

Synod '23



Converge International Report



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

ITIMs faith-based DNA is very much alive and well within Reventure/Converge and remains a key focus of the organisation.

1. Integrated Onsite Support

Converge Integrated Onsite Support (IOS) provides a range of services including counselling, wellbeing resources, groups sessions and crisis response. Pastoral Counselling (previously known as 'chaplancy') is a key facet of our Onsite Services. In South Australia, Converge International provides this service at locations mainly in the metropolitan area, the Adelaide Hills, the Barossa, the Riverland and the South-East.

Our IOS service has largely returned to a pre COVID-19 format after restrictions were lifted. Telephone and Teams meeting counselling services are still available for our customer's employees who remain on work from home rosters.

IOS services are available to employees at their employer's cost. This investment speaks powerfully to staff about their organisations desire to care for their wellbeing. Pastoral Counsellors are embedded into a workplace where an ongoing presence, availability and friendly/approachable nature help to develop rapport with employees. It's about building trusting relationships where people feel safe to explore both workplace and personal issues in a confidential and non-judgmental space.

Pastoral Counsellors provide this care and ongoing support through 'Walk and Talk', counselling appointments and group presentations. The 'Walk and Talk' component involves initiating casual conversations that help build trust and rapport. There are times where these flow into deeper conversations. The staff member may not have been looking to book a counselling session, but as they feel listened to, heard and valued, it gives them the confidence to share more personal issues. This further highlights the importance of the 'Walk and Talk' aspect of our Onsite services.

Pastoral Counsellors are also available to do offsite and hospital visits, as well as attend/conduct funerals. Further important avenues of our Onsite service include referral to GP's, specialist counselling through the client's employee assistance program (EAP) or to a community agency. Where referrals are made, our Pastoral Counsellors can continue catching up with the employee for ongoing welfare checks.

2. Integrated Onsite Structure

The value of the IOS provided by Converge is evident by the increased engagement of these services by both Government Departments and the private sector. This has led to the expansion of the IOS leadership team. In addition to the General Manager of Onsite & Pastoral Services/Principal Chaplain, Manager of Onsite Consultants and our Victorian Country Fire Service Co-Ordinating Chaplain - we've now added two Onsite Team Leaders, an Operations team of four full-time staff as well as a 0.8 FTE recruiter who are all dedicated to IOS.

3. Other Services

In addition to on-site pastoral services, Converge provides Employee Assistance Programs (counselling off-site by appointment paid for by the employer). These counsellors deliver a brief therapy model, with a set number of sessions, usually three to five.

Converge also has teams that provide consulting and training, 'Rapid Response' (responding on-site to critical incidents), as well as the provision of Pastoral Supervision and access to the Spiritual and Pastoral Care Help Line.

4. Converge International Personnel

In South Australia there are currently six part-time Pastoral Counsellors (chaplains), from several Christian denominations – some lay ministers, others ordained. All require accreditation by Converge and are endorsed by their local church. IOS leadership team provides professional support through regular phone contact. The SA Coordinator also provides peer support and convenes monthly on-line meetings.

5. Contacting Converge International

For further information about the On-Site Pastoral Counselling (Chaplaincy) service, the Employee Assistance Program or any other services that Converge provide, please contact Converge International on 1300 687 327 (24/7), or visit our website: www.convergeinternational.com.au

Derek Croser

Pastoral Counsellor Coordinator (SA), Converge International

April 2023



The Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of South Australia