

Report on the Seventeenth Session of General Synod

by Murray McFarlane

General Synod was held from the 3rd to the 8th of September at the Novatel Twin Waters on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland. The Murray was represented by Bishop John and the Ven Dr Peter Carlsson and Murray McFarlane. Unlike the previous General Synod all the allotted time was used

The Synod Eucharist was held at the Matthew Flinders Anglican College on the first Sunday.

During the first full day of proceedings, a conference session was held where Robert Fitzgerald, a Royal Commissioner on the child sexual abuse inquiry spoke to the delegates and observers, he told the Synod “that nearly 600 people had told the commission of being abused in Anglican institutions, with an average of 10.6 years old at first offence. He said the church’s response must be forthright, clear and just.”¹

This led the tone for a suite of legislation revolving around Child Protection and Redress. Whilst there were a few amendments there was little dissent. General Synod is setting up a mechanism for redress with the possibility of joining in the Commonwealth Govt scheme. Details are sketchy at the moment but Dioceses and other Church Institutions can join this on a voluntary basis. This was not something that could wait 4 years so the decision was taken to set up a body that could join the Commonwealth or other schemes.

A feature of this Synod was a change of a rule in standing orders to allow the introduction of electronic voting, a system pioneered by the Adelaide Diocese. It was certainly effective in providing a means of secret balloting without having to call for such a ballot, which, I believe was a significant benefit in some motions. This system can cater for voting by Houses without each house having to vote separately. This happened a couple of times.

Other motions revolved around matters of Domestic Violence, Refugees, Assisted Dying, Climate Change, Pioneer Ministry, Professional support for Clergy etc

Financial Matters – Synod approved the Financial Reports and proposed Budget for 2018 and forecasts for 2019 and 2020. One thing we can learn from the redesign of reports is the nomenclature of changing titles from Funds to Accounts. They were able to show the proposed assessment figures for each Diocese. Dioceses cannot reduce assessment liabilities by spending in other areas.

¹ For the full text go to

https://www.anglican.org.au/data/GS17_Conference/Speech_by_Commissioner_Fitzgerald_to_the_General_Synod_of_the_Anglican_Church_170904_FINAL.pdf