

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

### VOLUME 2

#### D. MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

## Female elders

*Prepared by Committee 7 of the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations in January 1989, and adopted by General Synod in Convention, July 2000. Edited August 2001. This statement supersedes the 1987 statement, 'Office of Elder', published in DSTO II page D1.*

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1. The Lutheran Church of Australia teaches that public preaching and the administration of the sacraments should be done only by the ordained pastor (Augsburg Confession 14; Theses of Agreement VI.1). However, the church affirms the right of congregations to establish auxiliary offices according to their needs (Theses of Agreement VI. 9, 10).
2. The statement 'Elders in the Lutheran Church of Australia' (DSTO I D7) emphasises that the role of the elders is subordinate to the pastoral office. The duties of elders, as outlined in the Model Constitution for a congregation (section VIII.6; Handbook E 10), involve giving assistance and support to the pastor. This is consistent with an auxiliary role.
3. The term 'elder' as it is used and understood in the Lutheran Church of Australia is not the same as the term 'elder' used to translate the Greek word *presbyteros* in the New Testament. Nor does the Lutheran Church use the term 'elder' in the same way as it is used in some other churches. The office of elder is not to be thought of as in any sense equivalent to the office of ordained pastor.
4. The auxiliary office of elder in the Lutheran Church of Australia does not have authority, real or implied, over people. The qualities which are required of an elder – diligence, wisdom, and discretion – are not gender-specific. We therefore conclude that there is no reason to debar women from the office of elder in the Lutheran Church of Australia.