

## Proposal to change the status of the provisional parish of Robertson to a parish

(A report of the Wollongong Regional Council.)

### Proposal

1. The minister and wardens of the provisional parish of Robertson propose under clause 4 of the Parishes Ordinance 1979 that the provisional parish be reclassified as a parish.
2. The various requirements for this proposal under clauses 4 and 6 of the Parishes Ordinance 1979 have been met and details of this follow.

### Support of the Wollongong Regional Council

3. On 14 May 2013 the Wollongong Regional Council resolved to support the request that the provisional parish of Robertson be classified as a parish under the Parishes Ordinance 1979.

### Parish Information

4. Robertson is one of the smallest parishes in the Sydney Diocese with a population of 1,850 in the village itself and perhaps that number again in the surrounding rural areas within the parish boundaries. The parish became Provisional during the time of the previous incumbency as a result of financial difficulties. The parish originally had 6 centres. Three have been closed down, Glenquarrie, Kangaloon and Kangaloon East and the properties sold. A fourth, Fitzroy Falls, has been transferred to Moss Vale parish and the remaining centres are at Robertson and Burrawang.

5. **St David's Burrawang.** Burrawang is a small village with St David's perched on the side of a hill on the outskirts of the village. There had been an aluminium clad hall in the centre of the village until 2010 when this site was sold to finance the new building at Robertson. The hall was rarely used, on a piece of land too small for any future development and was becoming a significant maintenance issue. St David's church is in reasonable condition and has sufficient land to be a possible centre of a separate parish should it be needed. However, any population growth at Burrawang in the near future is likely to be small. A service is held once a month in St David's at 5.00pm but while a few locals attend it is mostly supported by people from the Robertson congregation. Burrawang was originally the main centre for the parish and the original parsonage dating from the late 1800s is still standing. The local council is currently seeking to list St David's on its heritage list.

6. **St John's Robertson.** St John's is sited in the centre of the village of Robertson on a substantial block of land. There are four buildings, the old church, a sandstone building dated 1876, a sandstone rectory dated 1920 and extended in 1988, a timber army barracks that was transported to the site in 1960 and used as a church hall and the new Church Centre which was completed in 2007. The old church served well for many years but only designed to seat approximately 60 people maximum it had been outgrown by the early 1980s. It is a cold building in winter and together with the appearance that it was full, we were losing people who would otherwise have attended.

7. **New Church Centre at St John's** A beginning was made on plans for a new multi-purpose building that would allow for growth, to be financed by the sale of 3 acres of land the church owned in the northern area of the village. By 2000 an architect had been engaged but by the time the land was sold, the cost of the proposed building had exceeded the income from the land. It was at this stage that the decision was made to sell the hall at Burrawang to meet the shortfall and a bridging loan was arranged with the Diocesan Loans Board to enable the building to proceed. The sale of this land was greatly affected by the Global Crises and the parish was left with a considerable debt to the Loans Board. However, in 2011 that debt was discharged as a result of the generosity of members of the congregation and all parish buildings are now debt free. The new Centre was built without the use of any grants from the Diocese. The new Centre has a modern, air conditioned auditorium seating up to 200 people with full audio-visual capabilities. It includes a substantial commercial quality kitchen, Meeting Room, Parish Office, Crying Room, Baby Change Room and Storage Room as well as being equipped with good toilet facilities. There is no other venue in the village that can offer the same seating and equipment and since its opening it has been used for concerts and community meetings on a regular basis as well as being the venue for the main Sunday service.

8. The proposal is made with the full support of the minister, the wardens and parish council, along with the congregations as a whole.

### Particulars of all church trust property

9. The provisional parish has the St David's Burrawang church building. At St John's Robertson there are four buildings, the old church, a sandstone building dated 1876, a sandstone rectory dated 1920 and

extended in 1988, a timber army barracks that was transported to the site in 1960 and used as a church hall and the new Church Centre which was completed in 2007.

10. These properties are owned outright, with no debt owing.

#### **An estimate of the number of households within the parish boundaries claiming Anglican affiliation**

11. The 2011 census recorded 1,850 individuals living in the township of Robertson, and there is perhaps the same number again in the local district. 31.5% (582) of the town's population describe themselves as Anglicans.

#### **An estimate of the size of the congregation**

12. An 8am traditional Prayer Book service is held in the old church on the 1st and 4th Sundays of the month and is attended by approximately 12 people. The main service on Sundays is at 9.30am and caters for all ages. Younger children leave after the first Bible Reading and Kids song for Sunday School in the adjacent hall and return for morning tea with the adults at the end of the service. Junior highs adjourn to the meeting room for a bible study during the sermon and toddlers are catered for by a Crèche in the crying room. The main service is contemporary and informal and is generally led by lay people with the minister or guest preacher giving the sermon. Music is provided by a small band or by a pianist on the grand piano. Morning tea is served at the end of the service with people often staying to talk until midday. Attendance at this service is now averaging around 70 people with approximately 55 adults and the rest children. Growth is slow, as is normally the case in Robertson, but it has been steady and in the last 2 years we have seen a number of younger couples moving into the village and into the congregation. A Youth service is run on the 1st Sunday of the month at 6.30pm.

13. Robertson Youth Bible Study (RYBS) is a youth group that is run on Friday nights with a current attendance of approximately 18 and up to 23. One of our youth completed the Year13 course with the parish covering the cost of the course and went on to work for Youthworks at their Waterslea property and two others have completed courses with Capernwray in England. In 2010-11 the parish supported a Youthworks Trainee from outside the parish. Each year the majority of the youth group attend the KYCK Conference at Katoomba with 26 attending last year and 20-23 this year. Most young people find they have to leave the village at the end of High School in order to continue tertiary studies.

14. Our congregation is mostly responsible for the Scripture teaching in 5 local Primary schools, 4 of which are small schools. The church also runs a Playgroup called Jumping Joeys in the new building on Wednesdays which is attended by up to a dozen mums with their children.

15. St John's has always had a strong Home Bible Study ministry with 7 groups currently running and most people in the congregation in a home group.

| Year | Attendance |
|------|------------|
| 2010 | 75         |
| 2011 | 76         |
| 2012 | 78         |

#### **A summary of Robertson's financial standing**

16. For the last three years, 2010 to 2012, the rector has been paid the full Diocesan Stipend and the recommended Travel Allowance, all Cost Recoveries including levies have been paid and the parish is free from debt. The parish supports CMS link missionaries Wayne and Mandy Oldfield as well as other missionary organisations as indicated in the Parish Financial Statements. The parish is in a sound financial position.

| Year | Offertory Actual |
|------|------------------|
| 2010 | 89,744           |
| 2011 | 81,391           |
| 2012 | 106,250          |

17. The provisional parish's 2012 financial statements show a net asset position of \$6,587,884.

18. In accordance with Section 6 of the Ordinance the provisional parish over the previous financial year –

- Paid the minister according to minimum recommended stipend and provided the recommended travel allowance.
- Has paid all cost recoveries.
- Housed the minister in a diocesan standard residence.
- Is in a sound financial condition.

**Recommendation**

19. The Wollongong Regional Council recommends that the provisional parish of Robertson be reclassified as a parish with effect from 1 January 2014.

For and behalf of the Wollongong Regional Council

PETER HAYWARD  
*Regional Bishop*

TONY WILLIS  
*Assistant to the Bishop*

30 May 2013