

Response to feedback from 2008 Synod survey

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Background

1. In November 2008, members of the Synod were asked to complete a survey about various aspects of the 2008 session of the Synod. Attached is a summary of the survey results showing the 5 highest rated and the 5 lowest rated aspects of Synod (based on responses from about 200 members to 23 aspects surveyed).
2. The survey also asked members to respond to the question: "How might Synod be improved for 2009?".
3. This report sets out the proposed response to the comments made by Synod members in relation to the administrative arrangements for Synod. The proposed response focuses on addressing those aspects of Synod which received the lowest ratings.
4. While most of the proposals will be implemented as a matter of course by the Diocesan Secretary and his team before and during the 2009 Synod session, the Standing Committee's express endorsement was sought for one proposal.
5. This report does not address suggestions made about the administration of Synod elections. The Diocesan Secretary intends to outline some of these suggestions in conjunction with a report already requested by the Standing Committee about the greater use of electronic communications in the Synod election process.

Car parking

Feedback

6. Car parking received the lowest approval rating out of the 23 aspects of Synod covered in the survey.
7. Comments from Synod members suggest the main concerns are the expense and limited availability of parking. The comments did not however provide many suggestions for improving parking arrangements.

Response

8. Following a reasonably detailed consideration of car parking arrangements at Synod, it is apparent that there are not many cost effective and practical options for addressing the concerns raised by members. This is particularly so while Synod meetings continue to be held in the Sydney CBD.
9. However the following action will be taken (or continue to be taken) in relation to car parking –

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- (a) Continue the system of issuing concession tickets for St Andrew's House car park and Wesley's Piccadilly car park both in advance and during Synod.
- (b) Ensure that members are made aware that parking spaces are limited and that having a concession ticket does not guarantee a space (for example the St Andrew's House car park tends to be 'sold out' on Synod days).
- (c) Encourage car pooling and the use of other forms of transport (where safe/suitable).

10. Steps will also be taken to ascertain whether Wesley's Piccadilly car park usually has spaces available during Synod and whether there are other car parks available near the Wesley Centre at reasonable rates. Any information about these matters which is likely to assist members will be communicated to members.

11. One possible option to address concerns about the cost of parking would be for the Synod to fund a further car parking subsidy for members. However, in view of the current financial situation it was not thought appropriate to make this recommendation.

Use of technology and paper distribution

Feedback

- 12. The use of technology received the third lowest approval rating out of the 23 aspects of Synod covered in the survey.
- 13. Many members who commented on this issue recommended the electronic distribution of information, both before and during Synod.
- 14. An important underlying theme was a desire to reduce the quantity of paper used in running Synod.
- 15. Some members thought the distribution of promotional material on the seats was very wasteful.
- 16. A number of members suggested increased use of technology in the Wesley theatre to help identify all the material relevant to the topic under consideration and to record and display amendments to the text of ordinances and motions as they are being considered.
- 17. A number of members suggested that the process for asking and answering questions be reviewed to save time and that the answers be made more widely available.

Response

- 18. It is proposed to take the following action in response to these comments –
 - (a) Make all Synod papers readily available (as downloadable .pdf files) on the SDS website around the

time they are produced for distribution in paper form. This would include –

- (i) circulars and all attachments in 1st and 2nd mailings (as temporary pages, to be replaced by the full record of the proceedings of Synod after the event),
 - (ii) the Synod book as a single downloadable file (if that is practical and usable), as well as separate files for each component of the book,
 - (iii) business papers and amendments sheets daily during Synod, and
 - (iv) the election results on the day following the day they have been declared, and questions and answers on the day following the day the questions have been answered (while continuing to attach a copy of all this information to the notice board in the foyer).
- (b) Provide all Synod papers for the day to members as they enter the Wesley Theatre rather than placing a full set of this material on each seat in the Theatre. This would allow print runs to be limited to expected Synod attendance and would also address the difficulty of late arriving members not being able to find a spare set of the day's papers on a seat.
 - (c) Discontinue printing the Synod service, and the daily Bible readings and hymns, and just display this information on the big screen.
 - (d) Provide paper recycling bins at the exits from Wesley theatre.
 - (e) Continue Powerpoint display of late amendments to motions on the big screen.

19. It is also recommended that the Standing Committee agree to discontinue the practice of distributing all extraneous material not directly relevant to the business of Synod on the seats of Synod and instead provide organisations with the space to make approved promotional material available for collection in the foyer area.

20. The following additional matters are being investigated –

- (a) Whether Wesley can provide a wireless network within the Synod chamber to enable members to download papers from the SDS website as needed.
- (b) Whether there new forms of technology that would be cost effective and practical to use to enable the better display of late amendments on the big screen.

21. The possibility of giving Synod members the option of receiving in electronic form the materials in the 1st and 2nd mailings (including Circulars, Synod book) in lieu of paper needs to be considered in the context of electronic communications for Synod elections (see paragraph 5 above).

Administration and process of Synod

Feedback

22. A number of members asked that the ACL 'Newcomers' booklet be made more widely available and that more assistance be provided in the form of simple explanations of both the processes of Synod and the substance of some of the more complex individual issues.

23. Some members were concerned that –

- it was difficult for members arriving late to access empty seats,
- noise from the foyer was a distraction while the Synod was in session, and
- congestion was a problem when members were leaving the theatre at the conclusion of each session.

24. Some members were concerned that the process for counting votes on resolutions during Synod (other than via formal written ballots) may not be accurate.

Response

25. It is proposed to take the following action in response to these matters –

- (a) Consistent with Synod resolution 19/07 on the responsibilities of Synod members, to make the ACL "Newcomers" booklet prepared by Mr Robert Tong available to any member on request or by reference to a downloadable form of the document on the ACL's website.
- (b) To assign a staff member to the theatre doors so that they can remain closed while the Synod is in session.
- (c) Staff to encourage members who arrive early to sit toward the front of the theatre and away from the aisles to make it easier for members arriving later to find a seat (recognising that members are entitled to sit where they wish in the theatre).
- (d) The President to be requested that whenever a count is required for a vote on the floor of Synod–
 - to require members to stand rather than just raise their hands, and

- to advise members that their votes will only be counted if they are located in the designated seating area for members (and not if they are located in the public gallery or the aisles of the Theatre).
- (e) The Returning Officers to review the format of count sheets used by staff to record the number of votes in each section of the Wesley theatre, clearly indicating the rows to be counted etc.

26. In terms of addressing congestion in the foyer, it would be possible to hire another room in the Wesley Centre (the Pacific Room) for an additional \$550 per day. The additional room could be used for all displays and promotional material. While removing the displays and promotional material from the foyer area would undoubtedly reduce congestion, such a step would almost certainly be seen as unhelpful by those preparing the displays and promotional material. In any event, it is difficult to justify the additional cost in hiring the extra room.

Standing Committee's response to recommendations

27. The Standing Committee agreed to discontinue the practice of distributing all extraneous material not directly relevant to the business of Synod on the seats of Synod and instead provide organisations with the space to make approved promotional material available for collection in the foyer area.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee.

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

14 July 2009

Attachment

Summary of feedback from 2008 Synod survey

1. In November 2008 all Synod representatives were sent an email inviting them to access a secure website and record their responses to a number of aspects of the recent Synod. There were 31 multiple-choice questions across 7 categories requiring a simple rating (1-5) and an open text field for comments on how Synod might be improved for 2009.

2. Just over 200 members responded to the survey, although not all those answered every question. The split was roughly 56 clergy and 144 lay or 72 new members and 127 continuing members. By age bracket the number of responses was (18-29 = 9, 30-39 = 28, 40-49 = 42, 50-59 = 55, 60-69 = 47 and 70+ = 15).

3. The 5 aspects of Synod (out of 23 surveyed) that received the **highest** ratings were –

Rank	Overall	Clergy (generally also true for continuing members)	Lay (generally also true for new members)
1	Presidential address	Presidential address	Location/ accessibility
2	Location/ accessibility	Helpfulness of staff	Presidential address
3	Helpfulness of staff	Comfort	Helpfulness of staff
4	Comfort	Location/accessibility	Comfort
5	Facilities	Places to eat for dinner	Facilities

4. The 5 aspects of Synod (out of 23 surveyed) that received the **lowest** ratings were –

Rank	Overall	Clergy (generally also true for continuing members)	Lay (generally also true for new members)
23	Parking	Parking	Parking
22	Synod Service	Synod Service	Synod Service
21	Use of technology	Use of technology	Use of technology
20	Policy debates	Policy debates	Policy debates

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Rank	Overall	Clergy (generally also true for continuing members)	Lay (generally also true for new members)
19	Process answering questions	Daily Bible studies	Process answering questions

5. The 6 purposes of the Synod nominated in the survey were ranked from **most important** to least important as follows –

Import	Overall	Clergy (generally also true for continuing members)	Lay (generally also true for new members)
1	Making ordinances	Making ordinances	Making ordinances
2	Policy debates	Passing resolutions	Policy debates
3	Passing resolutions	Policy debates	Passing resolutions
4	Conducting elections	Conducting elections	Conducting elections
5	Being encouraged/challenged through Bible teaching	Opportunity for fellowship	Being encouraged/challenged through Bible teaching
6	Opportunity for fellowship	Being encouraged/challenged through Bible teaching	Opportunity for fellowship

6. The feedback from the survey will be taken into account in preparing for Synod in 2009.