

General Synod Session 2007

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Introduction

1. The 14th General Synod was held in Canberra from 20-26 October 2007. The 15th General Synod will be held in 2010.
2. The 14th General Synod consisted of 248 members of whom 57 were from the Diocese of Sydney. 132 resolutions were passed and 19 canons, 1 provisional canon and 4 rules were made. A number of elections also took place for General Synod boards and committees.

Resolutions

3. Many of the 132 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.

28/07 Financial reporting

4. The General Synod –
 - recognised the importance of responsible, professional and transparent financial reporting at all levels within the Anglican Church, especially at the national and diocesan level, as being essential to our stewardship and risk management process, and
 - congratulated the Diocesan Financial Advisory Group (DFAG) for encouraging dioceses to fully adopt the Australian International Financial Reporting Standards (AIFRS), being the accepted accounting framework of Australia, and
 - requested the Standing Committee of the General Synod to continue to support the ministry of DFAG by regularly reviewing progress by dioceses in implementing best practice financial reporting through the adoption of AIFRS in diocesan accounts, as well as those of related entities such as their development or deposit funds.

38/07 The Rev Bernard Suwa

5. The General Synod gave thanks to Almighty God for the ministry of the Rev Bernard Suwa in the parish of Blacktown in the Diocese of Sydney to the Sudanese community, particularly noting his advocacy for Sudanese migrants. The General Synod, noting that Mr Suwa had been appointed as the Executive Director of ACROSS Sudan, assured Bernard and his wife Esther, of its prayers for God's blessing as they work for the renewal of southern Sudan.

41/07 Gambling

6. The General Synod, in light of the problems caused by the expansion of the gambling industry in this country and, noting the dependence of most State Governments on gambling generated revenue, asked the next Federal Government to work with State Governments to reduce this dependency.

46/07 Millennium Development Goals 2

7. The General Synod noted the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.15 encouraging each diocese to fund international development programs to a level of at least 0.7% of annual diocesan income. It welcomed the commitment of a significant number of dioceses in the Anglican Church of Australia to that target response.

8. The General Synod also affirmed its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and encouraged dioceses to reflect that commitment by providing funds to recognised international development programs particularly through Australian Anglican mission and relief and development agencies such as the Anglican Board of Mission Australia.

47/07 Millennium Development Goals 3

9. The General Synod encouraged clergy and lay persons to consider how they might respond to and affirm the MDG's through their Christian stewardship by their financial support for the international development agencies. The General Synod also encouraged clergy and lay persons to advocate policies affirmed by this resolution through their involvement in the *Make Poverty History* and *Micah Challenge* campaigns.

51/07 Sudanese Immigrants

10. The General Synod, while pleased that Australia offers a safe haven for those fleeing violence in many parts of the world, was disturbed that recent comments by the Federal Immigration Minister about African immigration in general, and Sudanese in particular, had led to a perceived increase in hostility to Sudanese people living in Australia. The General Synod therefore –

- (a) urged all Australian Governments to set an example in heeding the command of God, originally given to the nation of Israel: “the alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Lev 19:34), and
- (b) requested that Governments provide generous assistance and support to those who come from other cultures to help them settle into the Australian community, and
- (c) asked public figures to refrain from indiscriminate comments which reflect badly upon specific groups in

the community, and which may be used by others as an excuse for violence, and

- (d) asked the Secretary to convey this resolution to members of the Federal, State and Territory governments.

52/07 Faithfulness in Service and codes of personal behaviour

11. The General Synod noted resolution 33/04 of the 13th General Synod which received the 2004 Report of the Child Protection Committee and adopted *Faithfulness in Service* in that report as the national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and lay church workers. In line with resolution 35/04, the General Synod again recommended that each diocese adopt a code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by its clergy and church workers that includes *Faithfulness in Service* and any revisions, particularly its standard expressed for clergy and church workers in the section on sexual conduct that “you are to be chaste and not engage in sex outside of marriage”.

63/07 Fresh Expressions Australia

12. The General Synod resolved that –

- (a) evangelistic mission must be the strategic focus for the General Synod Standing Committee for the triennium 2008 – 2010, and
- (b) the Task Force on Mission become known as “Fresh Expressions Australia” and continue as a Task Force of General Synod, and
- (c) Fresh Expressions Australia prepare a proposal for a full time National Mission Facilitator or equivalent, together with options as to how the role will be funded for presentation to Standing Committee, and
- (d) Fresh Expressions Australia be requested to examine and develop appropriate criteria for the selection, training and deployment of ordained and lay pioneer ministers in an Australian context, and
- (e) Fresh Expressions Australia be requested to consult, engage and network with Ministry Development Officers or their equivalents, throughout the Anglican Church of Australia.

64/07 Welcoming the people

13. The General Synod encouraged every diocese through the next three years to encourage parishes, schools and agencies to reaffirm their commitment to welcoming and including people in the life of the Church by investigating the factors which may prevent people from participating fully (especially people with lived experience of disability) and initiating improvements which enhance accessibility and participation.

65/07 Professional Standards Commission - 1

14. The General Synod recommended that each diocese –
- ensures that its website contains details of its professional standards policies and procedures and includes a link to the professional standards information on the General Synod website, and
 - introduces a diocesan policy for the selection and accreditation of lay parish church workers who have the opportunity to be alone with a child in their ministry, including appropriate training and storage of records, that takes into account the principles in the document entitled “Model System for the Selection and Accreditation of Lay Parish Church Workers” of the Professional Standards Commission, and
 - develops procedures for the disclosure of whether there is any, and if so what, information on the National Register for the appointment of persons to professional standards role, the election of a bishop, and the election of persons by a Church authority, and
 - includes on the diocesan website a list of all licensed clergy of the diocese, and
 - circulates the Preliminary Report from the Doctrine Commission concerning Theological Issues Surrounding Sexual and Other Forms of Abuse to all clergy and church workers who minister to those affected by abuse and abusers.

77/07 Environment Working Group

15. The General Synod acknowledged God’s sovereignty over His creation through the Lord Jesus Christ and the Anglican Communion’s 5th mark of mission “to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth”. It also recognised that human activity contributing to climate change is one of the most pressing ethical issues of our time. Accordingly the General Synod –

- (a) requested the General Synod Doctrine Commission to develop a Christian Theology for a sustainable future including a Global Ethic, and
- (b) requested the General Synod Standing Committee Environment Working Group to generate a Christian response to the political/economic and social impacts of climate change on our Pacific neighbours, our primary producers, the world’s poor and the environment, and
- (c) encouraged our Federal and State Governments to produce environmentally sustainable policies on –
 - (i) energy production within Australia, particularly looking at renewable energy sources, and

- (ii) the export of raw materials for energy production overseas, and
- (iii) global warming, and
- (iv) international security, and
- (v) the responsible processing of end products especially CO2 emissions and depleted uranium, and
- (d) called on the Federal Government to accept Pacific Island peoples seeking refuge as a result of climate change on their homes and livelihood, and
- (e) called on all Anglican dioceses to develop and implement an environmental policy which expresses principles of good environmental stewardship and care to all Anglicans, Anglican parishes and agencies, including modeling of sustainable water and energy use, and
- (f) requested the Australian Anglican Environmental Network to act as a clearing house for policy material developed by dioceses for collation and dissemination nationally through the General Synod website or other means.

80/07 Drought Task Force

16. The General Synod –

- (a) acknowledged the harsh and transforming nature of drought across this land, and
- (b) expressed its prayerful solidarity with all who live in drought affected regions, and
- (c) recognised that as a consequence of the drought the shape and nature of many of these communities will be forever changed and the mission, ministry and pastoral care provided by and within these communities are being seriously impacted.

General Synod therefore asked that the Standing Committee set up and resource a Task Force to –

- explore ways of dealing with the effects of drought as raised above to ensure on-going ministry by church communities in those rural areas, and
- identify other issues of significance relating to the impact of the drought, and
- ask the Provincial Bishops to look at the possibility of establishing similar Task Forces in each of the provinces which will specifically tackle the issues arising out of the impact of the drought on regional churches and faith communities.

85/07 Equal representation of women

17. The General Synod, responding to ACC Resolution 13.31 which requested member churches to work towards making the goal of equal representation of women in decision-making at all levels –

- (a) recognised and celebrated the giftedness of women and the multitude of ministries in which they participate,
- (b) requested the Standing Committee of General Synod to apply the principle of equal representation of women in its appointments to Commissions, Task Forces and Working Groups wherever legislatively and practically possible and to report progress to ACC 14 in 2009, and
- (c) encouraged each diocese to adopt this principle in elections and appointments and report progress to General Synod Standing Committee by the end of 2008.

93/07 Anniversary of slave trade abolition

18. The General Synod recognised the 200th anniversary of the British Parliament passing an act to outlaw the slave trade in its colonies on 25 March 2007. The General Synod gave thanks for the key role played by Christians in bringing about the end of slavery, while also acknowledging that the church sometimes colluded with this injustice and drew financial profit from it. The General Synod resolved that as Christians we commit ourselves to overcoming injustice and inequality in our society both arising from the past practices of slavery and from present practices that involve the trafficking of human beings.

99/07 Women bishops

19. The General Synod –

- (a) noted the decision of the Appellate Tribunal and welcomed the clarity it brings to the question of the eligibility of women for admission to the order of bishops in the Anglican Church of Australia, and
- (b) requested the Standing Committee to monitor developments in relation to women bishops, including provisions made for those who decline to receive the ministry of a woman bishop, and report to the next session of the General Synod.

107/07 Association for the Apostolic Ministry

20. The General Synod noted the creation of An Association for the Apostolic Ministry under the initial chairmanship of Bishop Michael Hough and Archbishop Peter Jensen to promote the apostolic gospel and to assist the Church in working through the on-going consequences of the consecration of women to the Episcopate.

Canons

21. In 2007 the General Synod passed the following canons –
- Australian College of Theology Canon 2007*
 - Canon Concerning Holy Orders, 2004*
 - Constitution Alteration (Chapter IX) Canon Amendment Canon 2007*
 - Constitution Amendment (Diocesan Council) Canon 2007*
 - Constitution Amendment (Provinces and Dioceses) Canon 2007*
 - Constitution Amendment (Section 10) Canon 2007*
 - Constitution Amendment (Section 54A) Canon, 2007*
 - Constitution Amendment (Suspension of Bishops) Canon 2007*
 - Episcopal Standards Canon, 2007*
 - Financial Protection Canon Amendment Canon 2007*
 - Holy Orders (Reception into Ministry) Canon 2004*
 - Long Service Leave Canon 2007*
 - National Register Canon 2007*
 - Offences Canon Amendment Canon 2007*
 - Primate Canon Amendment Canon 2007*
 - Protection of the Environment Canon 2007*
 - Special Tribunal Canon 2007*
 - Special Tribunal Canon Repeal Canon 2007*
 - Strategic Issues, Commissions, Taskforces and Networks Canon Amendment Canon 2007*
22. The General Synod also passed the following canon as a provisional canon –
- Solemnization of Matrimony Amendment Canon 2007*
23. Some of the canons referred to in paragraph 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

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

<i>Council of the Australian College of Theology</i>	<i>The Board Electors of the Primate</i>
Bishop Glenn Davies	Bishop Glenn Davies
<i>Standing Committee</i>	Bishop Robert Forsyth
Bishop Glenn Davies	Mr Garth Blake SC
Bishop Robert Forsyth	<i>Long Service Leave Board</i>
Mr Garth Blake SC	Mr Mark Payne
Mr Justice Peter Young	

*The Board of Assessors (Appellate
Tribunal)*

Bishop Glenn Davies

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary
29 August 2008