

47/14 Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Key points

- At the Synod's request, the Standing Committee has responded to the Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force (being a report initially considered by the General Synod in 2014).
- The response asserts the critical importance of realising that the viability of churches and church structures is not principally about finances and resources but gospel integrity.
- The response also highlights the importance of ministry training and formation, opportunities for action at a provincial level, gaps in the analysis of the Viability Report and suggestions for less formal means of supporting ministry in other dioceses.

Purpose

1. To inform the Synod about the response of the Standing Committee to the Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force considered at the 2014 session of the General Synod.

Recommendation

2. Synod receive this report.

Background

3. Synod passed resolution 47/14 in the following terms –

“Synod, noting –

- (i) the Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force (the “Viability Report”) considered at this year's session of General Synod, and
 - (ii) the response of the General Synod to the Viability Report in resolution 65/14 (the “Viability resolution”), particularly the referral of the Viability Report to the dioceses for their consideration and response to the Standing Committee of the General Synod by 31 October 2014,
- (a) expresses its preliminary view that changing the structures, policies and leadership of the Anglican Church of Australia (the “ACA”) will not, of itself, adequately address the underlying challenges faced by the ACA, although agrees that the focus of work in these areas may best be pursued on a provincial basis,
 - (b) calls on the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that clarity and confidence in the content of the gospel message and its faithful proclamation in word and deed across the ACA, particularly in the context of local Anglican churches, are at the fore of any proposal to respond to these challenges,
 - (c) affirms its commitment to the diocese as the unit of organisation of the ACA and therefore calls on the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that it consults widely with dioceses about the Viability Report and the Viability Resolution over a reasonable time frame before formulating any significant proposals which may require the support of dioceses,
 - (d) opposes as a matter of principle any proposal which would involve an increase in the central powers of the General Synod as a means by which the challenges faced by the ACA are sought to be addressed,
 - (e) considers that the expectation of a considered response from dioceses to the Viability Report by 31 October 2014 is unrealistic,

and invites Synod members to send any comments on the Viability Report and Viability resolution to the Diocesan Secretary by 31 December 2014 and requests our Standing Committee to respond to the Viability Report and the Viability Resolution taking any comments from Synod members into account.”

4. A copy of the Viability Report can be found at –

http://www.anglican.org.au/general-synods/2014/Documents/books/Book%208_for%20website.pdf

5. In accordance with the Synod's request, the Standing Committee submitted a response to the Viability Report to the Standing Committee of the General Synod for consideration at its meeting in May 2015.

6. The response is reproduced in the Schedule.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

1 May 2015



Schedule

Response of the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney to the Report of the General Synod Viability and Structures Task Force

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1. Introduction

The Report of the General Synod Viability and Structures Task Force¹ (the 'Viability Report') was referred by the General Synod to dioceses for response and accordingly it was considered by the October 2014 session of the Sydney Synod which resolved –

Synod, noting –

- (i) the Report of the Viability and Structures Task Force (the 'Viability Report') considered at this year's session of General Synod, and
 - (ii) the response of the General Synod to the Viability Report in resolution 65/14 (the 'Viability resolution'), particularly the referral of the Viability Report to the dioceses for their consideration and response to the Standing Committee of the General Synod by 31 October 2014,
- (a) expresses its preliminary view that changing the structures, policies and leadership of the Anglican Church of Australia (the 'ACA') will not, of itself, adequately address the underlying challenges faced by the ACA, although agrees that the focus of work in these areas may best be pursued on a provincial basis,
 - (b) calls on the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that clarity and confidence in the content of the gospel message and its faithful proclamation in word and deed across the ACA, particularly in the context of local Anglican churches, are at the fore of any proposal to respond to these challenges,
 - (c) affirms its commitment to the diocese as the unit of organisation of the ACA and therefore calls on the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that it consults widely with dioceses about the Viability Report and the Viability Resolution over a reasonable time frame before formulating any significant proposals which may require the support of dioceses,
 - (d) opposes as a matter of principle any proposal which would involve an increase in the central powers of the General Synod as a means by which the challenges faced by the ACA are sought to be addressed,

¹ <http://www.anglican.org.au/general-synods/2014/Documents/books/Book%20for%20website.pdf>

- (e) considers that the expectation of a considered response from dioceses to the Viability Report by 31 October 2014 is unrealistic,
- and invites Synod members to send any comments on the Viability Report and Viability resolution to the Diocesan Secretary by 31 December 2014 and requests our Standing Committee to respond to the Viability Report and the Viability Resolution taking any comments from Synod members into account.

Immediately following the formal debate on the motion, Synod members were invited to make short comments to assist the Standing Committee frame a response. These comments together with further comments received in response to the final paragraph of the Resolution after the Synod session were taken into account in preparing this response.

The Viability Report is the first national snapshot of the Anglican Church of Australia (“ACA”) since its inauguration in 1961. While there are one or two bright spots, the overall picture is one of decline and retreat. The remedy offered is: revitalise the leadership, improve governance and redeploy resources. Although much valuable information is gathered in the report, there is a significant lack of integrated theological explanation as to why the ACA is in its present state and what corrective action, under God, should be taken.² The other serious lack is a failure to properly examine and assess the different theological perspectives which have historically shaped the ACA.³

This response enlarges on themes introduced in the Sydney Synod response resolution.

2. Matters of theology

The Sydney resolution (b) calls on the Standing Committee of the General Synod to ensure that clarity and confidence in the content of the gospel message and its faithful proclamation in word and deed across the ACA, particularly in the context of local Anglican churches, are at the fore of any proposal to respond to these challenges.

God’s redeeming and gathering work is attested throughout the Scriptures. The New Testament makes clear that the Church, the gathered people of God, is the centrepiece of God’s purposes. All history is heading towards that day when Christ’s redeemed people from every nation, tribe and language will be gathered around the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev. 7). In the interim between the resurrection of Christ and his return, this great gathering is anticipated in the churches where those who have responded to the gospel of Christ in repentance and faith are drawn together by the Spirit of God around the word of God. The gospel is the instrument God uses to form the Church and in turn the Church becomes ‘the pillar and foundation of the truth’ (1 Tim. 3:15).

For this reason a report about the viability of churches and church structures ought to give priority to clarity and confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ and recognise that the structures serve first and foremost to support the churches who proclaim and live in obedience to that gospel. Diocesan and national structures have been developed over time as mechanisms for guarding and resourcing the churches where the gospel is proclaimed in accordance with the teaching of Scripture. They do not exist for their own sake but for the sake of the churches by which they are constituted. This means that the primary question when it comes to the viability of a diocese must be cast in terms of its capacity to encourage and resource clear gospel proclamation and gospel growth both in terms of evangelism and ongoing edification within the context of the local congregation.

It is critically important to realise that viability is not principally about finances and resources but gospel integrity. Sadly, this realisation is largely absent in the Viability Report, although it is worth noting that the discussion groups at the 16th General Synod kept returning to this point. There are very significant differences between dioceses on the most important theological questions and these are far from irrelevant when it comes to the question of how we might survive, let alone thrive, together. Without a much more extensive exploration of our core message, the rest is merely window dressing.

We might consider the letters of Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor, recorded for us in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation as ‘viability reports’ on those churches. Rather than addressing their constitutions and structures, the risen Christ draws attention to their tolerance of false teaching and immoral behaviour. It becomes clear that it is possible for a church to amass the resources to ‘stay open’ long after they have ceased to be a viable church. The church in Laodicea is a case in point. Their wealth blinded them to their spiritual poverty. Other churches that were struggling to survive, who were only too aware of

² A short theological reflection is appended to the Report at p 8.095 but this appears to be an afterthought.

³ See the May 2014 Report of the National Church Unity Task Force to General Synod which substantially enlarges the inadequate report printed at p. 8-085 of the Report.

their poverty in terms of resources, were praised as rich. Would a careful study of what makes a church viable in the sight of Christ be a better starting point than that chosen in the Viability Report?

Of course the issues of financial and organisational viability are important. The concrete needs of the churches need to be considered carefully. However, the fellowship enjoyed between churches who share a clear and confident focus on the gospel of Christ is a foundation for the sharing of resources. So even at the level of financial and organisational viability the bedrock issues are theological. Until serious attention is given to the divergent doctrines of church and the gospel, which exist within our national body, we cannot expect effective collaborative effort to evangelise Australia and build the congregations of God's people.

We in the Diocese of Sydney value our links with Anglicans across Australia. We remain committed to the Anglican Church of Australia with its rich heritage stemming from the mission activity of the Church of England in the late eighteenth century. We long for that unity which arises from a common message and a common determination to live under the authority of the Scriptures as the word of God. We are committed to strengthening the clear and principled proclamation of Christ crucified, risen and reigning, of salvation from sin and judgment and the hope of a new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells. To that end we take very seriously the theological education of those called to the ordained ministry in our churches.

3. Ministerial training and formation

One of the six key findings of the task force is the need for a comprehensive training programme for Ordained Local Ministry⁴ (see 8-048). The Report notes that many rural dioceses 'have adopted various schemes of locally ordained ministry as a strategy to meet declining populations, remote locations and the inability to pay a stipend'. The Report encourages the further growth of this form of ministry and recommends the implementation of training standards for non-stipendiary clergy.

Sydney Diocese does not view the increased use of locally ordained ministers as a solution to the issues of viability and vitality of our church; in some cases this strategy may actually serve to exacerbate the problem. The ordained ministry is central to Anglican polity. Therefore, the viability of churches cannot be ultimately separated from the question of the recruitment, training and deployment of clergy. High priority must be given to ministerial training and formation. In the current circumstances we need men and women who have been well prepared for the challenges, joys and disappointments of contemporary gospel ministry. Without any suggestion that the Diocese of Sydney has all the answers, perhaps it will prove helpful to reflect on why we view this issue to be of such importance, and how this has shaped our approach to the requirements for ordination.

The standard requirement for ordination training and formation in the Diocese of Sydney is a 4 year BD at Moore College, which contains a substantial component of original language biblical study, followed by 3 years of formation in a parish as an assistant minister before ordination as a presbyter. Readiness for ordination is assessed by observation, interviews and reports from referees. During the three years as an assistant, a program of ministry development is undertaken.

There are two theological reasons why the Diocese requires ordination candidates to complete a 4 year fulltime residential degree. First, to be so immersed in the Word of God so that the student will be equipped to sustain a life-long pulpit ministry to 'feed those committed to his charge'. By laying aside other preoccupations (rather than simply fitting study around those preoccupations) both breadth and depth in study are possible. In particular, such a single-minded attention to study allows the acquisition of a facility with the original biblical languages which is essential to this training.

Second, learning in community provides the relational context which reflects the relational nature of the gospel and God's own triune character. The God who is fellowship in himself gathers his people to love, serve and edify one another. Training for Christian ministry is more than simply the exchange of ideas or developing of the capacity to convey information accurately. It involves developing the appropriate convictions and patterns of behaviour (godly character) which commend the biblical gospel and assist the long-term consistency of life, message and ministry practice. This is best achieved through the 'iron sharpening iron' activity of a Christian community of fellow learners. Living out what is being learnt in prayer, conversation, and the practicalities of life and mutual service makes a critical difference in the ministry outcomes of a theological college.

Moore Theological College is the only Anglican theological college which requires full-time residence for degree students. The Diocese of Sydney remains committed to this model of ministerial training and formation because it regards the pastor/teacher as central to viable parishes and viable parishes make viable dioceses. Such pastor/teachers need deep learning but also strong convictions and consistent Christian character. It should be noted that in accordance with its objects, the ministerial training and

⁴ p. 8-048

formation offered by Moore Theological College is available to those preparing for Christian and, in particular, ordained Anglican ministry outside Sydney.⁵

4. Structural Issues

The Sydney resolution (a) expressed a preliminary view that changing the structures, policies and leadership of the ACA will not, of itself, adequately address the underlying challenges faced by the ACA. While the Report gives some space to the views of Bob Jackson on the vision setting role of the diocese the gloss from Bishop Robert Forsyth is more apposite to the Australian situation.⁶ Likewise, pointing to the rearrangement of some English dioceses,⁷ being a beneficial exercise of central power, raises a completely unrealistic notion for constitutional structural change.

A key finding of the Report is that the role of the General Synod office and the General Secretary needs to be 'enhanced', and a proposal for this is contained in Appendix 6⁸. This expansion of the National office is based on the premise that 'Strategy, Reform and Restructure' can and should be driven from the 'top-down'.

The Sydney resolution (d) opposed, as a matter of principle, increasing the powers of General Synod as a means by which the challenges faced by the ACA are sought to be addressed. These views should not be regarded as an expression of Sydney contrarianism. They arise from a belief that a focus on changing the structure, policies and leadership of the ACA are secondary issues that must not be used to avoid asking and responding to the more fundamental questions, outlined in part 2 of this report, about the ACA's lack of viability.

On the other hand, the Sydney resolution (a) does recognise that, although secondary, any work in the areas of structure, policies and leadership may best be pursued on a provincial basis. We agree with the statement in the Report, 'The bishops were largely of the opinion that provincial co-operation was a more achievable goal than trying to work as a National Church.'⁹ In the Province of New South Wales there is an established and well used legal framework for provincial initiative. Chiefly for the benefit of readers outside the province, the next few paragraphs set out this framework.

Although the constitutional/legal arrangements for the ACA vary from State to State, the historical development of the constitutional framework for the ACA places the diocese at the centre. At the beginning, in each Colony, the Church of England was an unincorporated association.

Apart from Tasmania, dioceses are grouped in provinces which largely follow state boundaries. There exists in NSW three Acts which provide the constitutional/legal framework for the seven Anglican Dioceses in the state (Sydney, Newcastle, Canberra & Goulburn, Bathurst, Grafton, Armidale and Riverina) –

1. The chief Act is the *Anglican Church of Australia Constitutions Act 1902*. This Act, in a Schedule, provides a constitution for each diocese. Decisions concerning property are made binding on the members of the church.
2. The *Anglican Church of Australia Trust Property Act 1917 (1917 Act)* gives wide powers of management of church property to a NSW diocesan synod. The synod (and in Sydney, the Standing Committee by delegation) has power under the 1917 Act to authorise the sale,

⁵ Ministerial training and formation has traditionally been an interest of diocesan bishops. Only in the last fifty years and only in a few universities has it been possible to study divinity or theology as a separate discipline. Previously, theological study for ordination had to be undertaken separately from the universities. To meet this need, some bishops established their own college for training ordinands. So in NSW, Broughton established St James's College (1845-49), Barker (Moore 1856), and A.V. Green, St John's in Armidale in 1898, relocated to Newcastle in 1918. The creation of the Australian College of Theology by the General Synod in 1891 as an examining body established the two-year Licentiate in Theology of the College as a minimum standard for ordination. H M Carey (*God's Empire, Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c 1801-1908*, Cambridge 2011, pp247-287) has an illuminating survey on the training and supply of clergy in the nineteenth century.

Since the early 1970s, the level of theological education required for ordination has risen, so that a bachelor's degree is now the accepted standard. A consequence is that smaller colleges have closed or joined ecumenical theological colleges. Larger colleges have been granted degree-awarding status. In some dioceses, arrangements have been made with local universities to supply the academic instruction, with ministerial formation remaining with the diocese.

With the demise of St John's College, Morpeth and St Michael's House, Crafers, South Australia, there is no college in the Anglo-Catholic tradition in Australia. Trinity College, Melbourne (1872) is the leading liberal Catholic college while St Mark's, Canberra, meets needs across the theological spectrum. Moore Theological College, Sydney (1856), Ridley College, Melbourne (1910) and Trinity Theological College, Perth (1997) are evangelical in foundation and purpose.

⁶ pp. 8-010 – 8-013

⁷ p. 8-023

⁸ pp. 8-069 – 8-071

⁹ p. 8-049

mortgaging and leasing of church property. The Act also gives power to the synod to vary the trusts on which church property is held.

3. The *Anglican Church of Australia (Bodies Corporate) Act 1938* allows a NSW Anglican synod to create a body corporate by resolution and a notice in the Government Gazette. In essence, this is a power to create a corporation without the need to satisfy the normal company creation requirements of the company law. Schools and other organisations can have their separate corporate existence. This is an aid to proper governance and also limits liability.

On the adoption of the present national 1961 constitution, the ACA was inaugurated and the legal nexus with the Church of England severed. The General Synod constitutional arrangements give each diocese the right to determine which church rules would apply to that diocese. Any canon of General Synod which touches on ritual ceremonial or discipline, the order and good government of the church within a diocese or the church trust property of a diocese does not become part of the law of a diocese until adopted by ordinance of that diocese. Clearly, at least for NSW if not the rest of Australia, the diocese remains the focal point for legislative initiatives.

Although provincial legislation in NSW does not have paramount effect, the existence of common secular laws governing voluntary associations, the existence of special legislation for the seven ACA dioceses in NSW, and the unifying office of Metropolitan strongly suggest that provincial constitutional arrangements offer a genuine and more manageable structural avenue for corrective initiatives to be explored at least in NSW if not in other provinces. Given this history and the locus of legislative power, any structural changes to address viability issues must start with dioceses and then co-operatively in the province.

There is presently a limited amount of co-operative action among dioceses of the Province of NSW and clearly scope for such action to be enhanced. However, even at the provincial level, there are likely to be limits on the extent of co-operative action unless the very significant theological differences that exist between dioceses can be resolved at a fundamental level.

It is for this reason that Sydney Diocese does not agree with the finding and recommendations of the Report that suggest that the strategy, reform and restructure of the ACA ought to, or can, be managed by an expanded General Synod Office.

5. Analysis Gaps

It is inevitable that a report which seeks to cover so much territory as is comprised in the 23 dioceses of the ACA and to do so with minimal resources would contain gaps. As noted in the introduction, the overarching gap is an absence of an integrated theological explanation for the present state of the ACA.¹⁰ Connected with this is the absence of any real consideration of the historical and theological differences found in the ACA, as evidenced by the state of impaired communion consequent to the ordination of women priests and bishops.

Firstly, within the Report there is the failure of the Task Force to affirm or deny propositions advanced in the Report. An example is the following statement –

However the data for the metropolitan dioceses is frightening. How can a single diocese serve 5 million people plus? How can any diocesan bishop adequately relate to more than say 50 parish units?¹¹

The statement raises a several questions which are not addressed: First, on what data is the statement based? Why are 50 parishes the suggested limit of effective episcopal oversight and what happens if a diocese increases beyond 50 parishes? Second, is the statement based on a particular theological view of the nature of the episcopate? If so, what is that view? Finally, does the Task Force endorse this statement? Silence suggests that the members do. The experience and example of Sydney does not support the statement.

Of greater significance is the statement of Colin Reilly –

In only three dioceses (Armidale, North West Australia and Sydney) are sufficient numbers of clergy being ordained to replace those in current active ministry.¹²

If correct, this situation, with the population of Australia on the increase, is alarming. Does the Task Force accept Reilly's analysis? If the analysis was correct, surely it deserved further examination. The dioceses

¹⁰ The theological reflection in appendix 1 does not serve this purpose.

¹¹ The Hon Robert Fordham p. 8-006.

¹² p. 8-015. The full report by Colin Reilly *Australian Anglican clergy 1995 & 2010* can be found at http://www.academia.edu/8251374/Australian_Anglican_clergy_1995_and_2010

of Armidale, North West Australia and Sydney are very different geographical areas. How are these 3 dioceses able to secure the clergy they need? Why are the other 20 dioceses not able to do this? These obvious issues are ignored.

A second gap is the failure of the Report to look outside the ACA to churches in non-metropolitan cities that, in the last 25 years, have sprung up and grown significantly. The most remarkable growth has been the establishment of independent evangelical churches in the eastern States of Australia. The first was EV church founded by the Rev Andrew Heard at Erina, NSW. EV Church now has approximately 2,000 persons attending each Sunday, over 8 full-time persons on its staff, and annual revenue of over \$3,500,000.¹³ The church owns 9 acres in the heart of Erina with a 1,000 seat auditorium, a 400 seat hall and numbers of class rooms for their 'thriving' children's ministry (380 children) and sees around 100 converts each year. The services are informal¹⁴ and the church is devoted to outreach.¹⁵ At present, there are 30 similar independent evangelical churches, who are members of an association called the 'Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches' ("FIEC"). EV Church is the largest, while among the others, 2 full-time staff members and 400 church members is typical with services generally held in available schools and halls.¹⁶ Significantly, with two exceptions, transfers from other denominations have comprised less than 5% of membership.¹⁷ None of the members of FIEC are 'charismatic'.¹⁸

Why have the FIEC churches survived and mostly thrived whereas some local Anglican Churches have not? The Synod of the Diocese of Sydney has not allocated financial support to FIEC or any FIEC member.¹⁹ Some initial support has been provided by individual Sydney churches, their members and benefactors. The critical questions are: Why have these independent evangelical churches succeeded? How must regional churches, suffering from little support in the places where they are, change to survive?

A third failure of the Report is an inadequate discussion on 'mission' or 'evangelism'. The word 'mission' is mentioned over 200 times in the report. It is never defined or explained. The Report may have assumed that 'mission' includes evangelism but the latter topic deserves separate treatment. In the Report, it receives none.

This leads onto a fourth gap in the Report. At no point is there a detailed analysis of any struggling rural Anglican Church.²⁰ This is extraordinary given that the Report is principally a response to the problem of a declining rural church. What mission and evangelism has been conducted in the past 20 years by the clergy and laity of such churches? Is the decline taking place notwithstanding vigorous mission and evangelism? Is the decline taking place because of ineffective or inadequate mission and evangelism? The reader is left to guess.

Archbishop Carnley once described the differences within Australian Anglicanism as being so profound that in effect the ACA is –

a stratified church, almost like two churches in one. Within the Anglican Church of Australia two quite different mind-sets rub up against each other like two great tectonic plates that occasionally move and grate upon one another²¹

¹³ <http://evchurch.info/> most leaders have had formal theological training and are or were ordained. Most trained at Moore Theological College or at SMBC, Sydney.

¹⁴ Informal services are common in Sydney. Such services generally include the following elements:

- (a) A sermon. This is the major element. The sermon is biblical, commonly an exposition of a passage of scripture and usually part of a series.
- (b) Bible readings, prayers, hymns and songs. These may be projected onto a screen. Prayer and hymn books are not used.
- (c) Music is in a popular idiom. Organs and choirs, even if available, are not used. The singing of hymns and other songs is supported by lead-singers, guitars, drums and other instruments. Words sung or said by those present are projected onto a screen.
- (d) Dress by church leaders and members is informal, e.g. at one extreme T-shirt, shorts and thongs.

¹⁵ Outreach includes every possible means of evangelism and, in particular, scripture in schools, programmes for teenagers and regular Bible studies in homes.

¹⁶ Some churches are now of a size and with financial resources such that property can and has been acquired.

¹⁷ This is not surprising as the members of local protestant churches are said to be old and prefer traditional / Anglican / older styles of worship. The two exceptions were begun by Anglicans who were dissatisfied with decisions made by the bishops of the dioceses in which they were formed.

¹⁸ Information in this paragraph was provided by EV Church and the Rev James (Jim) Ramsay and the Rev Andrew Heard.

¹⁹ Although the Synod has provided no financial support to any FIEC member, some have become affiliated with the Sydney Diocese under the provisions of the *Affiliated Churches Ordinance 2005*.

²⁰ The Task Force membership included, at different times, the bishops of Canberra and Goulburn, Adelaide, Riverina, Ballarat and Bendigo. Each of these dioceses includes substantial areas of rural land and it is reasonable to assume that each of the bishops of these dioceses were aware of the condition of the Anglican Church in those areas. However, none of this information appears explicitly in the Report.

²¹ Peter Carnley, *Reflections in Glass*, (Harper-Collins Publishers, Sydney, 2004), 13. This idea of 'two churches in one' was expressed by Donald Robinson (Vice-Principal, Moore College and later Archbishop of Sydney) in 1955 commenting on the draft

On this view, the ACA is no longer one denomination but has become two denominations under one constitution. Given the differences canvassed in the National Church Unity Task Force Report,²² is joint action possible and is there a realistic willingness to resource each other?

A fifth and glaring failure of the Report is its employment of census figures when discussing attendance and numbers of clergy. The Report provides a table displaying numbers of clergy and estimates of attendance based on Census responses which, for none of the dioceses listed, bears any resemblance to the average attendance figures provided by the dioceses and listed in the same table.²³ Nevertheless, the Report relies on those estimates to provide several pages of discussion and potential conclusions regarding the number of clergy in each diocese. This discussion culminates in a list of 'interesting trends and comparisons' which, when reconsidered with the attendance figures provided by the dioceses (where available) substituted for the estimates, produces less compelling figures and in one case suggests the exact opposite conclusion to that reached by the Report; demonstrating the inadequacy of the Report's statistics and its consequent analysis.²⁴

Ironically two of the statistics derived from the Census, which would have been both natural and helpful to engage with, were largely ignored by the Report –

- 1) The Report indicates that, of those who responded that they were Anglican on the Census, only 6% actually attend church at least once per month. Although that figure is contrasted with the corresponding figure for Baptists (63%),²⁵ the opportunity to engage in consideration of the changing attitudes of society to religion; the emerging clarity of the scope of 'nominal Anglicans' and to what extent (if any) they should be considered when assessing viability; and the question of what advantage in mission the Anglican church has as a result of the large number of nominal Anglicans; are each ignored in the Report.
- 2) Similarly, the Report notes that the percentage of nominal Anglicans in rural areas is higher than in capital cities.²⁶ Although the Report is concerned principally with the viability of rural dioceses, this statistic is never examined, and consideration is not given to changed approaches to ministry that may flow from the higher proportion of nominal Anglicans in rural communities than in capital cities.

6. Supporting ministry in other dioceses

Models of co-operation in the ACA are canvassed in Chapter 4 of the Report. Most of the options canvassed involve formal agreements between dioceses, such as covenants, MOUs and arrangements for Shared Service Centres. While there is merit in considering some of these formal options, there are a number of less formal means of supporting ministry in other dioceses which we suggest should factor in plans to support and revitalise ministry in other dioceses.

Our first suggestion involves providing support by sending trained clergy. The Report does not provide enough information to draw definitive conclusions on this, but a possible inference from the tables of clergy numbers is that the increasing dependence on part-time and retired clergy may be contributing to long term decline. Where retired clergy are 'looking after' a parish because the parish is unable to support a full-time ordained clergyperson, the focus of their ministry is likely to be on maintaining a ministry to 'the faithful' rather than to grow the church through evangelism. Because they are not reaching the next generation,

constitution. '[Anglicans] only remain united by maintaining two denominations in one organisation, and allowing members of both to call themselves, Anglican. But the real problem that we face is that there is no unity between these two diverging views at the local level of worship, which is the only valid test of unity.' *Australian Church Record* 12 May 1955, quoted in Thomas R Frame *Anglicans in Australia*, (UNSW, 2007), 86. The 'tectonic plates' metaphor was introduced into the ACA lexicon by The Rev Canon Dr Bruce Ballantine-Jones OAM during a speech at the 2001 Brisbane General Synod.

²² [http://www.anglican.org.au/general%20synods/2014/Documents/Report%20of%20the%20National%20Church%20Unity%20Task%20Force%20to%20General%20Synod%20dated%2020%20May%202014%20\(supplement%20to%20the%20report%20Unity%20Task%20Force.pdf](http://www.anglican.org.au/general%20synods/2014/Documents/Report%20of%20the%20National%20Church%20Unity%20Task%20Force%20to%20General%20Synod%20dated%2020%20May%202014%20(supplement%20to%20the%20report%20Unity%20Task%20Force.pdf)

²³ p. 8-029. With the exception of Sydney, in every case where diocesan attendance is provided, the Actual attendance falls in the range of 23-73% of the Census estimate. In the case of Sydney, the actual attendance is 125% of the estimate. (i.e., the estimate is never within 25% of accuracy when compared to the known figures.)

²⁴ For example, on p. 8-029 the Report suggests that Brisbane has 2,348 Anglicans per clergy, whereas Sydney has only 933, and asks whether this means that Brisbane has larger parishes, or that its parishes can't afford more clergy, or that its clergy work harder (than Sydney clergy). However, if the attendance figures provided by the dioceses are substituted for the estimates, it becomes evident that Brisbane has 49 attenders for every clergy, whereas Sydney has 90. A quick comparison of figures using the provided attendance figures shows that following Sydney, Armidale has the next highest number of attenders per clergy (70) with all other dioceses falling into the range of 28-60. Of the Capital cities, the next highest is Adelaide (54). These figures in themselves do not imply that any clergy in any diocese work harder than others, however they do demonstrate the inappropriateness of the statistics employed and the suggestions made as a consequence of those statistics.

²⁵ p. 8-027

²⁶ p. 8-027

this kind of 'caretaker' ministry contributes to the aging congregation profile in many churches, as noted in the Report. In a similar way, part-time clergy who balance the demands of ministry with secular employment are unlikely to have the time and energy to grow the church effectively. As already indicated in section 3 above, we believe that full time ordained clergy are integral to the long term growth of the church.

Providing full-time ministry in a 'non-viable' parish will require external financial support. Partnerships with BCA have proved to be a fruitful vehicle for this in the past, and are likely to be key in the future.

In terms of support that the Diocese of Sydney can provide, we believe that sending trained and experienced clergy will be more effective in providing help to struggling dioceses than sending money, which may be used to perpetuate patterns of ministry that have proven themselves to be of limited effectiveness. Provided a diocese was willing to receive them and provide a licence with acceptable conditions, Sydney may well be able to provide many experienced clergy willing to relocate to a new diocese for the sake of Christ's mission there. We acknowledge that not all Sydney clergy would be able to make such a transition and some may be considered unacceptable. That said, there are many examples of former Sydney clergy who now make significant and fruitful contributions to parishes in most other dioceses of the ACA. Some dioceses refuse to license clergy who have trained at Moore Theological College and some bishops insist on undertakings that evangelical clergy are unable to accept. It would be beneficial for future sharing of clergy if these restrictions were removed.

Another possibility to explore is the establishment of Parish Partnerships.

The Report outlines a number of inter-diocesan co-operative mechanisms that exist across the ACA.²⁷ The Report's analysis focuses on structural and administrative initiatives and agreements entered into by various dioceses to streamline co-operation and territorial issues. It also briefly examines the role of national agencies. The question of Shared Service Centres receives considerable attention, and support is given for further exploration of this model as a way of reducing back-office costs.

Not examined in the Report is the issue of developing a decentralised model of parish-to-parish co-operation across dioceses which is based on mission rather than administration. Such partnerships are more informal but offer greater opportunity for larger, well-resourced parishes to assist parochial units elsewhere in Australia, particularly in struggling rural and regional areas. This model has strong roots in the early church in the New Testament, where wealthy communities of believers in Macedonia and Achaia assisted the saints in Jerusalem.

Indeed, the 2008 Sydney Synod passed a resolution for the Sydney Mission Task Force to examine how such partnerships might be generated. Since then a number of direct partnerships between Sydney parishes and those in other dioceses have been developed, including parishes in NW Australia, Armidale, Riverina, and the Northern Territory. These relationships are highly decentralised and often initiated by a personal relationship between individuals in each parish. Importantly, such relationships have not involved the formal diocesan apparatus. It is likely that some parishes in other large dioceses have similar arrangements.

Specific areas of assistance include –

- visiting parish teams assisting with running training programs, conferences or one-off missions for parishes in remote and regional locations,
- direct financial support for staff (eg. one Sydney parish financially supports a children's worker in a remote parish in NSW),
- visiting maintenance teams repairing buildings and infrastructure – sometimes this is also done through BCA,
- prayer and direct pastoral support of the regional/remote parish leadership team, and
- reciprocal visits and encouragement.

We submit that there is great scope for the intentional development and expansion of these kind of grass-roots missional initiatives across the ACA. Not only is the purpose of gospel mission served, but the bonds of fellowship and understanding are strengthened to great mutual benefit in a way that has deep resonance with the example of the early church.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

21 April 2015

²⁷ pp. 8-038 – 8-043