

THE NEW CHURCH in AUSTRALIA

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 to 2018

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Our Mission	6
<i>Rationale</i>	6
Our Vision	7
<i>Rationale</i>	7
Our Values	8
<i>Rationale</i>	8
Services that we provide	9
Action Plans - Making It Happen	9
What can you do to help?	10
Current Situation (SWOT)	11
Our Strategic Focuses.....	14
<i>Continuity of Leadership - Spiritual</i>	14
<i>Connection - Spiritual</i>	14
<i>Meeting Place - Spiritual</i>	14
<i>Management - Organisational (Administration)</i>	15
Our Goals.....	16
<i>Continuity of Leadership</i>	16
Goal 1: Spiritual - Ministry	16
Goal 2: Spiritual - Australian New Church College	16
<i>Connection</i>	16
Goal 3: Spiritual - Community Work and Outreach.....	16
<i>Meeting Place</i>	16
Goal 4: Spiritual - Camp and Spiritual Retreat	16
Goal 5: Spiritual - Importance of Place	16
<i>Management</i>	16
Goal 6: Organisation - The Way We Work	16
Goal 7: Organisational - NCIA Administration	16
Outcomes/How we know it is working/Strategies	17
<i>Goal 1:</i>	17
Goal Outcomes	17
How we know it is working	17
Strategies.....	17
<i>Goal 2:</i>	18
Goal Outcomes	18
How we know it is working	18
Strategies.....	18

Goal 3:	19
Goal Outcomes	19
How we know it is working	19
Strategies.....	19
Goal 4:	20
Goal Outcomes	20
How we know it is working	20
Strategies.....	20
Goal 5:	21
Goal Outcomes	21
How we know it is working	21
Strategies.....	21
Goal 6:	22
Goal Outcomes	22
How we know it is working	22
Strategies.....	22
Goal 7:	23
Goal Outcomes	23
How we know it is working	23
Strategies.....	23
Acknowledgements	24
Version	24

Executive Summary

Mission: We enable growth of people's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, by facilitating learning and development through the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Lord's Word.

Vision: Welcoming all people to be part of a living community serving the Lord and encouraging personal development.

Goals:

- Continuity of Leadership
- Connection
- Meeting Place
- Management
- and within all these, Personal Development

Introduction

A Strategic Plan sets down the overall purpose of an organisation in terms of why it exists and where it seeks to go. This entails definition, examination of the core values and services, the current situation and the future. It establishes goals from these and provides the strategies that enable such goals to be achieved.

The New Church in Australia has undertaken to create a 5 year Strategic Plan to gain an accurate understanding of its purpose and objectives. It has adopted and followed the processes of strategic planning and this document is the result of the process and it is intended to be dynamic and evolving.

The New Church in Australia is a religious organisation that provides identity and integration for those who are within it. These are Societies, which are centres of activity, The Australian New Church College, Groups and individual people who are in or may come into connection with the organisation. The primary purpose of The New Church in Australia is to foster the spiritual life of all. The Australian New Church College does this through a variety of activities.

The New Church in Australia is a national association of independent Societies and Groups. Its connection with individual people is either through Societies, Groups or direct.

The New Church in Australia is based on spiritual practice and development as they are shown in the writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and given in the Lord's Word.

The process of creating the Strategic Plan required the concentrated activity of many people over considerable time. This involved collective assessment, exchange of ideas, determining priorities and formulating statements. Those who have been involved in this lengthy process are sincerely thanked and appreciated.

The wishful prayer is that the Strategic Plan be effective in directing the activity of the New Church in Australia and to help Societies and Groups in their endeavours. It is to be used for this end. Above all, it should be understood to be a living document. A separate document - the Action Plan - accompanies the visionary document of the Strategic Plan.

JCD - signature

Julian Duckworth, President of The New Church in Australia

11/5/2013

Our Mission

We enable growth of people's relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, by facilitating learning and development through the spiritual writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and the Lord's Word



Rationale

A Mission statement tells you the fundamental purpose of the organisation. In writing a mission statement which accurately reflects the core business of The New Church in Australia, as outlined in its Constitution, and in particular its expression of the business in the Objects. The statement is a rewriting of *Object [a]* in the Constitution:

“To promote and facilitate a life of charity and worship of the Lord God Jesus Christ and the teachings and doctrines of the New Church as signified by the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse or Revelation of John as set forth in the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and not for the purpose of monetary gain.”

All the other Objects look to and promote this one.



Our Vision

Welcoming all people to be part of a living community serving the Lord and encouraging personal development

Rationale

The life and aim of a healthy church community looks towards itself to be a community that embraces spiritual practice among those who form part. This shows itself in mutual care and friendship, in being together before the Lord, and in sharing the Lord's transforming work within and among the community. We recognise that this is the Lord's work and only secondarily from our own endeavours, bringing about the change and extension present in all living things in creation, and this is the source of our deepest joy.

Equally important is the wish to share the community with other people so that they themselves can experience the Lord's transforming work through their willing part in being in the community. The effect of seeking growth in numbers is to experience internal growth - transformation - in both the community and in each person who is part of it.

This is a continuing process which does not reach completion but is reflected in the ever-developing changes that take place in all living organisms. Its constant experience and sign of health is the felt joy as the Lord brings about transformation and brings the community and the people in it from separation into belonging.

Our Values

Our values are drawn from the constitution and are fundamental to the life of the NCIA:

- To identify and deepen our relationship with the Lord;
- To come to know and identify with key teachings of the New Church;
- To live accordingly;
- To value our people;
- To be good corporate citizens;
- To be in shared community
- To facilitate personal development



Rationale

The existence of the community that we call church is firstly spiritual and secondly organisational. This indicates two points: that the purpose of administering the organisation is for its life, wellbeing and growth and not for the sake of administration, and that being an organisation of people necessarily requires competent administration.

The values given above express what the organised church holds to be the guiding aims for its existence. In being an organisation and carrying out administration, these values keep directing and shaping its life and work.



Services that we provide

The New Church in Australia and all activities which form part of it exist to serve the life and growth of people in community as outlined. Our prime service both nationally and locally is to seek the welfare of all and to assist with needs as they arise. This has to be a truly democratic process which while it requires leadership and management equally seeks the contribution of all into its planning and practice.

The Australian New Church College is an activity which is directly under the management of The New Church in Australia. Its purpose is to train people, provide study opportunities, encourage participation in spiritual growth programs. It does this through online activity and physical gatherings such as seminars.

Action Plans - Making It Happen

The Strategic Plan covers the identified goals and strategies for the New Church in Australia. It follows that the activity from these translates into Action Plans.

The Strategic Plan stands for the next 5 years after its adoption and will be revised in the future. Action Plans simply continue on and are not related to revisions of the Strategic Plan.

Action Plans involve the ongoing aims and work of the NCIA Board which has its own agenda and goals. A good number of the goals in the Strategic Plan are already active and present in the decision-making of the NCIA Board.

Action Plans will need to be carefully and regularly monitored to check on their progress and achievements or otherwise.

Action Plans also require and depend on the ownership and involvement of Societies, Groups and individual people who are in the New Church in Australia. It is essential that this is understood by the Australian church as a whole.

It is very likely that Societies and Groups will want and need guidance in developing the goals of the Strategic Plan and Action Plans. While the NCIA Board and the Council of Ministers can assist with this, it is important that Societies, Groups and also individual people think through their own plans and determine what is their way of being active in the future of the Church.

The NCIA Board will need to provide guidance and ways of monitoring the development of Action Plans in their progress and results.



What can you do to help?



Here are suggestions for people to be part of the future planning and activity of the Church:

Familiarise yourself closely with the Strategic Plan, particularly in considering the goals and strategies it presents.

Think about and come up with some ways in which you can be part of this process, taking into account your time, location, interests, background and abilities.

Indicate your wish to others in your local society or Group and look at your wish to be part of activity in the context of what your local church now does and what it could do in the future.

Urge your church community to think and talk together towards growth, renewal, different areas of activity, and activities that flow from the Strategic Plan.

Get in touch with the people who have national responsibilities and share your enthusiasm and intentions. The NCIA President, Rev Julian Duckworth can be contacted by phone on 02 9416 7032 or by email jduckworth@optusnet.com.au. The NCIA Secretary, Kevin Attwater, can be contacted by phone on 02 6582 7229 or by email attwaterk@bigpond.com

In meeting any difficulties or disappointments, don't stop or give up. Think along new lines. The Lord helps those who help themselves by doing what they feel moved to do.

Current Situation (SWOT)

A SWOT analysis is used in the initial stages of the Strategic Planning process to identify -

Strengths - what are we good at - where do we function well

Weaknesses - where do we fall down and need to address these areas

Opportunities - what do we see as some of the possibilities that also exist

Threats - what are the risks we face by changing or staying the same



A SWOT analysis provides a picture of the organisation which is not just problem based but is also a functional analysis of the organisation. It describes how we function in terms of what we are good at and what we need to improve or work on, as seen by the members of the organisation. This can also be done by the people who use the organisation (i.e. our customers) and by the people who manage it and have overall governance (management). The wider the groups we survey the bigger and better an overall picture we get.

During development of our Strategic Plan a number of SWOT analysis exercises were completed by different groups - the NCIA Conference in 2009, the Church Camp in 2010 and by the Board in 2010. By and large, the results of the SWOT analysis exercises were similar, the combined results are set out in the following table.

New Church in Australia - Collective SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Committed core of members Lord's Providence Family Service large attendance once a month Program of different services works well Continue to reach out Small regular group Financially sound Long standing committee Wide spread activity Attendance improved	Lack of own minister Few visitors to services Isolation Difficulty recruiting formal members	The future of the NCIA Advertising to raise public awareness Seeks to support NCIA and others Small growth over time Encourage lay leaders	Aging members Lack of skill managing organisational aspects Decline in national minister resources Older Generation not being replaced by new generation

This analysis paints a picture of an organisation which is at a change point wherein the change will happen either with a planned or unplanned approach - in either case change seems imminent. In short the issues that this raises for the church are -

- Ministers and current members are significantly close to minimal numbers for survival of the organisation
- New influx of ministers and members is minimal and not sufficient for maintaining the organisation.
- This is compounded by the isolation some societies and Groups feel and the lack of consensus to band together nationally as an organization.

To counter these processes we find a number of strengths and opportunities exist -

- There is a committed core of members in most societies and Groups and some are financially sound. Some societies and Groups have already begun to adapt and experiment with new forms of worship and spiritual growth.
- There is a deeper sense that whatever happens there can be a sense of trust in the Lord's Providence and there exists a clear connection across societies and Groups in commitment to the Word and the Writings.

This shows two interesting trends which are also given in the SWOT analysis.

Firstly, the numbers of new members has dropped dramatically in the last ten years, and,

Secondly, the attendance at alternative activities has surpassed that of attendance at the traditional church service as an average across all societies and Groups.

However this is not happening evenly across the board. In some societies/Groups there are twice as many people attending Church services while in other societies/Groups the opposite is the case, where two or three times as many people are attending alternative events.

Hence there are indications of a change process taking place in our church shown most clearly in significantly small numbers of members and ministers. There remains nonetheless a determined resilience at work and moreover a significant growth in attendance by people at alternative events, many of whom may not be members in the traditional sense.

Consideration of the SWOT analysis by the NCIA Board and others identified the key critical issues facing the Church to be;

- Manpower - lack of Ministers or Leaders
- Finances and financial management
- Succession planning - manpower and human resources

Further discussion led to the development of the Strategies, Goals and Objectives encompassed in our Strategic Focus, namely;

- Continuity of Leadership - Spiritual
- Connection - Spiritual
- Meeting Place - Spiritual

which relate to the first critical issue identified, and

- Management - Organisational

aimed at addressing the second and third critical issues identified.

These are the outcomes from a very valuable SWOT analysis and we are grateful to Brian O’Neill for leading the way with it, and to all those people who took part. Much of the material and thinking in the SWOT analysis has been picked up in the Strategic Plan which we believe is the right way for the Australian New Church to go forward to make the required planning decisions for the future.



Our Strategic Focuses

Each strategic focus has goals associated with it, some being concerned with the life to be found in the organisation. Other goals are associated with the more practical and organisational resources and structures which serve that life. The interdependence of these is the key to their success.

Continuity of Leadership - Spiritual

Ensuring continuity of competent Spiritual leadership

This is a *strategic* plan whose goals and strategies seek to provide for continued leadership, not for the purpose of maintaining the way things are. It is about becoming an organisation which serves the Lord's transformative work in our lives. This requires effective leadership which is also in touch with the contemporary world and developing technologies.



Connection - Spiritual

Awareness of the Church spread throughout Australia encouraging development of community spirit and connection, and 'outreach' or extension work to assist other people.

This strategic focus is about *spiritual* and *relational* connections. These are of two kinds: internal and external. Internal connection focuses on those already in the community of the church; external connection focuses on those who may enter into connection with our community. It is essential that both focuses are made on people of all ages. The external connection will need to bear in mind those who are most likely to benefit from being in connection with our particular community.

Meeting Place - Spiritual

This concerns the life and use found within places of meeting and the provision and equipping of such places. This provides a physical or technological home within which connection can take place through formal or informal meeting.

Providing gatherings for people to connect over an extended period and in different formats.

Buying, building, hiring, maintaining, and renovating places of meeting for the varied and developing meetings the church currently holds and will hold in the future. The use of technology (video, audio, computer website, email, social networking) is an essential factor.

Maintain and develop dedicated meeting places that allow for connection and community.

Management - Organisational (Administration)

This strategic focus is about *administrative* connection, both vertically and horizontally, ensuring that stakeholder groups receive appropriate information and have opportunity to participate in governance. It bears in mind the distinctions between spiritual leadership responsibility and organisational leadership responsibility.

Developing clear and agreed lines of communication between the national Board and local Societies/Groups and outsourcing specialist skills.

Encouraging members to take up leadership roles in the administration and practical running of the national church organisation. This focus could be extended to address similar issues in societies and Groups. Members would research and drive the development and maintenance of organisational plans.

Encouraging members to come forward to serve on the Board or to serve on a sub-committee responsible to the Board. Members will assist in management, developing and reviewing Action Plans, linked to the Strategic Plan and financial capacity of the NCIA.



Our Goals



Continuity of Leadership

- Goal 1: Spiritual - Ministry:** Continued leadership which is innovative and suits each activity and Society/Group and its continuing development.
- Goal 2: Spiritual - Australian New Church College:** Development of advanced training methods and delivery that will lead to increased awareness and long-term development of the church across Australia.

Connection

- Goal 3: Spiritual - Community Work and Outreach:** Awareness of the Church spread throughout Australia with development of community spirit and connection, and 'outreach' in extension activity to assist other people.

Meeting Place

- Goal 4: Spiritual - Camp and Spiritual Retreat:** Providing gatherings for people to connect over an extended period and in different formats.
- Goal 5: Spiritual - Importance of Place:** Maintain and develop meeting that allow for connection and community.

Management

- Goal 6: Organisation - The Way We Work:** Developing supportive services for Societies and Groups and working towards greater National efficiency and effectiveness.
- Goal 7: Organisational - NCIA Administration:** Maintain and manage the separate streams of spiritual leadership and life as distinct from ongoing organisational administration to ensure the latter serves the former.

Outcomes/How we know it is working/Strategies

Goal 1: *Spiritual - Ministry: Continued leadership which is innovative and suits each activity and Society/Group and its continuing development.*

Goal Outcomes

Contemporary leadership which suits each activity and Society/Group and their continuing development.

How we know it is working

- Continued innovative leadership.
- Appointment of (Regional) Spiritual Directors.
- Numerical growth.
- People inspired to offer themselves in leading.
- Steps taken to train and enable people to lead.
- Spiritual wellbeing, interest, vitality and life-change.



Strategies

Strategy 1.1: *Lay out a variety of models of worship and other possibilities for each Society/Group to consider and from which to choose and plan their own way forward.*

Strategy 1.2: *Create a resource of attainable ways in which all people are encouraged and then trained to lead, and do this in close consultation with the ANCC.*

Strategy 1.3: *Look to the creation of and 'hosting' of small groups sharing in spiritual-based activity.*

Strategy 1.4: *Encouraging younger people in their understanding of and active involvement in the spiritual life of the church and religious teachings and beliefs.*

Strategy 1.5: *Encouraging all people into the practice of connecting their spiritual life with their personal life and their involvement with life and responsibility.*



Goal 2: Spiritual - Australian New Church College: Development of advanced training methods and delivery that will lead to increased awareness and long term development of the church across Australia.

Goal Outcomes

To foster a spread of activities to train people in church teachings, leadership and individual spiritual development.

How we know it is working

- Increased national involvement with the College in Logopraxis, College Courses, Seminars and other areas of study.
- Increased financial support for the College from societies, Groups and individuals.
- Increasing awareness and support of the college nationally.

Strategies

Strategy 2.1: *Consultation with the Director of the College on a 5 year plan.*

Strategy 2.2: *Increase national awareness of College activities and goals.*

Strategy 2.3: *Increase financial support for the work of the College.*

Strategy 2.4: *Encourage people to take part in Logopraxis and Seminar activity.*

Goal 3: *Spiritual - Community Work and Outreach: Awareness of the Church spread throughout Australia with development of community spirit and connection, and ‘outreach’ in extension activity to assist other people.*

Goal Outcomes

Develop awareness of the Church spread throughout Australia fostering community spirit and connection, and the importance of outreach to assist other people.

All people in connection with the New Church are to be encouraged to take part in some direct activity within the community and where it can be done, in outreach and promotional activity.

How we know it is working

- Increase in the general public’s knowledge of the existence of the New Church.
- Increase in activities that lead to such an increased knowledge.
- Clear information about the extent to which people, societies and Groups are becoming actively involved in promoting and carrying through community and church programs.
- Greater use of and involvement in technologies and social networking.

Strategies



Strategy 3.1: *Develop a transparent model to attract people to be involved, to help those who are serving and being served and to ensure our services.*

Strategy 3.2: *Provide a safe environment for people to meet and explore their friendships.*

Strategy 3.3: *Outreach - Create ‘kits’ on various attainable outreach methods, giving practical guidelines, goals and possible problems.*

Strategy 3.4: *Offering services to the community that enhance the lives of the community and offer the rights of individuals to happy fulfilled lives.*

Strategy 3.5: *Equip the Church to promote and present its teachings in multiple forms and media.*

Goal 4: *Spiritual - Camp and Spiritual Retreat: Providing gatherings for people to connect over an extended period and in different formats.*

Goal Outcomes

Gatherings provided for people to connect over an extended period and in different formats, which will be evolving and dynamic.



How we know it is working

- Number of gatherings held.
- Experimenting with a number of different kinds of organised gatherings in various locations - at a church society, in homes in close proximity, at a hired weekend venue, or online.
- Measure of the success of an initial gathering using an appropriate scale of assessment.
- Noting the wish of those taking part to repeat the experience.
- Continuation of the annual church camp.

Strategies

Strategy 4.1: *Continue to hold annual church Camp.*

Strategy 4.2: *Hold weekend camps/seminars/retreats.*

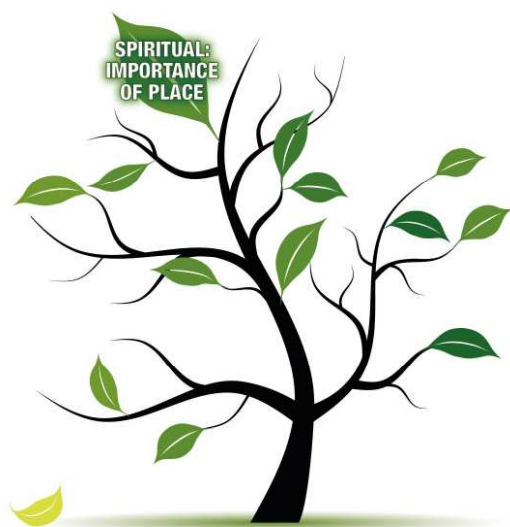
Strategy 4.3: *Conduct a feasibility study of establishing a National Centre and/or dedicated retreat centre.*

Goal 5: *Spiritual - Importance of Place: Maintain and develop meeting that allows for connection and community.*

Goal Outcomes

Dedicated meeting places are maintained and developed to allow for connection and community.

Meeting places have expanded to take advantage of technology trends (video, audio, computer website, email, social networking).



How we know it is working

- Church buildings are available for use by the community.
- Increase in the number of hours a week a location is used in any way to show vibrancy.
- Increase in number of people who attend or take part in activities.
- A completed feasibility study in relation to a National Centre.

Strategies

Strategy 5.1: *Review use of buildings to support a spiritual retreat for a weekend and longer.*

Strategy 5.2: *Develop and implement at least one project for alternative use of buildings to support Strategic Plan.*

Strategy 5.3: *Lease accommodation for the College, permanently or for specific courses.*

Strategy 5.4: *Share facilities of societies for courses and NCIA meetings.*

Strategy 5.5: *Assist Societies to use their buildings.*

Strategy 5.6: *Develop and establish online groups, events and virtual church.*



Goal 6: Organisation - The Way We Work: *Developing supportive services for Societies and Groups and working towards greater National efficiency and effectiveness.*

Goal Outcomes

More efficient services by reduction of duplication and support for societies and Groups in times of need.

Stakeholder groups receive appropriate information and have opportunity to participate.

Greater efficiency and effective communication between the national Board, Societies and Groups.

How we know it is working

- Stakeholders participate in governance.
- Good communications and relationships exist between the national Board and Societies.
- The creation of an annual reporting, informing and decision-making online conferencing meeting.

Strategies

Strategy 6.1: *To provide support to Societies and Groups by overseeing and ensuring systems continue to operate.*

Strategy 6.2: *Review of efficiencies that could be achieved by pooling resources.*

Strategy 6.3: *Activity undertaken in relationship management between the national Board, local Societies and Groups.*

Goal 7: Organisational - NCIA Administration: Maintain and manage the separate streams of spiritual leadership and life as distinct from ongoing organisational administration to ensure the latter serves the former.

Goal Outcomes

Spiritual leadership and life is distinct from but supported by the organisation.

Members come forward to serve on the Board or on a sub-committee responsible to the Board or in some other way.

Members assist in managing, developing and reviewing Action Plans that are linked to the Strategic Plan and the financial capacity of the NCIA.

How we know it is working

- Clear and effective lines of management locally and nationally.
- Increase in number of people taking an active part in maintaining/developing management locally and nationally.
- Strategic Plan adopted.
- Action Plans established.
- Leadership Succession Plan in place.



Strategies

Strategy 7.1: Encourage stakeholders to come forward and serve on the Board and/or one of its sub-committees.

Strategy 7.2: Encourage and enable strategic planning processes to take place at a national and a local level.

Strategy 7.3: Establish Strategic Plan evaluation framework.

Strategy 7.4: Identify peoples' abilities and specific skills for helping with activities of the Church.

Acknowledgements

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- David Moffat
- Loretta Attwater

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