

# CHURCH FUTURES

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## Press Release

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## Does the Uniting Church in Australia have a future?

### New PhD research project calls church's future into question

The Uniting Church's social welfare work is worth more than most of the corporations listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, yet the church may not have a future.

This is the key finding of Dr Keith Suter's third PhD dissertation, released this week. Dr Suter uses the technique of scenario planning, the first time this management technique has been used on an Australian church.

"Scenario planning is not about 'prediction' but 'possibilities'. It asks what could happen," he said.

The thesis sets out four possible scenarios.

The 'Word and Deed' scenario examines how the Uniting Church could become a church of a small number of large parishes providing both spiritual activities and social welfare. This would require the enforced amalgamation of small churches into 'regional' ones.

"Secondly, the 'Secular Welfare' scenario examines how the Uniting Church could let the parishes just continue to fade away and instead focus on the provision of social welfare.

Dr Suter's third scenario, 'Return to the Early Church', examines how the Uniting Church could react against the corporate managerialism required by government to run social welfare programmes, and instead decide to stop accepting government contracts.

The final scenario, 'Recessional' is one in which the Uniting Church is wound up and its assets dispersed. The Uniting Church would need an explicit exit strategy.

"The challenge for the Uniting Church, then, is in recognizing the seriousness of its plight and taking explicit action. If it just drifts along, then it will gradually fade away," Dr Suter concluded.

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For more information, including a downloadable copy of the PhD dissertation, visit:  
<http://www.churchfutures.com.au>

Dr Suter is also available for media interviews by contacting him directly:  
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The web site: <http://www.churchfutures.com.au> also contains television quality video interviews of Dr Suter addressing his thesis. They are available for download or for use on news web sites.

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