

## General Synod Session 2001

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

### Introduction

1. The 12th General Synod was held in Brisbane from 21-27 July 2001. The 13th General Synod will be held in 2004.
2. The 12th General Synod consisted of 236 members of whom 49 were from the Diocese of Sydney. 78 resolutions were passed and 15 canons and 2 rules were made. A number of elections also took place for General Synod boards and committees.

### Resolutions

3. Many of the 78 resolutions related to formal matters concerning the business of General Synod. Others were of more significance. The following paragraphs summarise those resolutions of particular interest. As will be seen, General Synod proposes continuing in 2004 debate on matters such as human sexuality, child protection, constitution review, women bishops and dialogue with the Lutheran and Uniting Churches.

#### *02/01 Health*

4. The General Synod recognised and acknowledged the deplorable state of Indigenous health in Australia and noted that many of the horrific statistics concerning health issues have dire consequences for the Indigenous community. The General Synod also acknowledged that Indigenous people have been removed from their lands, disconnected from their culture, had their language destroyed and their families and family relationships fragmented by continuing government policies. This alienation from their lands has resulted in family breakdown, drug, alcohol and other substance abuse and mental illness. General Synod called on the Federal Government to continue, increase and enhance Indigenous health programs that recognise the spiritual and cultural aspects of both the causation and remedy to Indigenous ill-health.

#### *03/01 Human Sexuality*

5. The General Synod noted the report of the Doctrine Panel in relation to General Synod resolution 20/98. It resolved that the report be received and that the essays *Faithfulness in Fellowship: Reflections on Homosexuality and the Church* be commended to the Church for study and reflection. It also resolved that its Standing Committee take appropriate steps to encourage this study and reflection seeking to engage in conversation the diversity of views on this subject, consider what other steps might appropriately be taken and advise the next meeting of the General Synod.

#### *04/01 Mandatory Sentencing*

6. The General Synod joined with NATSIAC in condemning the practice of mandatory sentencing, notwithstanding the provision of diversionary programs. It called on the Northern Territory and Western Australian Governments to repeal these laws. It also called on the next Federal Government to override the Northern Territory laws and to use such power as is available to it to have the Western Australian laws declared invalid.

#### *07/01 Reconciliation*

7. The General Synod considered there is much unfinished business following the closure of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Accordingly it urged the Commonwealth Government to provide funding for the new body, Reconciliation Australia and assured its co-chairs of its support of its programs to education all Australians about the need for reconciliation. The General Synod also encouraged the national church and its dioceses and parishes to keep the issue of reconciliation on the agenda of the Church.

#### *08/01 Refugees*

8. The General Synod called upon the people of the dioceses of the Church to give continuing care to refugees and asylum-seekers through prayer and other spiritual, physical and emotional support. It also requested the dioceses concerned to act to provide chaplaincy and pastoral care, where possible, to residents of detention centres in NW Australia, Woomera, Villawood, Maribyrnong and any other centre created. The General Synod requested the Federal Government and in particular the Minister for Immigration and Multi-Cultural Affairs to address the disparity between current treatment of persons overstaying their visas and persons held in detention with temporary protection visa status and to provide separate and appropriate living quarters for women and children detainee if so requested by any of them. The General Synod asked its Standing Committee to establish a working group to advise on how these issues might be best addressed at every level of the Church and requested the dioceses of the Church to observe Sunday 26 August 2001 as Refugee Sunday this year and that the last Sunday in August be observed as Refugee Sunday in each year from 2002.

### *09/01 Stolen Generations*

9. General Synod reaffirmed Resolution 27/98 which included an apology from the Anglican Church of Australia to the Stolen Generations and a commitment to implement the "Bringing Them Home Report" recommendations. It also shared the profound disappointment expressed by NATSIAC at the continuing denial of the Stolen Generations by the Federal Government and its failure to apologise or to implement fully the recommendations of the "Bringing Them Home Report". It committed the Anglican Church of Australia to support the establishment by the Council of Australian Governments of a national fund as recommended by the Bringing Them Home Report as part of the healing process and urged all Australians to contribute to it.

### *15/01 Standing Committee Consultation*

10. The General Synod recognised a substantial decline in attendances over the last 10 years in the Church nationally and requested its Standing Committee, when dealing with strategic issues, to arrange a consultation with all incumbents of Anglican parishes which have at least doubled in average weekly attendance in the 5 years between 1991 and 1996 or 1996 and 2001, as measured by the National Church Life Survey. Advice may then be offered to the Standing Committee on strategic issues.

### *20/01 Child Protection*

11. The General Synod requested that the Primate establish a committee to consider the issue of child protection in the Church. This is to include the licensing of clergy and the appointment of lay persons who have been convicted of serious sexual offences, the adequacy of current disciplinary measures and protocols, the screening of all persons who work with children and the training of ordinands and lay leaders and post-ordination training for clergy on the issue of child abuse. It also requested that the committee report with appropriate recommendations and any draft legislation to the next session of General Synod.

### *23/01 Children's and Young People's Ministry Task Force*

12. Pursuant to the Strategic Issues, Task Forces and Other Bodies Canon 1998 as amended, the General Synod established a task force to be known as the Children's and Young People's Ministry Task Force. The functions of this Task Force are to include examining, reflecting and describing best practice ministry to children and young people in rural, provincial, urban and suburban contexts. Before the next General Synod the Task Force is also to recommend either its continuance, abolition or the establishment of an expert panel on children's and young people's ministry.

### *25/01 Constitution Review*

13. The General Synod requested that all diocesan synods consider the draft constitution 2001 and fair description of alternative constitutional arrangements drafted by the Standing Committee. It also requested that diocesan synods report their views to the Standing Committee and that the Constitution Review Commission be reappointed as a Task Force until the next ordinary session of General Synod.

### *35/01 Reaffirmation of Beliefs*

14. The General Synod noted that the faith of the church in Christ crucified and risen is declared by all lay and ordained Anglicans in the regular recitation of the Creeds in the course of our Common Prayer. It also noted that the adherence of Anglican clergy to the doctrine and principles of Holy Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty Nine Articles is affirmed at ordination and at other times of licensing. The General Synod urged all members of the Anglican Church of Australia to uphold and defend the Christian faith at all times.

### *38/01 Women Bishops Debate*

15. The General Synod noted that although the bill for a Church Law (Further Clarification) Canon 2001 with its accompanying schedule has been approved in principle by 135 votes to 95 votes with 2 abstentions, significant concerns have been raised in the debate. Accordingly it requested the Standing Committee to prepare a report on some of the issues raised in the debate and some of the possible outcomes for consideration by dioceses, provincial synods, provincial councils and the Bishops' Conference, seeking their responses by February 2003. It also requested that the Standing Committee prepare amended legislation and accompanying material in consultation with these bodies for the next session of the General Synod.

### *40/01 Anglican/Lutheran Churches Dialogue*

16. The General Synod welcomed and gave general support to the Anglican/Lutheran Dialogue Group document "Covenanting for Mutual Recognition and Reconciliation between the Anglican Church of Australia and the Lutheran Church in Australia". It stated its belief that this document forms an appropriate basis for proceeding towards a national Covenant for Eucharistic hospitality to be implemented at a regional level subject to further review by the Doctrine Panel. The General Synod welcomed the work of the Anglican/Lutheran Dialogue Group, authorised the continuation of that work, commended the report to be studied at all levels of the Church and requested that the Dialogue Group take note of comments and reactions from the Anglican and Lutheran churches to report to our next respective General Synods.

*41/01 Anglican/Uniting Churches Dialogue*

17. The General Synod received the report "For the Sake of the Gospel" and welcomed the presentation on essentials on faith and ministry as contained in the report. The report was referred to the Doctrine Panel and the Inter-Anglican Standing Committee on Ecumenical Relations. The General Synod also resolved to explore a formal Covenant of Association with the Uniting Church in Australia and requested that the Standing Committee bring a report to the next General Synod on these matters.

*50/01 Bishop Brian King*

18. The General Synod noted that Bishop Brian King has concluded his term as Bishop to the Defence Force, gave thanks to his dedicated ministry over a period of seven years and expressed its appreciation of this ministry particularly in view of his other commitments including chaplaincy during the Olympic Games.

*75/01 National Anglican Resource Unit*

19. The General Synod approved provision of up to \$10,000 per annum until the next session of the General Synod from the Statutory Fund to support the work of the National Anglican Resource Unit (NARU).

*77/01 Report of the Honorary Treasurer*

20. The General Synod authorised the write-off of the following Special Fund assessments -

Year	Ballarat	Nth Queensland	Sydney
1996	5,526		73,776
1997	5,526		73,776
1998	5,470		73,183
1999	3,478		82,020
2000	1,748	10,486	83,884
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>21,688</b>	<b>10,486</b>	<b>386,639</b>

**Canons**

21. In 2001 the General Synod passed the following canons -

*Alteration of the Constitution of the Province of Queensland Ratification Canon 2001*

*Anglican Board of Missions - Australia Canon 2001*

*Canons Amendment (Bishop to the Defence Force) Canon 2001*

*Chancellors Canon 2001*

*Constitution Alteration (Special Tribunal) Canon 2001*

*Constitution Alteration (Suspension from Duties) Canon 2001*

*Constitution Alteration (Tribunals) Amendment Canon 2001*

*General Board of Religious Education (Repeal) Canon 2001*

*Holy Communion Canon 2001*

*Liturgy Publishing Canon 2001*

*Long Service Leave (Amendment) Canon 2001*

*NSW Provincial Synod Constitution Amendment Ratification Canon 2001*

*Primate Canon (Amendment) Canon 2001*

*Special Tribunal Procedure Amendment and Repeal Canon 2001*

*Strategic Issues, Task Forces and Other Bodies Canon Amendment Canon 2001*

22. Some of the canons referred to in 21 have already taken effect, others will not take effect unless the requisite majority of diocesan synods assent by ordinance, and still others will not take effect in Sydney until they are adopted by our Synod. The canons will be referred to our General Synod Canons Committee for comment and, in due course, a further report prepared for the Synod.

**Elections**

23. The following persons from Sydney were elected to the following General Synod boards and committees.

*Standing Committee*  
Bishop Robert Forsyth  
Deaconess Margaret Rodgers  
Mr Robert Tong  
Mr Justice Peter Young

*The Board of Assessors (Special Tribunal)*  
Archbishop Peter Jensen  
Mr Garth Blake

*The Board of Electors for the Primate*  
Dean Boak Jobbins  
Deaconess Margaret Rodgers  
Mr Justice Peter Young  
Bishop Robert Forsyth \*  
Mr Robert Tong \*

*Long Service Leave Board*  
The Rev Zac Veron  
Mr Mark Payne

*Council of the Australia College of Theology*  
Archbishop Peter Jensen  
Bishop Robert Forsyth  
The Rev Dr Glenn Davies  
Dr Ann Young  
\* Supplementary

*The Board of Assessors (Appellate Tribunal)*  
The Rev Dr Glenn Davies  
The Rev Dr Robert Doyle  
The Rev Dr Mark Thompson

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

ROBERT WICKS

*Legal Officer*

28 August 2001