



EXPONENTIAL

AUSTRALIA

Church Planting Report 2025

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Current insights into church planting in Australia

It's exciting seeing an across-the-board increase in enthusiasm and activity in Australia for church planting multiplication.

Whilst some denominations are certainly leading the way here, it's great seeing a range of denominations from the more traditional, the mainstream and the Pentecostal denominations making concerted efforts to plant new churches.

And we need to see this happen with the number of Protestant churches in Australia dropping by 8% in the 5 years from 2016¹ to 2021. With the aging of many congregations, the decline is not likely to slow and turn around unless we start planting more churches; churches that plant churches that plant churches.

¹ <https://www.ncls.org.au/articles/number-and-size-of-local-churches-in-australia/>

Is the number of churches planted in Australia increasing?

The number of churches planted in Australia for the twelve months to 30 June 2025 has shown a healthy 22% increase over the number planted in the year to June 2024, according to analysis done by Exponential Australia of church planting information contained in the New Churches Database².

This figure is consistent with the denominational survey conducted by Exponential Australia in 2024 which indicated a 21% increase in churches planted between 2023 and 2024. The denominational survey covered 5,610 Australian Protestant churches; 60% of the Protestant churches in Australia.

In Australia, the vast majority of churches belong to denominations.

The New Churches Database analysis indicates that 1.6% of Australian churches planted a new church in the year to June 2025. There were undoubtedly more churches than this planted that were not registered in the New Churches Database, but the number of additional churches is likely to be small.

Whilst the church planting rate is far lower than it needs to be, it is significantly higher than the 1% planting rate reported by NCLS Research³ in relation to calendar 2019.

The bottom line is that the increase in church planting in Australia is significant and highly encouraging. We can and should celebrate this but we must recognise that we are coming from a very low base.

How many churches are there in Australia?

According to NCLS Research⁴, in 2021, there were 9,365 Protestant churches in Australia (10,158 in 2016). In addition to this, there were 1,223 Catholic churches in 2021.

Protestant churches in Australia		
	Number of Protestant churches in 2021	Churches planted in Year to 30 June 2025
Mainstream Protestant	5,168	66
Other Protestant	2,674	25
Pentecostal	1,523	57
Total	9,365	148

(see Appendix 1 for classification information)

² <https://new.churches.org.au/dashboard>

³ Growth, decline, and planting by Australian churches: Results from the 2021

⁴ Powell, R., Sterland, S. & Pepper, M. (2025). Church Pulse Check 2021 to 2024: Estimates of Australian church attendance, faith commitments and churches across denominations. NCLS Occasional Paper 61. Sydney: NCLS Research.

Which denominations are planting the most churches?

The most prolific church planting denomination is the Australian Christian Churches (ACC), Australia's largest Pentecostal denomination. Perhaps surprisingly to many, the next most prolific church-planting denomination was the Seventh-day Adventist Church, followed by the Anglican Church, Baptist Churches, and Christian Community Churches, which are a network within the Open Brethren churches.

In the year to 30 June 2025, the New Churches Database records that 4.1% of ACC churches planted a church in Australia. Although they didn't plant as many churches as ACC due to their denomination having a smaller number of churches, the Seventh Day Adventists' planting rate was slightly higher at 4.2%.

The most prolific planting rate was achieved by Christian Community Churches, which saw a planting rate of 5.2% for the year.

One other aspect that should be noted is that there was great variation in planting numbers amongst some denominations. For example, there are 23 Anglican Dioceses in Australia, but 65% of the plants in the year were in the Melbourne Diocese. A similar story could be told with the Baptists, who are organised by states. NSW & ACT Baptists saw 53% of the Australian Baptist plants recorded in the New Churches Database for the year.

The regional variation in planting provides a great opportunity for other regions in a denomination to look closely at the regions that are planting more successfully and potentially learn from those regions that are seeing substantially better results. Of course, one cannot ignore demographic realities in this, with some dioceses or locations struggling because of decreasing numbers of people in the area.

The five most prolific church planting denominations in the year to 30 June 2025 are as follows:

Denomination / Network	Churches planted	Number of churches	Planting rate
ACC	44	1,082	4.1%
Seventh-day Adventist Church	23	545	4.2%
Anglican	17	2,527	0.7%
Baptist Churches	15	1,076	1.4%
Christian Community Churches Australia (CCCAust)	12	230	5.2%

Are healthy planting rates occurring across the board?

The simple answer is no. While some denominations are planting at healthy rates, there are some that aren't yet. Of the 32 denominations that provided information to Exponential Australia, in 2024, 12 denominations planted at a rate of 3% or higher, 11 planted at a rate of less than 3% but more than or equal to 1% and 9 planted at a rate of less than 1%.

What this indicates is that different strategies are required for different denominations to increase church planting levels. Some need help getting started, whilst any help for others would be to build on what is already happening.

As a whole, 3.7% of Pentecostal churches planted a church in the year. This compares to 0.5% for Mainstream Protestant churches and 2.5% for Other Protestant churches.

What models of churches are being planted?

Some denominations have formalised which models of church planting they will pursue, whilst other denominations don't have a formalised approach and instead will assess every situation on its merits. An excellent example of a formalised model approach by the NSW and ACT Baptists may be downloaded here https://nswactbaptists.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Church-Planting-Tools_A-blended-ecology.pdf

There are pros and cons with both approaches, but it appears that an approach that offers, say, three to five models as options does have advantages. This enables clearer vision casting, training and the development of strategies, processes and policies appropriate to the models.

So far, we have found that the main models' denominations favour planting with are:

- a. Simple Church
- b. Missional Communities
- c. Weekend Worship Church
- d. Regional Church
- e. Resource Church
- f. Multi-Site Church

Brief descriptions of these models are to be found in Appendix 2.

In addition to this, there are important nuances that include worship styles, ethnic churches, vocational / bi-vocational, city / rural locations, as well as theological differences.

The strong message is that one size does not fit all circumstances. A good example of this is that the Salvation Army commissioned research to identify the regions of greatest need so that they could establish services and churches in these communities. The model of churches planted would be very different to the model frequently utilised to reach the more highly educated and affluent.

Major Dianne Jarvey, National Faith Community Development Secretary of The Salvation Army Australia, comments:

We are often found among the most marginalised, isolated, and vulnerable in our communities. This proximity means our ministry often looks different from traditional church models. We are not simply a Sunday morning congregation – we are a 24/7 missional presence.

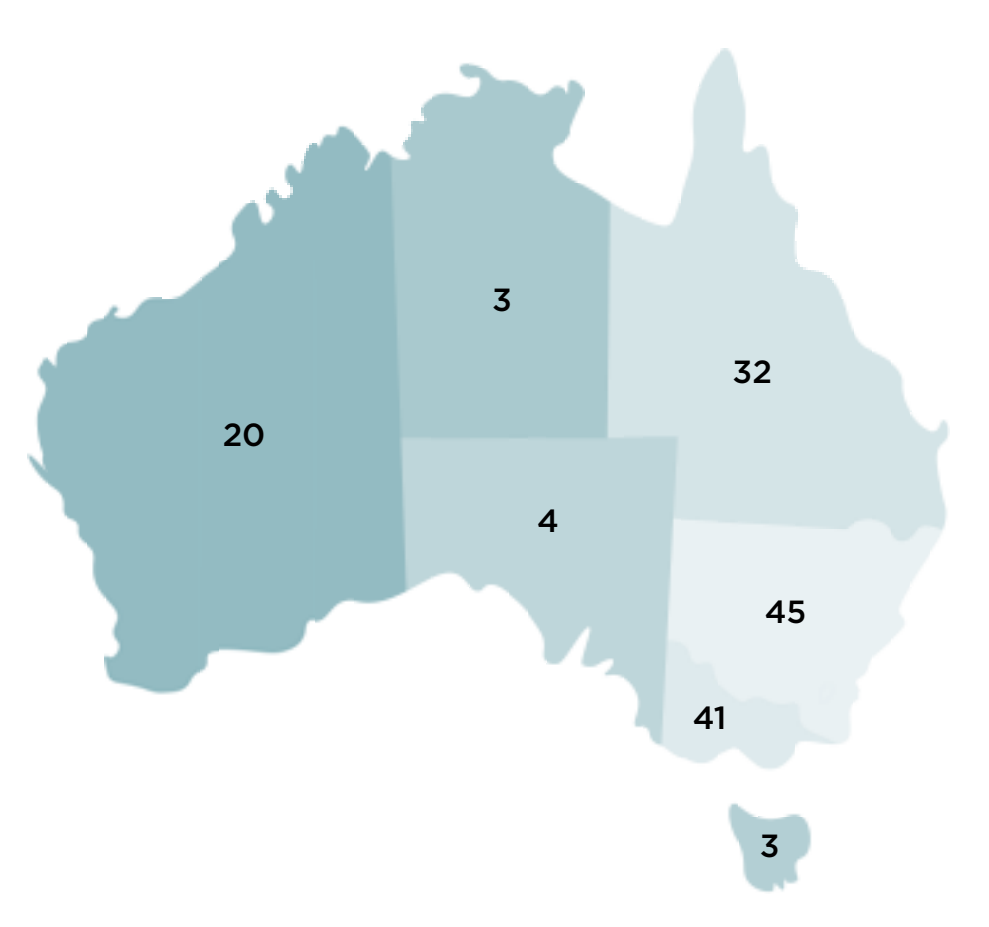
Traditional metrics such as attendance numbers, offering totals, and program counts often fail to capture the essence of our mission. We are learning to ask deeper questions:

- **Are lives being transformed?**
- **Is the community experiencing wholeness?**
- **Would our absence be felt if we left?**

Which states are churches being planted in?

Generally, the planting of churches in the states and territories follows the population distribution in Australia, with an overweight distribution found in Western Australia and Victoria and an underweight distribution in NSW & ACT and South Australia.

State / Territory	Churches planted	% planted	Population distribution	Variance
Western Australia	20	14%	11%	3%
Victoria	41	28%	26%	2%
Queensland	32	22%	21%	1%
Norther Territory	3	2%	1%	1%
Tasmania	3	2%	2%	0%
NSW & ACT	45	30%	33%	-3%
South Australia	4	3%	7%	-4%
	148			



What are the key learnings from recent church planting research?

The recent survey of Australian denominational church plant leaders provided some insightful information with four key insights being:

- a. By far, the number one impediment to the planting of more churches is the lack of potential church planters. Correspondingly, the issue that would most help in planting more churches is having more church planters!

Jesus indicated that this would be the problem that we faced when he said that the problem isn't in the harvest, it's in raising more workers to send into the harvest! (Luke 10:2).

To raise more church planters, two steps that need to be taken are:

- churches becoming more effective at not just gathering attendees but making disciples,
 - having more leadership pipelines that will equip people to be church planters.
- b. The denominations that are planting the most churches generally have someone whose major responsibility is to drive church planting within their denomination or region. This may include casting the vision to plant, identifying prospective planters, developing preferred church plant models, helping to arrange financial assistance, assisting with locations and arranging assessing, equipping and coaching of planters.
 - c. There is no one model of church planting that is the best in all circumstances. Rather a variety of models are needed with different styles in different contexts.
 - d. Multiplication Ministries that help assess, equip and coach church planters are under utilised by some denominations. They offer expertise and experience that is in some situations absent and can provide a valuable service to assist in the raising of leaders and teams and the planting of new churches.

What does the future hold?

Exponential Australia has a 2032 Vision Goal of seeing 10% of Australian churches planting churches in any given year from 2032.

Based on the current number of Protestant churches in Australia, that would require 936 new churches to be planted. That's a little over six times the amount currently being planted.

Sound impossible? I know it's not because I know that our God can do immeasurably more than we can ever ask imagine. But I also believe that we can't do in the future what we have done in the past and expect different results.

There's a saying that preaching (and programs) add, but disciple making multiplies, and I think that this is key. Broadly speaking the Church in Australia has been strong at the former but weak at the latter. It shouldn't be one or the other but both; both adding and multiplying.

We need to better learn and practice how we make disciples who make disciples, who plant churches that plant churches that plant churches. Multiplication DNA is critical.

With the vision goal in mind, Exponential Australia is committed to providing thought leadership that stimulates positive change towards embracing multiplication, inspiring leaders to action and fostering engagement with multiplication ministries who will serve the Church well.

Why? The answer is simple. To ignite church planting multiplication across our nation and to see the 2032 vision goal achieved, not for our sake but for the sake of our nation and in serving Jesus and seeing His will being done in and across Australia.

"God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply ..." Genesis 1:22 (NET)

"But the word of God spread and multiplied." Acts 12:24 (CSB)



Tim O'Neill,
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Appendix 1 – Denominational classification

The Denominational Classification has been adopted from the NCLS Church Pulse Check 2021 to 2024 as follows:

Mainstream Protestant: Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Uniting.

Other Protestant: Baptist, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, Churches of Christ, Fellowship of Congregational Churches, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC), Nazarene Church, Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventist, Wesleyan Methodists.

Pentecostal: Acts 2 Alliance, Acts Global Church, Australian Christian Churches (ACC), C3 Church Australia, CRC Churches International, International Network of Churches (INC)

Appendix 2 – Model descriptions

The following is a general description of the models listed in this report.

a. Simple Church

A “simple church” is a stripped-down, relational approach to Christian community, often characterised by small, intimate gatherings focused on core biblical principles and practices. Micro churches are a form of simpler church that has a particular emphasis on disciple-making and mission.

b. Missional Communities

A “missional community” is generally formed to address a particular issue or problem in the community, such as addressing poverty, addiction or providing meals. Missional communities may resemble simple churches, but with a missional community-oriented focus.

c. Weekend Worship Church

A “weekend worship church” will commence with the worship service being the main focal point of the church. Other activities, such as small groups and youth and children ministries, will normally be held in addition to the weekend service.

d. Regional Church

A “regional church” is generally a larger church that will serve a region beyond the local community and will often provide support to related smaller churches in the region.

e. Resource Church

A “resource church” may resemble a weekend worship church or a regional church, but is differentiated by a desire to see multiplication happen through the planting of additional churches and providing resources and support to them.

f. Multi-Site Church

A “multi-site church” is a church that meets in various locations or campuses with a central location that provides leadership and support to the locations.

An Infographic highlighting the information contained in this Report may be obtained at https://exponential.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Insights-into-Church-Planting-in-Aus_Infographic_July-2025.pdf

