

Converge International Report

Converge International was formerly ITIM Australia Limited and before that, the Interchurch Trade and Industry Mission. It is the operations organisation and trading name for Reventure, an Australian inter-denominational not-for-profit company, with a Head Office in Melbourne. Since 1960 it has provided pastoral counselling (chaplaincy) and related employee services to workplaces. Customers include Commonwealth, State and Local Government, as well as private sector organisations. Converge International is a member of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association of Australia (EAPAA).

1. Converge Integrated Onsite Support

Pastoral Counselling (previously 'chaplaincy') is one of our range of on-site Services. In South Australia, Converge International provides this service at locations mainly in the metropolitan area, the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa, the Fleurieu and the South East.

On-site services are available to employees and family members at the employer's cost. The pastoral counsellors build trusting relationships with the employees in their care. They make regular workplace visits to 'do the rounds', speaking with employees and providing brief counselling. They are also available to make home and hospital visits, and attend/conduct funerals. Face-to-face counselling is provided away from the workplace when requested. The counsellor may refer individuals to specialist counselling through the client's employee assistance program (EAP) or to a community agency. The pastoral counsellor's role also includes monitoring morale and reporting to management.

2. COVID-19 response

During 2020 our service delivery had to adapt to restrictions resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In South Australia site visits were suspended from mid-March to July, and client contact continued by telephone and on line, with pastoral counsellors working from home. Our customers and their employees appreciated the continuance of our services, and contracts were retained. Team meetings are now 'virtual' on Zoom, which has been an advantage as regional counsellors have been able to join in without having to travel to Adelaide.

When a return to site visits was allowed, the Converge Pandemic Taskforce enacted strict protocols around site risk assessments and daily symptom checks for all staff, and provided Personal Protective Equipment kits.

3. Other services

In addition to on-site pastoral services, Converge provides Employee Assistance Programs (counselling off site by appointment), consulting and training and 'Rapid Response' (responding on site to critical incidents).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Converge developed a new product, "CoronaCare", to provide support for employers and employees. The suite of services includes isolation support and wellbeing risk assessments.

Uptake far exceeded expectations, with 216 customers nation-wide, representing 21,000 employees, having access to the services.

4. Converge International Personnel

In South Australia there are currently five active part-time Pastoral Counsellors (chaplains), from several Christian denominations – some lay ministers, others ordained. All require endorsement by their local church, and also accreditation by Converge, which is maintained through regular compulsory professional development. The national On-site Services Manager provides professional support through regular phone contact and Quarterly Pastoral Forums. The SA Coordinator provides peer support and convenes monthly team meetings.

5. Contacting Converge International

For information about Converge Integrated OnSite Support (Pastoral Counselling/ Chaplaincy) and the Employee Assistance Program please contact Converge International on 1300 687 327 (24/7), or visit our website: www.converginternational.com.au

Les Milner

Pastoral Counsellor Coordinator (SA)

Converge International

January 2021