

26/08 Affiliated Churches

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Background

1. By resolution 26/08, the Synod warmly welcomed, as an expression of our partnership in the gospel, the formal affiliation between this Diocese and the following churches –

- Northern Lakes Evangelical Church
- Albury Bible Fellowship
- The Point Community Church
- The Lakes Evangelical Church
- Maitland Evangelical Church
- Stanthorpe Evangelical Community Church

and requested the Standing Committee to consult with each of our affiliates about the ways in which our partnership in the gospel can be strengthened and to report back to Synod next year about any action taken for this purpose.

2. Since resolution 26/08, Crossroads Christian Church in Canberra has also affiliated with the Diocese.

3. The following table provides some information about each of the churches currently affiliated with the Diocese –

Name of church	Location of church	Name of senior pastor	Staffing arrangements	Congregations and average attendances	Date of affiliation
Northern Lakes Evangelical Church	Gorokan/ Central Coast	Connan O'Shea	2 f/t staff	<i>Morning</i> 100 adults 57 children	11 December 2006
Albury Bible Fellowship	Albury	Chris Little	1 f/t pastoral staff	<i>Morning</i> 50 adults 20 children	11 December 2006
The Point Community Church	Port Macquarie	Steve Covetz	2 f/t Pastors, 1 p/t admin officer	<i>Morning</i> 170 adults 150 children <i>Evening</i> 30 adults 10 children	11 December 2006
The Lakes Evangelical Church	Tumbi Umbi/ Central Coast	David Sheath	3 f/t pastoral staff 2 p/t office staff 3 MTS trainees	<i>Early morning</i> 124 adults 55 children <i>Late morning</i> 108 adults 65 children <i>Evening</i> 39 Adults	10 December 2007
Maitland Evangelical Church	Maitland	Roger Burgess	3 f/t pastoral staff 1 p/t pastoral staff 1 p/t volunteer office staff	<i>Early morning</i> 50 adults 30 children <i>Late morning</i> 60 adults 60 children <i>Evening</i> 40 adults 20 children	10 December 2007
Stanthorpe Evangelical Community Church	Stanthorpe QLD	Neville Heyward	1 p/t pastoral staff 1 p/t office staff	<i>Morning</i> 23 adults 6 children	16 June 2008
Crossroads Christian Church	Canberra	David McDonald	8 f/t pastoral staff 3 p/t office staff 1 volunteer pastoral staff worker 4 – 6 MTS trainees	<i>Early morning</i> 132 adults 73 children <i>Late morning</i> 153 adults 132 children <i>Evening</i> 282 adults 3 children	28 September 2009

4. This report has been prepared by the Affiliated Churches subcommittee (the committee) in response to Synod's request in resolution 26/08.

Consultation process

5. The primary means by which consultation with our affiliates was undertaken was through feedback obtained during and after a conference held by the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) at Collaroy in August 2009. The conference included representatives from about 20 independent evangelical churches, including 6 of the 7 churches affiliated with the Diocese. The only affiliated church not represented at the conference was Stanthorpe Evangelical Community Church. The committee was represented at the conference by Bishop Al Stewart, the Rev Chris Moroney and Mr Robert Wicks.

6. Following the conference, each of our affiliates was invited to provide additional and specific feedback.

Overview of feedback

7. In general, affiliation continues to be regarded positively by both our affiliates and other independent evangelical churches within the FIEC. The on-going value of affiliation was affirmed by representatives at the FIEC conference and also in separate comments made by representatives from our affiliates after the conference.

8. As indicated in the report provided to the Synod last year on affiliated churches, our capacity to provide many of the specific benefits listed in the Schedule to the Affiliated Churches Ordinance 2005 has been more limited than initially contemplated. This is largely due to the fact that the provision of such benefits, for example insurance cover, is essentially incompatible with the status of affiliates as independent churches. This matter was raised at the conference and appears to be generally accepted by our affiliates.

9. Despite these limitations, the senior pastors from a number of our affiliates indicated they particularly valued the professional standards and general administrative information provided to them from time to time through staff at St Andrew's House. A representative from one affiliate indicated that the provision of material such as the *Employment Relations Guidelines* and the *Risk Management Manual* has been extremely helpful.

10. Possibly of greatest value are the less tangible benefits of affiliation. While difficult to fully describe, they include the "no prejudice" commitment to clergy returning to the Diocese after working for an affiliated church (see clause 8 of the Affiliated Churches Ordinance 2005), the source of continuity of leadership/theological training provided by the Diocese and the opportunities for mutual sharing of expertise, for example, at preaching conferences and church planting forums etc.

11. One senior pastor indicated that affiliation also appears to be of some value in assisting people to decide what church they should attend if moving from the Sydney area. He also asked that consideration be given to some form of acknowledgement of affiliated churches in *Southern Cross* from time to time, for example to highlight the ministry opportunities and initiatives in such churches.

12. Another senior pastor queried whether affiliation might assist Anglican clergy who work as pastors in an affiliated church to be licensed to act as Anglican wedding celebrants.

Response to feedback

13. The feedback received suggests that the basic structure of affiliation under the Affiliated Churches Ordinance 2005 does not need to be significantly changed at this time. However, there is a need to ensure that adequate attention is given to the relationships we have with our affiliates and to ensure that new opportunities to assist each other in promoting the gospel continue to be explored and appropriately acted on.

14. Professional standards support and administrative information should continue to be provided to our affiliates. To this end, complimentary copies of *Southern Cross* will be provided to each affiliate as a tangible means of keeping them informed about events and activities being undertaken in the Diocese.

15. Consideration will also be given to featuring our affiliates in *Southern Cross* from time to time.

16. The model of providing a level of support to our affiliates which can be absorbed by diocesan staff and organisations and which does not impose an unreasonable burden on them both in terms of cost and time should also be continued.

17. In response to the query about whether Anglican clergy working in an affiliated church could be licensed to act as Anglican wedding celebrants, we indicated that this is not possible. However it may be possible to assist pastors of affiliated churches to be recognised as religious wedding celebrants in their own right.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

22 September 2009