

# LOCAL CHURCH DELEGATES GUIDELINES

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## *CRC Churches International - Australia*

### **Background:**

The idea of a representative delegate system for our CRC Churches was presented as an important initiative by Pastor Bill Vasilakis, just prior to his election as National Chairman in May 2002. The proposal, outlined in his March 2002 booklet, explained how a delegate system would help the Movement become more interdependent and truly express the intent of our Charter “that the CRC is a **fellowship of local churches and ministers**” – and not just a fellowship of ministers. This initiative with some alterations by the National Executive was decided upon by the National Council in May 2005.

The previous representative system only recognised nationally credentialled ministers who as members of the National Council had voting rights. Our State Councils were also comprised only of both Nationally credentialled and Credentialled ministers. A local Church as an entity in itself did not have representation or voting rights at our National and State Councils. It was not uncommon for our smaller churches (without a Nationally credentialled or Credentialled minister) to have no representation at our National or State Councils, even though they faithfully paid their levies and their leaders attended our Council meetings.

The Delegate System addresses the deficiencies of our previous arrangements and gives appropriate voting rights to our churches at both State and National levels. A local church delegate will have voting rights at our National and State Council meetings without being an official member of the National and State Council who still must be people who hold either a National Minister’s Credential or a Minister’s Credential.

## **1. OVERVIEW OF THE DELEGATE SYSTEM:**

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### **1.1 Number of Representatives:**

Nationally credentialled ministers would continue to be members of the National Council and Credentialled ministers (along with

Nationally credentialed ministers) would be members of the State Council.

IN ADDITION – each church would also have one representative able to vote at both State and National Council meetings.

## **1.2 Church Representatives:**

- A Local Church delegate should be a serving elder of the church, or a man or woman scripturally suited to eldership. If a local church is led by a Trainee, State or Affiliate credentialed minister, the Eldership Board may select him/her to be their delegate representative able to vote at the National and their respective State Council.
- Delegates need to be recommended by their Eldership Boards to the appropriate State Executive for approval.
- Approval would generally be automatic but the State Executive have the option of precluding/deferring someone if known impediments exist and delegates must have the continuing confidence of their State Executive.
- A separate register of representatives will be maintained by the National Office and will ensure church representatives are included in National and State mail-outs.
- Local church delegates cannot stand for National or State constitutionally elected official positions (i.e. Officers and Executives) as only Nationally credentialed ministers are eligible.

## **1.3. Advantages of the Delegate System:**

- 1.3.1 All local churches now have voting rights on our Councils, even if they don't have a senior minister or if their senior minister has a credential other than a National credential. This removes the previous anomaly of some churches having no formal representation at our National and State Council gatherings.
- 1.3.2 Delegates, in most cases, would be drawn from the Eldership Boards of our churches. Having Elders and key ministry leaders as delegates will establish stronger links between churches and our State and National organisations.
- 1.3.3 This system builds networks and strengthens the linkage of our Elders within our Movement – which is in line with the sentiments of our Senior Ministers and Eldership Board Guidelines.
- 1.3.4 The attendances of our State and National conferences should increase.

- 1.3.5 The culture of our Movement will gradually change to be more interdependent and accountable, which is an outworking of our core values.
- 1.3.6 As our credentialing process is now extended to six years (becoming more character and competency based) the pressure to prematurely credential someone, so that a church can have voting rights on our Councils, is removed.
- 1.3.7 The smaller churches of our Movement benefit – they now enjoy a greater sense of validation and increased self-esteem through having voting representatives at our State and National Councils.

#### **1.4. Possible Difficulties of our Delegate System With a Response**

- 1.4.1 It may be difficult to ensure the spiritual suitability of delegates (unlike the current system in which Council representatives are subject to a rigorous credentialing process) as there is presently no formal assessment or appointment criteria for elders. **However our Senior Ministers/Eldership Boards guidelines address this matter.**
- 1.4.2 Some elders are good “business people” but may not necessarily be deep spiritually or ministry minded. This could change the dynamics of Council meetings. **The spirituality of elders is addressed in our Senior Ministers/Eldership Boards Guidelines.**
- 1.4.3 Attendance at conferences by secularly employed delegates may be more difficult, and potentially exclude some of the more fitting delegates being appointed. **Unfortunately this is also the story of many of our bi-vocational Credentialed Ministers and is a reality the movement has always lived with.**
- 1.4.4 Smaller churches may struggle financially to send delegates to both State and National Conferences. **These delegates like some of our bi-vocational pastors may need financial support to attend conferences.**
- 1.4.5 There is a possibility that some churches might frequently change their nominated delegates, making it difficult for individual delegates to attain the level of knowledge and experience ideal for voting rights. **Senior ministers should be involved in the necessary educational/acclimation process for their Elders, as well as delegate selection, to help ensure the best results for the Movement.**

## **2. PROCEDURES FOR LOCAL CHURCH ELDERSHIP BOARDS AND STATE EXECUTIVES**

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### **2.1 Affiliated Churches:**

- 2.1.1 The delegate system recognises that our Charter and Constitution prescribes “that the CRC is **a fellowship of local churches and ministers**”. A local Church, as an entity in itself, will often be represented at National and State Councils by Nationally credentialed or other credentialed ministers but it is not uncommon for our smaller churches to have no representation.
- 2.1.2 For a local church to be eligible for a delegate it must fit within the definition of a local church as defined by the State Constitutions, or be a formally recognised outreach church that contributes to the CRC Levy system.

### **2.2. One Delegate per Church:**

- 2.2.1 The delegate representation provides for each church to have, in addition to their credentialed ministers, one representative at both State and National Council meetings.
- 2.2.2 A Local Church Delegate will have full voting rights at our National and State Council meetings without being an official member of the National and State Council.
- 2.2.3 A Local Church Delegate should be a serving elder of the church, or a man or woman scripturally suited to eldership. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). If a local church is led by a Trainee, State or Affiliate credentialed minister, the Eldership Board may select him/her to be their delegate representative at the National and their respective State Council.

### **2.3. Appointment of Delegate:**

- 2.3.1 A Delegate is to be endorsed by their Eldership Board, in an officially minuted eldership meeting, and recommended to the appropriate State Executive for approval. Approval would generally be automatic but the State Executive has the option of precluding/deferring someone if known impediments exist and delegates must have the continuing confidence of their State Executive.
- 2.3.2 Nomination of the Church Delegate is to be formally made using the official nomination forms.

- 2.3.3 There is an expectation that Delegates will attend State and National Council meetings and in selecting delegates, church elderships should recommend people that are willing and able to attend State and National Council meetings and fairly represent the church.

## **2.4. National Register:**

- 2.4.1 Names of approved delegates are to be advised by the State Secretary to the National Office for inclusion in an official register of Church Delegates. Church Delegates will receive copies of National and State Executive minutes and CRC mail-outs.
- 2.4.2 Local church delegates cannot stand for National or State constitutionally elected official positions (i.e. Officers and Executives) as only Nationally credentialed ministers are eligible.

## **2.5. Cessation as Delegate:**

Local Church Delegates will cease to be the official church representative if:

- 2.5.1 The Local Church Eldership, in an officially minuted eldership meeting, decide that it is no longer appropriate for the present incumbent to continue.
- 2.5.2 The Delegate resigns from this position through a formal letter to the Church Eldership. Where there is no eldership the letter of resignation is to be forwarded to the State Chairman.
- 2.5.3 The State Executive rescinds approval for the incumbent to act as the official church delegate. There is no appeal provision similar to that which applies to National and State Council members who hold either a National Ministers Credential or Ministers Credential.
- 2.5.4 Where a local church delegate ceases to represent a church a replacement delegate may be appointed by following the normal nomination procedures.

## **2.6. Voting Eligibility:**

In order to be eligible to vote at State or National Council meetings, nomination for the office of a Local Church Delegate must be received by the State Secretary at least 90 days prior to the State or National Council meeting. Application for delegates received after this time will not be eligible to vote in a State or National Council meeting.

End Document