

34/01 Voting for regional council elections

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Resolution

1. On 3 November 2001, the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney resolved as follows (resolution 34/01) -

"Synod, noting -

 - (a) that the election process for regional council members requires that at least one lay member and one clerical member be from each area deanery, but that
 - (b) nonetheless, where only one such lay and/or clerical nomination is received for a deanery, this person is still included on the ballot paper, and so
 - (c) Synod members still need to vote for some nominees who will in any event be 'automatically' elected,

requests that the Standing Committee consider reviewing the appropriate election ordinance(s) so that in these (and any similar circumstances) nominees would be declared elected and would so not need to be included on the ballot paper."

Requirements of the Regions Ordinance 1995

2. The election of the members of a regional council takes place during the 1st ordinary session of each Synod. Casual vacancies which occur between elections are filled by resolution of the remaining members of the regional council.
3. Clauses 4(1)(c), (d) and (e) of the Regions Ordinance 1995 provide for the election of lay persons and ministers to the regional council by the regional electors of that region. For this purpose, the regional electors of a region are -
 - (a) the Regional Bishop and the Regional Archdeacon;
 - (b) each Minister licensed to a parochial unit in the Region and who is a member of the Synod;
 - (c) each person who is a member of the Synod as a representative of a parochial unit in that Region; and
 - (d) each other person who resides in that Region and is a member of the Synod but is not a Regional Elector of another Region.
4. The pattern of election is similar for lay persons and ministers in that the regional council must include one lay person and one minister from each area deanery and, in addition, 4 lay persons and 2 ministers from any area deanery in the region.
5. The Regions Ordinance 1995 does not specify how the elections are to be conducted. In July 1996 and again in April 1997 the Standing Committee determined that there should be 2 elections for each regional council, one for the lay members and one for the clerical members. That procedure is now prescribed in clause 8.1 of the Schedule to the Synod Elections Ordinance 2000.

Alternative options considered for electing the regional council members (clauses 4(1)(c), (d) and (e))

6. Other options considered in 1996 were -

Option 1 - That separate elections be conducted for each area deanery in a region.

Option 2 - That separate elections would be conducted for clause 4(1)(c) and (d) members and for clause 4(1)(e) members.

There is a further possible option -

Option 3 - To conduct an election for clause 4(1)(c) and (d) members by area deanery and clause 4(1)(e) members as a separate election.

7. Whereas clause 8.1 of the Schedule to the Synod Elections Ordinance requires 10 elections (one for lay persons and one for ministers in each of the 5 regions) the following table shows the number of elections required for the other 3 options.

	No. of Elections		
	Clergy	Lay	Total
Option 1 - Clause 4(1)(c) & (d) (by each area deanery)	28	28	56
Clause 4(1)(e)	5	5	10
	33	33	66
Option 2 - Clause 4(1)(c) & (d) as 1 group	5	5	10
Clause 4(1)(e)	5	5	10
	10	10	20
Option 3 - Clause 4(1)(c)(d) & (e) as 1 group (by each area deanery)	28	28	56

Disadvantages of each option

8. An objection to the present system whereby there is one election for the lay members and one for ministry members of the regional council is that a vote for the nominee who is uncontested for an area deanery is a wasted vote. The result of the ballot could be different if such "uncontested" elections were excluded.

9. The fundamental objection to options 1 and 3 is the large number of elections and the unnecessary administrative burdens they create. An objection to option 2 is that it maintains the principle referred to in resolution 34/01, namely, that one nominee for a particular area deanery must be included on the ballot paper.

Another alternative

10. In response to resolution 34/01 another alternative has been identified. There could continue to be only one election for each of the lay members and clergy members in each region but, where there is only one person nominated for a particular area deanery, then that election would be declared uncontested and only the remaining area deaneries and the "other area deanery" group would take part in a contested election.

11. The Synod Elections Ordinance 2000 requires amendment to allow part of an election for a regional council to be declared uncontested and the other part to be contested. No amendment to the Regions Ordinance 1995 is required. There do not seem to be any inequities or disadvantages from such a change.

12. The proposed Synod Elections Amendment Ordinance 2002 has been prepared to amend the Synod Elections Ordinance 2000 for this purpose.

Recommendation

13. Standing Committee recommends that the Synod pass the Synod Elections Amendment Ordinance 2002 as an ordinance.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

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