

Wollongong Regional Council Annual Report 1997

Opportunities and Challenges of Regionalism

1. The Wollongong region of the diocese was particularly well positioned to take up the challenges and opportunities presented by recent moves towards regionalism. Much of 1996 was spent in preparing to take up the responsibilities associated with the devolution of more decision making to the regional level.

Change in Name

2. During 1996, the Wollongong Anglican Regional Council met in February, May, July and September. The newly constituted Wollongong Regional Council met for the first time in November.

Major Regional Thrust for 1996

3. A major task delegated to Regional Council in 1996 by Bishop Piper was the consideration of applications from groups within the region for ministry grants in 1997. The Council sought to enunciate the principles associated with the allocation of grants and strategies that would assist with the difficult task of determining priorities that should be associated with each application. Final decisions about grants unfortunately could not be made until after Synod in October had determined the total funds available. This meant that parishes were given very little time to make adjustments to staffing for the following year and to amend budgets. In undertaking this exercise, many valuable lessons were learned and members of Council have felt more confident in considering future applications.

Ongoing Regional Planning

4. Fortunately, these discussions about grant applications were able to take place within the context of overall regional planning. In 1995 an initial Regional Planning day was held at Gilbulla. During 1996 Regional Council strongly supported Bishop Piper's efforts in developing further this plan for encouragement of ministry in the Wollongong Region by promoting a second planning day at Gilbulla. Involvement in this planning by many members of Regional Council has developed a real sense of "ownership" and has laid the groundwork for exciting developments in the future.

Guest Speakers

5. As part of its preparation for the responsibilities of regional decision making, Council has invited speakers from a number of areas to address its meetings. In 1996 these speakers included Dr Jeff Wagg (Kedesh House), the Rev John Thew (Cross Cultural Ministries) and the Rev Howard Dillon (Anglican Home Mission Society).

Regional Ministries

6. In 1996, Regional Council has continued to encourage ministries across parish boundaries by promoting activities such as Regional Prayer Days, Cross Cultural ministries, the Shoalhaven Counselling Service, University Chaplaincies at Wollongong and Western Sydney University, drug rehabilitation through Kedesh House and ministry to young people through Anglican Schools in our region.

Looking forward

7. Wollongong region's adaption to the changes by regionalism has been relatively smooth. With its own regional planning well advanced and a "trial run" at allocating grants for 1997 successfully negotiated, members of Council have achieved much and look forward to assisting parishes in the promotion of the gospel in the future.

For and on behalf of the Wollongong Regional Council.

REG PIPER
Regional Bishop

15 July 1997