

St Michael's (Regional Cathedral and Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2011

St John's (Regional Cathedral and Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 2011

Explanatory Report

Background

1. The Regions (Transitional Provisions and Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 1995 (the "Ordinance") provided transitional provisions for the implementation of regionalisation and made consequential amendments to a number of ordinances.
2. Under clause 9 of the Ordinance, the St John's Provisional Cathedral Parramatta Ordinance 1969 and the St Michael's Provisional Cathedral Wollongong Ordinance 1969 are repealed with effect from 1 January 2012, that date having been extended from 1 January 2010 by a period of 2 years by the Synod in 2009.
3. The effect of clause 9 is that St John's Parramatta and St Michael's Wollongong will cease to be Provisional Cathedrals on 1 January 2012.
4. At its meeting on 26 July 2010, the Standing Committee requested Bishop Lee to prepare a paper on the change in the status of the Provisional Cathedrals of St Michael's Wollongong and St John's Parramatta for consideration by the Standing Committee with a view to suitable amending legislation being promoted to the Synod in 2011 by request of the Standing Committee.
5. The Standing Committee considered Bishop Lee's report at its meeting on 30 May 2011 and –
 - (a) agreed in principle that St John's Provisional Cathedral Parramatta and St Michael's Provisional Cathedral Wollongong should become regional cathedrals, and
 - (b) requested that amending ordinances be prepared to give effect to this change with a view to such ordinances being promoted to the Synod this year "by request of the Standing Committee".
6. At its meeting on 22 August 2011, the Standing Committee agreed to promote to the Synod bills to change the status of the Provisional Cathedrals to regional cathedrals. The bills also take the opportunity to update the terminology used in the principal ordinances.
7. The Standing Committee also requested that various changes to the governance and administration of the Provisional Cathedrals be made. However the Standing Committee intends considering separate ordinances for this purpose after the Synod has considered the question of the status of the Provisional Cathedrals.

Discussion on change of status to regional cathedrals

8. The question of the change of status of St Michael's Wollongong and St John's Parramatta Provisional Cathedrals to become Regional Cathedrals, has been reviewed and discussed by the parish councils and chapters of each church. All four bodies are very positive in supporting such a change of status, the alternatives being to extend the Provisional status or to no longer have status as a cathedral in any sense.
9. Although the two cathedrals are by no means identical, and do minister in different areas and contexts, each with their own mix of various ministries, the following general points can be made –
 - (a) If the two cathedrals were no longer cathedrals in any sense, they would certainly continue successfully in their ministry and outreach as parish churches in the usual sense. But it should be noted that great disappointment would be felt by many of their members. Further, there are good reasons to retain their status as cathedrals, and in particular, as regional cathedrals.
 - (b) The cathedrals, as churches in the major cities of Wollongong and Parramatta, draw much of their membership and attendance from a wider area than their local parish boundary. For various reasons, many thousands of people visit and work and have cause to go to Wollongong and Parramatta, and so these two city churches attract a range of people and have opportunity for a variety of ministries.
 - (c) They provide a leading Christian and Anglican "voice" to the wider cities of Wollongong and Parramatta, and to the regions of Wollongong and Western Sydney. The cathedral status does add significance and support to this important role. Although perhaps more often for St Michael's than for St John's, various community, government and media bodies do look to them for opinion and leadership.
 - (d) St Michael's and St John's serve as cathedrals for regional and ceremonial occasions from time to time, such as ordinations, Episcopal welcomes, regional training and diocesan events. Other examples include the Easter Conventions and regional thanksgiving services for Anglicare at St Michael's. The diocesan thanksgiving service and farewell to Bishop Yong was recently held at St John's.
 - (e) Removing cathedral status, after being known as a cathedral for a considerable number of years, would be, as mentioned above, a disappointment or even a discouragement for many members of

the church. Further, it is likely that many in the wider community would see this as some kind of demotion or downgrading of “their” cathedral, or even be perceived as a decrease in Anglican interest in their city. These cities would be left with Roman Catholic cathedrals but no Anglican cathedrals.

- (f) Concerning the right of nomination in case of a vacancy in the position of the Senior Minister, the respective Chapters do not consider this right of the parish church as an essential advantage that needs to be regained. Appointments of the Senior Canon by the Archbishop have been well received and serve the parishes well, so long as the concurrence of the chapter to the appointment is retained.
- (g) The removal of cathedral status of St Michael’s and St John’s may also be viewed by Anglicans in the Wollongong and Western Sydney regions as a downgrading of the significance of their region and of regionalism in general, and as an indication of a kind of unwelcomed centralism. Further, the change of status from Provisional Cathedral (with the associated former context of the possible formation of a separate diocese) to Regional Cathedral would signify that regionalism and remaining as one diocese is our preferred future for the sake of mission, fellowship and gospel ministry.

Recommendation

10. The Standing Committee recommends that the Synod pass the bills as ordinances.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

IVAN LEE
Bishop of Western Sydney

4 August 2011