

**Report to the Presbytery of the Hunter**  
**regarding the Raymond Terrace Redundant Church Property**  
**for 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 Meeting of Presbytery**  
(Prepared by the Hunter Presbytery Strategy Committee)

**Introduction**

At its October 2018 meeting the Session of the East Maitland Presbyterian Church notified the Presbytery of the Hunter that services at the St. Andrew's Raymond Terrace Church had been permanently closed following the final service held in the church on 10 December 2017. This paper will seek to argue that any future proceeds of the sale of redundant properties of the former St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Raymond Terrace, be applied to support the continued expansion of the Gateway Presbyterian Church Anna Bay.

**Background to the Raymond Terrace Congregation**

The Raymond Terrace Presbyterian Church first met in the local RSL hall in October 1950. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s the congregation worked hard to raise funds to purchase suitable land (1951) and build a hall (1956). Finally, a suitable church building was found and moved from Seaham (1966). Throughout the 50s and 60s the church experienced significant growth. This growth slowed then began to decline in the 70's and 80's.

Throughout its history Raymond Terrace Presbyterian Church has been linked with a number of larger churches including Nelson Bay (now Gateway PC), Beresfield, St Philips -Newcastle, St. Johns Mayfield-Waratah before finally becoming part of the East Maitland Pastoral Charge.

Since its heyday in the 50s and 60s the Raymond Terrace congregation failed to thrive. Various reasons have been suggested for this including the impact of the often-changing geographic boundaries of charges and the Home Mission Station being under the jurisdiction of numerous other churches, this compounded by frequent changes in home missionaries and Interim Moderators. Added to this, throughout its history, Presbyterian work at Raymond Terrace has featured a strong Free Church (PCEA) presence which has made it difficult for the PCA church to grow in that area.

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s Raymond Terrace continued to decline with the PWA being suspended in 1994, the Committee of Management being disbanded in 2002 and the church finally closing in 2017.



### **The Decision to Close the Raymond Terrace Congregation**

For many years, despite the efforts of the East Maitland Pastoral Charge, the Raymond Terrace congregation continued to decline. It was decided by the East Maitland Session that, due to low patronage and the age of most of the members, that it was not possible for the congregation to continue to meet. Therefore, the Session, decided to cease services at East Maitland with the last service being held on 10 December 2017.

On the 21st August 2017, the East Maitland Session resolved that “there appeared to be no realistic possibility of the Presbyterian Parish of East Maitland leading a re-opening of the St. Andrew’s Congregation.” As such, the Raymond Terrace property is considered to be redundant church property. The Session further asked the Presbytery Strategy Sub-Committee for direction or strategies that could be considered for St. Andrew’s Church Property at Raymond Terrace and make recommendations to the Presbyterian Parish of East Maitland Committee of Management and to the Presbytery of the Hunter.

### **The Recommendation of the Presbytery Strategy Committee**

#### **Alternative uses for the Raymond Terrace Properties**

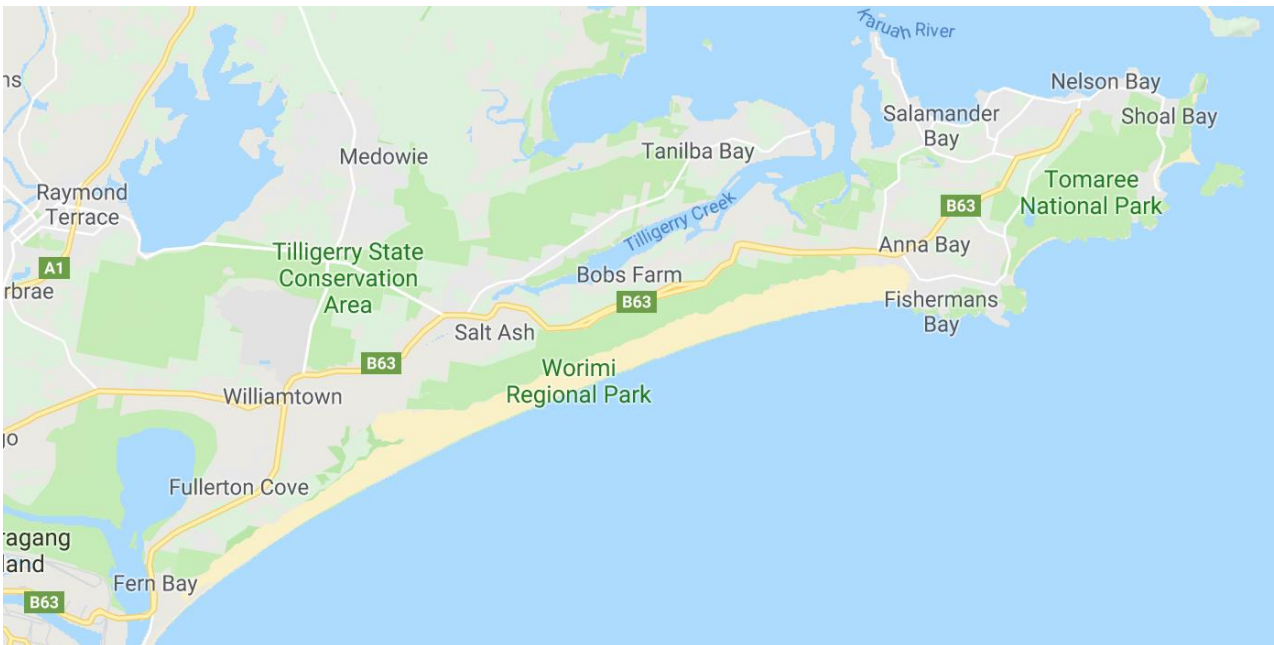
In the view of the Strategy Committee it is unlikely that any of the surrounding Presbyterian Churches will be in a position to plant a new congregation in the Raymond Terrace property in the medium-to-long term. The Strategy Committee suggests that the best way to see a healthy Presbyterian church possibly planted in the Raymond Terrace region is to support a church which is growing rapidly, but suffering significant financial constraints.



The Gateway Presbyterian Church at Anna Bay has been growing rapidly since it was revitalized by the Rev. Robin Turner in the early 2000s. A big part of the success story of Anna Bay Presbyterian Church has been the modern church facility which was built. While this facility is attractive, welcoming and conducive for church growth, it has left the Gateway congregation with no other capital assets, meaning that all their operating budget has to be met through giving.



While Gateway is in a good position relative to many other Presbyterian Churches in the Hunter, their growth is being held back by the church's inability to meet terms of call for a second full-time worker. We believe that supporting the future growth of this church by providing them with proceeds from the sale of the Raymond Terrace properties will enable the Gateway congregation to purchase a manse either as a residence for a gospel worker, or to generate income so that a manse allowance might be paid. We believe that healthy churches plant healthy churches, and, as such, the best way to see a healthy ministry in the Raymond Terrace region would be to further support the growth of the Gateway church.



Applying the proceeds of the sale of the Raymond Terrace properties to Gateway Presbyterian Church also makes sense from a geographic standpoint, Anna Bay is only a 25min drive from Raymond Terrace, and, if Gateway plants a church in Medowie, that new church would only be 15 minutes from Raymond Terrace. It would seem strategic to purchase a manse-equivalent property in Anna Bay to provide accommodation for a second gospel worker.

### **The Recommendation of the Strategy Committee**

If the Presbyterian church properties in Raymond Terrace were considered by the Presbytery of the Hunter to be 'redundant', the Strategy Committee humbly suggests that serious consideration be given to requesting the General Assembly of NSW to consider a Section 10 change under the Presbyterian Church Property Trust Act to allocate the proceeds of the sale of

the Raymond Terrace properties to the Gateway Presbyterian Church, Anna Bay which is the nearest healthy, growing Presbyterian Church, or to do otherwise as the Presbytery sees fit.

**Presbytery Resolutions following the delivery of the Report.**

**Presbytery of the Hunter 18.132**

- a. Presbytery resolved that the report be received.
- b. Presbytery noted that the Session of the Pastoral Charge of East-Maitland has ceased ministry in Raymond Terrace and no longer has the people resources, or inclination to initiate any new ministry in Raymond Terrace.
- c. Presbytery resolved, in accordance with C2.9.01a, that Presbytery agrees with the Session of the Pastoral Charge of East Maitland, on behalf of the Committee of Management, that the Raymond Terrace church properties be declared as redundant property.
- d. Presbytery resolved to request that the Property Trust and the Superintendent of Ministry and Mission consider a Section 10 change under the Trust Act to the Raymond Terrace Trust such that Gateway Family Presbyterian Church become the new beneficiary and present the request to the GANSW in July, 2019.
- e. Presbytery resolved to recommend Gateway Family Presbyterian church as a strategic reinvestment of the assets of the Raymond Terrace Presbyterian Church and therefore the recipient of the Section 10 for the Raymond Terrace Congregational Assets.
- f. Presbytery noted that Gateway Family Presbyterian Church is located at Anna Bay, only 33 km from Raymond Terrace, and is a healthy growing church strategically placed to minister to the Port Stephens region. In addition the purchase or construction of a manse would place Gateway Family Presbyterian Church on a more stable financial footing to undergird future growth of Gateway Family Presbyterian Church.
- g. Presbytery resolved to instruct the Interim Moderator of East Maitland to arrange a valuation of the Raymond Terrace properties, as well as two market appraisals, to be paid for from Raymond Terrace funds.