

62/19 Gender Representation on Diocesan Boards and Committees

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Recommendations

1. Synod receive this report.

Background

62/19 Gender representation on Diocesan boards and committees

2. In 2019, the Synod passed Resolution 62/19 in the following terms –

‘Synod, noting the report 27/17 Gender representation on Diocesan boards and committees (Revised 2019) –

- (a) requests the Standing Committee to ask the members of the 2019 Committee to oversee the implementation of the following initiatives –
 - (i) a survey of Synod members to determine logistical arrangements (such as times and locations) that should be considered by boards and committees,
 - (ii) analyse the responses to the survey, and convey relevant information to the boards and committees of the Diocese including –
 - (A) an outline of the value of increasing women’s participation, and presenting the case for reconsideration of the skills matrix, if appropriate, to include broader competencies and life experiences in addition to traditional professional competencies,
 - (B) a suggestion that they give fresh consideration to their meeting logistics (such as times and locations) to ensure that any possible obstacles to serving are removed,
 - (C) encouragement to foster a culture of mentoring by appointing existing members as mentors for new members (or those considering membership),
 - (D) encouragement to develop a one-page overview of the work of their board or committee, to be made available to potential new members,
 - (E) a request that when vacancies need to be filled, to include information on gender composition along with any recommendations regarding skills desired in a person to fill a vacancy,
 - (iii) seek publication of articles in print and online media to stimulate interest in serving on boards and committees, and
- (b) encourages its members who are experienced as board or committee members to consider a ministry of mentoring women newly appointed to, or considering a position on, boards and committees in the Diocese,
- (c) requests SDS to –
 - (i) produce a short guide to participating on boards and committees in the Diocese,
 - (ii) provide annual statistics of gender composition on boards and committees to the Standing Committee,
- (d) encourages the Standing Committee in its existing practice of considering gender composition when filling casual vacancies.’

3. At its meeting on 18 November 2019, the Standing Committee noted Synod resolution 62/19 (above), and asked in accordance with paragraph (a) of the resolution, asked the Gender Representation Committee (the **Committee**) to –

- (a) survey Synod members to determine logistical arrangements (such as times and locations) that should be considered by boards and committees in an effort allow women greater opportunity to participate, and
- (b) analyse responses to the survey, conveying relevant information to boards and committees of the Diocese, and
- (c) seek publication of articles in print and online media to stimulate interest in serving on boards and committees.

Discussion

Results of surveys

- 4. In addition to the Synod survey, the Committee, in response to the Synod resolution, also gathered information from the Chairs of all diocesan boards, councils and committees indicating their meeting patterns going forward.
- 5. A total of 73 responses (from a possible 83) were gathered from boards, councils and committees in response to our request for information.
- 6. In May 2022 the results of the survey of Synod members were analysed along with the information gathered from committee chairs regarding their meeting patterns going forward. From this analysis we learn that one of the significant reasons women indicated a reluctance to serve on a diocesan board, council or committee was due to the time & location of the meetings. It is significant to note that of the 73 boards, councils and committees who completed our survey, 32 (44%) indicated they met in the early evening (5-7pm).
- 7. An overview of the results, alongside the matters under 2 (ii) (a) of the 2019 Synod motion, have now been sent to the chairs of diocesan boards and committees as requested by the Synod. This overview includes suggestions of how the chairs might consider issues like those above which need to be addressed to increase participation of women on their committee. A copy of the letter is attached as **Appendix 1** for information.

ARCHDEACON KARA HARTLEY
Chair, Gender Representation Committee

15 July 2022



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Via email attachment

15 July 2022

[Name, Position
Organisation]

Email: [email address]

Dear [first name]

Findings from Gender Representation surveys

Thank you for your contribution to the recent survey conducted by the Gender Representation Committee about the anticipated logistical arrangements for boards, councils and committees in 2022.

You may also be aware a survey of the whole Synod was undertaken in 2021 to ask what kind of logistical arrangements would allow women greater opportunity to participate in diocesan governance.

The Synod requested the findings from both these surveys be sent to you for your consideration in enabling greater participation of women on your board, council or committee. As such, please find attached a short overview of those findings with some brief recommendations.

The Synod also requested that I convey to you –

- (a) the value of increasing women's participation, and the potential need to reconsider your skills matrix, if appropriate, to include broader competencies and life experiences in addition to traditional professional competencies,
- (b) a suggestion that you give fresh consideration to your meeting logistics (such as times and locations) to ensure that any possible obstacles to serving are removed,
- (c) encouragement to foster a culture of mentoring by appointing existing members as mentors for new members (or those considering membership),
- (d) encouragement to develop a one-page overview of the work of your board, council or committee, to be made available to potential new members,
- (e) a request that when vacancies need to be filled, to include information on gender composition along with any recommendations regarding skills desired in a person to fill a vacancy.

I would be grateful if you could please bring this to the attention of «Committeethe». Should you wish to access the full report, please contact me at khartley@sydney.anglican.asn.au.

Yours sincerely

Kara Hartley

ARCHDEACON KARA HARTLEY
Chair, Gender Representation Committee

[cc. Name, Position]

1. Overview of Synod Survey

The data from this survey has been analysed and considered alongside data produced by the 2021 survey of Synod representatives, which enquired more broadly into the reasons people may or may not choose to serve on Diocesan boards, councils, and committees.

As a diocese we want to continue to encourage a greater number of Sydney Anglicans to become involved in board/council/committee work. Benefits of a concerted effort in this direction may include:

- the inclusion/participation of some church members that might otherwise feel on the 'outside' in the Diocese,
- a wider range of qualified and committed Christian voices on Diocesan boards, councils, and committees,
- increasingly targeted and productive application of God's gifts for the building up of His Kingdom.

Just under half of Synod members submitted a completed survey (324 responses out of around 819). The distribution between male/female (77%/23%) and clergy/lay (36%/64%) of respondents is roughly equivalent to the overall proportions in Synod.

The survey of Synod members made enquiries about possible obstacles that may exist for a Synod member to be involved in Diocesan governance. The findings are outlined below.

2. Overall Findings

While meeting location and time appear to be factors in the ability to be / interest in being involved in boards, councils and committees, and particularly so for women, regional (out of Sydney), and older members of Synod, they weren't the only factors. The survey highlighted the following factors of at least equal significance:

- ***Prior and other commitments/priorities***
- ***Awareness of opportunities, and understanding the roles of boards, councils, and committees***

Awareness and education about board/council/committee participation, the expectations, and opportunities, are areas in which further work could be undertaken, especially if attracting women to Diocesan board, council, and committee work is a goal. Compared to male Synod members, female Synod members are less likely to have served on a Diocesan board, council, or committee, (69% of females compared to 51% of males have not served) and, at the moment, are slightly less interested in doing so (36% of females and 42% of males, of those that are not serving, are interested in doing so).

When given the opportunity to elaborate on possible reasons for lack of involvement by lay people many helpful and constructive ideas were raised by female Synod members. These include:

- ***Busyness/Other priorities and responsibilities.***
Many respondents pointed out that women were often busy with family and other ministry responsibilities. Even if they wanted to serve on a board/committee the time required, and the frequency of meeting (travel, prep, actual meeting) would be a factor in their willingness to be involved.
- ***Meeting Arrangements.***
The ability to attend meetings was also mentioned in relation to older women (meeting start time) and those from outside the Sydney metropolitan area (meeting location). Attending 'in person' was more problematic than virtual.
- ***Attitude to women, recruitment, awareness, perceptions about boards/committees/councils, and governance.***
Some female respondents felt they would not be wanted or valued in what they see as a male dominated/oriented environment. Linked to this, comments indicated that these sort of bodies

could be perceived as a 'boys' club'; there was a lack of awareness amongst women about how to get involved and the expectations of members; and some indication that the basis of recruitment was 'who you knew', rather than the experiences and skills one might bring to a board, council, or committee.

When asked the same questions, themes from male respondents were similar to those found amongst female respondents:

- Other commitments/priorities, and inability/barriers to attending meetings,
- A feeling that particular experience or knowledge is needed, and
- Lack of awareness about how such bodies work and how one might serve on one.
- Additionally a number of male respondents indicated they believed that some women feel undervalued in and/or intimidated by the Sydney Diocese's formal structures.

The male respondents also noted:

- There is a place for considering how to increase the involvement of other groups that are currently underrepresented on boards, councils, and committees such as younger people, those who do not work in professions, and those living outside Sydney.
- The perception that it's 'who you know', rather than what one can offer, that determines one's involvement, which leads back to the awareness/perception issue identified by female respondents.
- The perception that given the high demands on people's time there is more value in continuing to serve in local church ministries which appear to more directly helpful to Gospel work.

3. Survey of Diocesan boards, councils, and committees about their current and future meeting arrangements

The survey of Diocesan boards, councils, and committees about their meeting arrangements found that:

- Monthly is the prevalent frequency for meetings.
- Mid-week is the most popular meeting time (Tuesday/Wednesday).
- Early evening is the most common meeting start time, with significant numbers of others (approximately 30%) split evenly between afternoon and later evening starts.
- The majority have been using a mix of meeting modes (in person, videoconferencing, hybrid, and changing according to circumstances)

An understandable degree of uncertainty about the mode of meeting to be used in the future was detected. However, responses indicate that whilst technology is valued, and is used/continues to be used, in-person meeting is still favoured when/where possible.

4. Summary

Overall the Synod survey, and survey of boards, councils and committees highlight some important issues concerning female participation in diocesan governance.

Some issues, such as greater education on the purpose, value, and role of these committees will require the Synod and Standing Committee to address.

Yet there are others which your board or committee could consider. For example, the continued use of **videoconferencing** to allow women with young families, older people, and others who may have difficulty attending evening meetings, and those that live outside of Sydney, to serve. On average, women synod representatives scored meeting location and meeting time slightly higher in importance to participation than the wider Synod average score.

In addition, given the perception that women's participation is under-valued it could be helpful for your board or committee to review its own practice to assess if any cultural barriers exist making it difficult for women to participate or join in your work.