

## Prioritisation of Synod requests

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

### Key Points

- In the last five years, there has been a substantial increase in requests from the Synod for the Standing Committee to address.
- In light of the reality of the limited capacity of Standing Committee and its members, the Standing Committee has agreed to determine the relative priority of the resolutions of Synod each year, taking into account the urgency, importance and anticipated labour and costs involved addressing each resolution; and consider carefully its capacity to proceed to address those with the lowest priority.
- If Standing Committee determines not to address a Synod resolution (in part or full), a brief report will be provided to the following ordinary session of the Synod and the mover and seconder of the resolution informed.
- Synod members are encouraged to consider carefully the implications, in terms of cost and anticipated labour, to address the requests of motions they move at Synod.

### Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Synod of a prioritisation framework that the Standing Committee has adopted in relation to requests for research, reports and other action from the Synod.

### Recommendations

2. Synod receive this report.

### Discussion

3. In recent years there has been a perception that is hard to quantify, that requests by resolution from the Synod have substantially increased in volume. Some recent actions of the Standing Committee serve to illustrate the outworking of this perception —
  - (a) At its meeting on 8 September 2018, the Standing Committee debated a motion which, if passed, would have seen a report with recommendations go to the 2018 session of Synod, seeking to ensure that the Synod consider the real costs associated with implementing Synod motions before passing them as resolutions.
  - (b) At its meeting on 18 March 2019, the Standing Committee endorsed the decision of the Social Issues Committee to not address the request of a Synod resolution (30/16) in light of the workload of the Social Issues Committee.
4. It is an unfortunate consequence of the good processes of Synod that a motion supported by a handful of members and not opposed by any of the rest, can easily become a resolution of the Synod, passed without debate. In this fashion it is easy to understand that motions asking the Standing Committee to investigate and report on a matter, or asking the Standing Committee to implement an idea, are readily passed; with one result being an increasing number of requests to the Standing Committee. Some of these give little consideration to the cost in time and expense required by the Standing Committee to address or implement them.
5. In order to attempt to quantify this perception, a tally was made of the number of requests (be they simple or complex) from the Synod to the Standing Committee over the last twenty years. The following table provides the results, grouped into five year blocks to make clear the extent of the recent increase –

Years	# of requests to Standing Committee	Average per year
1999-2003	50	10
2004-2008	45	9
2009-2013	55	11
2014-2018	113	22.6

6. As the volume of work and requests has demonstrably grown, for practical purposes the Standing Committee has agreed to determine the relative priority of the resolutions of Synod each year, taking into account the urgency, importance and anticipated labour and costs involved addressing each resolution; and consider carefully its capacity to proceed to address those with the lowest priority. The Synod needs to be aware of this reality.
7. If Standing Committee determines not to address a Synod resolution (in part or full), a brief report will be provided to the following ordinary session of the Synod and the mover and seconder of the resolution informed.
8. Any decision not to address the request of a resolution of Synod cannot be taken lightly; but is a necessary result of the increased requests and limited time and resources of the Standing Committee and its members. Correspondingly, Synod members are encouraged to consider carefully the implications of any motions they move at Synod in terms of the likely cost to action them.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

DANIEL GLYNN  
**Diocesan Secretary**

29 August 2019