possibly make borrowing effective.

There is little doubt that the current ministry support can be maintained through the strong financial structure of the Northern Beaches Uniting Churches group. Strong commercial rental means supporting two ministers and lay staff is safe into the future.

## **9. AREAS TO BE AFFIRMED**

- The members and leaders of NBUC have shown great courage to step out and try something new. We affirm the decision to combine as it has made them financially viable
- We are impressed by the increased outward-looking focus across the sites. While we are told in the past there was a focus on just keeping services running, all the sites are now looking to connect with their communities.
- The combining of the congregations has brought a need for increased lay leadership and the members of the sites have stepped up to this challenge.
- We encountered caring and welcoming communities across all the sites.
- We want to affirm the success of Balgowlah’s Little Footsteps playgroup and the Afternoon of Music. The former is an example of a paid staff person co-ordinating a strong team of volunteers. It is great to see so many members of the church there as volunteers to make connections with the families. People feel connected enough to the playgroup to pop in even after many years. It is obvious it is really meeting a local need. The latter is a great outreach event inviting young members of the community to gather around shared interests.
- Cromer Craft group is a warm and welcoming group. It is a good transition for people who haven’t been to the church but may come to the craft group first. There is a vision for the new community worker to bring new people from the neighbourhood.

- Freshwater is a loving, caring community. They have a mindset for growth and great care for one another.
- The bold missional reinvention at Manly is to be applauded. We were impressed to see the potential for financial sustainability and the great community atmosphere.
- We commend the very generous gift of a manse to Dee Why to allow them to find a minister.
- Each site has a comprehensive and achievable mission plan with specific and realistic goals and clear plans on how to accomplish them.

## **10. AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- We are concerned that there is a very significant delegation of responsibility for property budgeting, maintenance, leasing etc. to a very small Finance and Business Committee. This arrangement carries considerable Key Person Risk<sup>1</sup>.
- The difficulty that the RMC had in discussing possible changes to a previously agreed maintenance plan suggests that there may need to be more clarity around the nature of the delegation from the RMC to the TBC, noting that as a matter of governance, the RMC retains ultimate responsibility<sup>[1]</sup> and must be able to reconsider delegated decisions, but that such reconsideration should make explicit reference to previously agreed plans.
- We ask NBUC to consider the best way to come together as one congregation. Given the struggle to get to Balgowlah on a Sunday morning, is it a worship service? Or a lunch? Whatever you decide to do, we suggest having a chance to share and celebrate what is going on at each site. There is a need to provide transport for people from the sites that have difficulty with this (can car drivers go and pick people up and drop them at the door?) and ideally rotate around the different sites.
- We think it would be good for all the sites to share news of different activities happening at their site perhaps by sharing videos. In particular, we would like to see increased communication of what is happening at Manly to the other sites, sharing the mission project with other members of the wider congregation.
- We suggest an analysis of the current plan of funding capital upgrades through free cash flow versus borrowing to allow those missional activities to meet the needs of missional activities sooner. Also, whether borrowing would allow for better cashflow for additional ministry positions now.
- We wonder if the Community Worker being employed to reach out to Cromer could be given a few more hours each week to cover more sites. They could employ similar methods in Freshwater and support Balgowlah's School for Seniors.
- We are concerned there is generally an attitude of employing staff to do ministry. We would rather see employed people leading teams of lay volunteers, as this is a more strategic way to use paid staff.
- We note that there was originally an intention to call a Minister of the Word to be responsible for pastoral care, but this never eventuated. We suggest considering employing a pastoral care worker across the congregation.
- In the Freshwater community garden, if it is not already being done, we recommend advertising specific gardening times for community members to come and

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.openriskmanual.org/wiki/Key\\_Person\\_Risk](https://www.openriskmanual.org/wiki/Key_Person_Risk)

participate at the same time as church members, to enhance the sense of community around the garden.

- At Freshwater we suggest investigating further rental of the Freshwater hall to make maximum use of resources.
- At Balgowlah, given the clashing of the morning service with Sunday sport, and the success of the afternoon of music timeslot, it might be worth considering an afternoon or evening worship-based activity for families.  
Manly are evaluating the timing of their service and we commend that.
- The survey revealed a desire for greater discipleship of lay people particularly through Bible Study Groups and in learning how to share their faith.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We note with concern that there is currently, in practice, only one person on the Finance and Business Committee (FBC). Given the scale of NBUC and the need for good governance we require that this be increased to at least 3 members of NBUC with relevant gifts and skills by the end of August. We understand the RMC is aware of this and already taking steps in this direction.

2. Given the significance of the matters handled by the FBC we recommend that there be an annual review of the delegation of authority from the RMC to the FBC to ensure that (a) the scope of the delegation, and the continuing final responsibility of the RMC is clear and well understood and (b) that the delegation remains appropriate to the needs of NBUC. This review should include a clear description of services provided, professionally or on a voluntary basis, by individuals who are not part of the FBC.

3. To improve the ability of the RMC to deal with disagreement and conflict, we recommend the introduction of a code of conduct for members, which would include a description of appropriate (and inappropriate) ways of dealing with contentious issues. In such as code it could be helpful to refer to the UCA Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders and the Manual for Meetings.

4. Consider the nature and role of the new placement intentionally. How many sites will they be responsible for, and what demographic? What will their ministry priorities be? And particularly, how will they relate to the existing ministry agents?

5. There is an imperative to give the Manly site the best chance of flourishing. To this end we recommend Manly be given an annual budget for its mission activities, to spend as their executive determines, rather than being required to come to the Regional Mission Council for approval for each expenditure.

6. While each site has realistic, mission-focussed goals, the survey revealed they are not easily identified by members This is not surprising since the goals are only new. Now that they have been agreed upon, ensure the site goals are clearly articulated to the members of the relevant site and regularly reinforced.

