

Indigenous Representation on the Synod

(A report from the Standing Committee)

Background

1. Under the Synod Membership Ordinance 1995, the membership of the Synod comprises –
 - (a) parochial ministers (part 4)
 - (b) parochial representatives (part 5)
 - (c) Chief Executive Officers of nominated organisations (part 6)
 - (d) nominated ministers (part 7)
 - (e) nominated lay persons (part 8)
 - (f) other members, in particular the Chancellor, the Registrar, the Diocesan Secretary and representatives of St Paul's College (part 9).
2. The nominated ministers and laypersons who attend Synod under parts 7 and 8 represent a number of areas and interests that are not covered by representation from parochial units. They include, for example, the bishops and archdeacons, female deacons, chaplains, staff of Moore Theological College, members of multi-ethnic congregations etc.
3. Currently, the Archbishop is entitled to appoint 24 persons as nominated ministers with the Standing Committee entitled to elect the same number of nominated laypersons. It is not possible for this number of representatives to cover every possible person or group who may wish to be represented at Synod.

Indigenous representation on the Synod

4. It has been acknowledged for some time that there are no Indigenous representatives on Synod and that Indigenous congregations may be a significant group that would otherwise not easily gain representation on Synod.
5. The Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee ("SAIPMC") has been requesting for some time that consideration be given to Indigenous representation.
6. At present there are three Indigenous congregations meeting under the auspices of the Diocese. They are –
 - (a) Crossroads, which is part of the parish of South Sydney, and
 - (b) a group meeting a Tregear as part of the parish of Mount Druitt, and
 - (c) a group meeting as part of the parish of Minto.
7. None of these congregations is a parochial unit in its own right, and therefore not able to have representation on the Synod under parts 4 and 5 in its own right. Likewise, none of them is yet of sufficient size to qualify to become a recognised church.
8. It is hoped that ultimately each of these congregations may become a recognised church, a parish or a provisional parish. At that time, they would have representation under parts 4 and 5 in their own right.

Proposal to amend Synod Membership Ordinance

9. Until such a status is achieved, it is proposed to provide for Indigenous representation at Synod under a new part 8A of the Synod Membership Ordinance 1995. Under the new part 8A, it is proposed that SAIPMC elect –
 - (a) one Indigenous pastor who is an ordained Anglican clergy person (a "nominated Indigenous minister"), and
 - (b) one Indigenous layperson who is a communicant member of the Anglican Church of Australia (a "nominated Indigenous layperson").
10. Other provisions for the election, retirement and summoning to Synod of these Indigenous representatives would correspond to those that apply to nominated ministers and nominated laypersons under parts 7 and 8.
11. It is proposed that Indigenous representation on Synod under the new part 8A would continue until SAIPMC declares that the first Indigenous parochial unit comes into existence to enable Indigenous representation on Synod under parts 4 and 5. An Indigenous parochial unit would be defined to mean a parish, provisional parish, or recognised church –

- (a) to which an Indigenous person has been appointed as rector or curate in charge, and
- (b) in which Indigenous people minister in a way that the gospel is commended to all.

Recommendation

12. The Standing Committee recommends that the bill for the Synod Membership (Indigenous Representation) Amendment Ordinance 2006 pass as an ordinance of the Synod.

For and behalf of the Standing Committee.

PHILIP SELDEN
Diocesan Registrar

19 September 2006