

Authorisation of Lay Ministry Ordinance 2015

Explanatory Report

Key points

- A proposed ordinance to authorise certain lay ministry in the Diocese to replace the *Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981*.
- Lay ministers (being staff members appointed to assist the rector) and certain lay ministries must be authorised by the Archbishop.
- Other lay ministries in a parish to be authorised by the rector.

Purpose of the bill

1. The purpose of the bill for the *Authorisation of Lay Ministry Ordinance 2015* (the “bill”) is to provide for the authorisation of certain lay ministry in the Diocese in place of the *Deaconesses, Readers and Other Lay Persons Ordinance 1981* (the “1981 ordinance”).

Recommendation

2. The Synod pass the bill as an ordinance of the Synod.

Background

3. In the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, following ancient practice, one senior minister, the bishop of the Diocese, is given the particular task of oversight of all the churches and ministries of the Diocese. This he shares with other ministers, expressed in particular by his power of licensing ministry in the churches of the Diocese.

4. Since the 1981 ordinance came into force there have been revolutionary changes in the way in which the ministry of the churches of the Diocese is conducted. In particular, as well as a significant shift away from authorised services, there has been the remarkable growth of lay ministry. The clergy/lay distinction is not as significant as it once was. There are now lay ministers in many church staff teams functioning effectively in the way in which ordained ministers, especially deacons, may have functioned in the past. And secondly, there has been a massive growth of informal and occasional lay ministry in the conduct of church services and in the various ministries of churches.

5. The 1981 ordinance does not adequately reflect this and is too complicated. A completely new ordinance is required.

Provisions of the bill

Authorisation of lay ministers by the Archbishop

6. The bill provides that the exercise of the office of lay minister or deaconess must be authorised by the Archbishop (clause 3(1)). A lay minister is a lay person appointed as a staff member to assist the rector undertake ministry in a church or parish, whether part-time or full-time or as an employee or volunteer (clause 2).

7. The requirement that the office of lay minister be authorised by the Archbishop is a natural extension of the principle that clergy must be licensed by the Archbishop to exercise the office of rector or assistant minister in a parish. In many churches, the distinction between ordained and non-ordained members of the staff team will rarely be significant. These publicly endorsed ministers of the church should have the proper authorisation and supervision which comes with an archbishop’s authority. This applies even if a person is a non-stipendiary member of a staff team. The question here is the person’s standing and responsibilities, not simply their form of remuneration.

8. The same principle applies to exercising the office of deaconess.

Lay ministry which may and must be authorised by the Archbishop

9. The bill provides that the Archbishop may authorise a number of lay ministries (clause 4(2)). These are –

- conduct services of public worship,
- administer baptisms,
- conduct funerals,

- deliver sermons,
 - give expositions on the aims, functions and needs of an organisation,
 - perform pastoral duties.
10. Of these, an authority is only required where a lay person (including a lay minister or deaconess) wishes to deliver sermons on a regular basis, administer baptisms or conduct funerals (clause 3(2)).
11. In relation to the other lay ministries, it may be appropriate to issue an authority not because one is required but because local circumstances make an authority helpful for the person's ministry. So, for example, although the formal category of Reader is diminishing, there is a role for something of the same function: that is, lay people who have particular authorisation for the conduct of public worship. Another example is an authority for those who have been designated as doing deputations, which is helpful to the person in gaining an entrance into churches for promoting their ministry.

Other lay ministry to be authorised by the rector

12. The bill contemplates that all other lay ministry should be conducted on the authority of the rector of the parish. This would include everything from Sunday school teachers to those delivering sermons on an occasional basis, those involved in pastoral work, musicians, those in missions and so forth.

Issuing of authorities

13. The bill preserves some of the provisions used in the 1981 ordinance for the issuing of authorities (clauses 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9(1)(a)).
14. In addition –
- Nothing in the bill affects the requirements in relation to the licensing of deaconesses by the Archbishop under the *General Synod – Order of Deaconesses Canon 1969 Adopting Ordinance 1970* (clause 9(1)(b)). Such requirements are supplementary to any requirements under the bill that apply to deaconesses.
 - The bill does not apply to lay persons who are licensed under the proposed *Anglican School Ministry Ordinance 2015* (clause 9(2)). This avoids duplication of regulation of lay persons who are appointed as school chaplains, particularly in relation to their ministry in the school chapel which would be a “church” under the bill.

Transition and repeal

15. Although the bill repeals the 1981 ordinance (clause 10(2)), the existing authorities under the 1981 ordinance are preserved and are deemed to have been issued pursuant to the proposed ordinance (clause 10(1)).
16. The bill also recognises that there may currently be lay ministers who, upon the bill coming into effect, will not hold the requisite authority to exercise that office under clause 3(1) or to perform the ministries of that office under clause 3(2). In order to avoid potential contractual difficulties in requiring the requisite authorities to be obtained, the bill provides that lay ministers who are employees can continue to exercise the office of lay minister and undertake any of the ministries of that office until the end of their appointment. Other (non-employed) lay ministers can continue without the requisite authorities until 31 December 2016.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

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21 July 2015