

## **MINISTRY COMMISSION**

The Ministry Commission in this triennium has overviewed ministry practice within the Anglican Church of Australia identifying urgent issues before this Church and responding to the three references made to the Commission by the last General Synod, the Standing Committee and the General Secretary.

### **Membership of the Commission**

Bishop Brian Farran (Chair), Archbishop Jeffrey Driver, Bishop Rob Nolan, Canon Colleen O'Reilly, Archdeacon Peter Stuart, the Reverends Mark Charleston and Kevin Bourke, Dr. Grahame Feletti.

### **References to the Commission**

#### **1. Model Statement for Clergy & Model Performance Review**

The 2004 General Synod requested the Ministry Commission to develop a model statement for clergy of the expectations and responsibilities of their roles and entitlements at the time of their appointment.

The Commission developed such a document which the Standing Committee sent to Dioceses after its October 2006 meeting for the consideration of and response by the dioceses to the Ministry Commission. Only the Diocese of Bendigo has forwarded comments to the Ministry Commission upon this document.

The document is too substantial to include in this report. The review of responses to the document will be on the agenda of the Ministry Commission.

The second component of the General Synod 2004 reference was the request for the development of a model review of the performance of the clergy. The Commission developed guidelines for the review of clergy in ministry using the mnemonic review.

### **Introduction**

Throughout the Australian Church there is increased interest in reviewing the effectiveness, appropriateness and direction of clergy ministry. The clergy themselves, bishops and church leaders want to see in what ways the ministry being exercised makes a difference. They want to be sure that the ministry environment promotes the wellness of the member of the clergy and their family. They want to know what education and training should be made available.

In this brief resource, the Ministry Commission identifies a basic framework for ministry review. It is a work in progress. The Commission invites responses from Bishops, Ministry Educators, Ministry Development Officers, Church Leaders and Clergy.

### **Principles of Clergy Review**

The following principles serve as a checklist for ministry review -

**Mutuality** — Each person who participates in the review process has power. Members of the clergy may feel disempowered, especially if the review focuses on them alone. Parish leaders may feel unable to express their views. Care needs to be taken to ensure that all voices can be heard and that no one is disempowered.

**Developmental** — In some organisations reviews form part of a disciplinary process. In others they may serve as the prelude to restructuring. The best review is focused in the well-being of the people involved in the process and seeks to offer them opportunities for development.

***Solution-focused and goal oriented*** — Fail to plan ~ plan to fail. Everyone will be assisted when the review moves from conceptual to concrete statements. A review report should outline specific development outcomes which the participants agree need to be achieved. It should specify an agreed completion date and detail the steps which will be taken to achieve them.

***Mission driven*** — The review should affirm and stimulate the church in mission. The mission agenda should be reflected in the questions asked and in the plans that are developed.

***Differentiate between function and identity*** — There are many “jobs” that a member of the clergy will do because of the specific office they hold and the needs of that ministry. A review will help the person “do the job better.” Clergy are also driven by their vocation and their life in Christ. The spiritual agenda of growing as a disciple of Christ is an important part of the review. The review should enable the clergy to reflect on their prayer life and scriptural study as well as on the way they complete ministry tasks. These aspects of the review distinguish it from a business based annual performance review.

***Manageable*** — The review process brings with it increased anxiety. This is especially the case when a review is introduced for the first time. All of the participants need time to reflect and to pray. The review will make demands in terms of writing and collating information, reading and discussing it. There may also be some costs to enable proper participation or to acquire the right level of skills in the process. The review should be planned and negotiated well before it is due to commence. Sufficient time and money needs to be available.

***Affirming and constructive process*** — Television and film suggest to us that employees are called in to the office or invited to lunch and dressed down in a way that leaves them humiliated and unaffirmed. Most industry practice is completely the opposite. The best employers value their staff knowing that a happy, well developed and reflective staff is capable of learning and adapting. Ministry review processes must emulate the best of industry—seeking the best in and for those engaged in ministry.

***Generates self awareness and emotional intelligence*** — It is possible for processes to dehumanize people. It is also possible people to avoid looking at themselves in the mirror and taking responsibility for their life and for their work. A quality review process enables participants to recognize their feelings and the feelings of others. It is about strengthening the capacity for relationship and motivating new action.

***A review is a review not something else*** — Discipline, pastoral care and therapy are important aspects of enabling people in ministry. A review must be and must be seen to be distinct from these important works or the reviewers and the reviewed will be confused, hurt and at times abused by the process.

***Encourages responsibility and intentionality*** — There must be a distinct activity that marks the end of the review process. This allows the relationship between the reviewers and the reviewed to conclude in that form. A review should leave the reviewed with the capacity to make choices for themselves and for the people they serve. They should, wherever possible, feel encouraged and motivated for the next stage of their ministry.

**Catalyst for change** — It is possible that a review may say “everything is going exceptionally well and all the bases are covered”. Most people, however, have opportunities for development and growth. These should be named and, where possible, the resources to help that development identified. Realistic time frames which have regard for a holistic life marked by recreation, activity, prayer and study among other things should be identified. Change can be expected.

**Contextual** — Every review is different and must be treated differently.

**REVIEW** provides a framework for ensuring that all the essential aspects of a ministry review are considered.

**Relate** — establish a safe environment in an effective mutual review can occur.

**Explore** — generate information from a variety of sources that enables the ministry to be properly understood.

**Verbalise** — Present the information in a form that it can be engaged with by a variety of people.

**Interpret** — Critically examine how the ministry fits with the ministry and mission of the church in this specific context. Does it meet the ‘best practice’ for ministry?

**Engage** — Discuss what the review has generated and make plans for development and action.

**Wise practice** — Each participant takes what they learned and turn it into practice.

## **2. Minimum Requirements for Ordination**

The second reference was from the General Secretary of General Synod who requested the Commission to review the **Minimum Requirements for Ordination** as circulated in February 1998.

The Commission is still working on this document conscious of the grids that have been developed by *Theological Education for the Anglican Communion* (TEAC). TEAC is a working group of the Anglican Communion which has been established by the Anglican Primates to make recommendations and practical proposals to strengthen theological education within the life of the Anglican Communion.

In reviewing this document, the work over a very long period of time of earlier Commissions, the present Commission is conscious of the changed context of ministry for the Anglican Church of Australia, especially the missional emphasis that has become so accentuated and resourced. Further, the Commission notes the development of the practice of a baptismal ecclesiology in some dioceses and regions of dioceses as well as the emergence of a significant network that resources such dioceses and regions, **Living Stones**. This network has international links and close association with similarly minded dioceses in New Zealand.

The practice of a baptismal ecclesiology has been structured in **Ministering Communities in Mission** which has developed ordained local ministries of deacons and priests set within ministry teams in parishes.

The Commission has been alert to the training and formation practices within dioceses pursuing this model of ministry and has sought in its review of the **Minimum Requirements for Ordination** to be conscious of the needs of such dioceses whilst recognizing implications for the Anglican Church of Australia.

### **3. Environmental Education in Theological Training**

The third reference was from the Standing Committee in relation to resolution 32 of ACC 13, part B i: asks Provinces to take the following steps urgently:

- i. include environmental education as an integral part of all theological training.*

The Commission affirmed the place of environmental ethics in theological course materials. We requested that Theological Colleges or Universities offering courses in theology consider the introduction of such a sub-set of ethics in their courses, and referred attention to the Bachelor of Theology course at the University of Newcastle as an instance of such environmental education.

### **The work of the Commission**

The Commission has been very conscious of the acute needs of isolated dioceses in ministry development and formation. A proposal was developed to mount a working conference for Ministry Development Officers. This required funding that the Standing Committee's budget could not support.

Eventually in 2006 such a conference was convened, organized and funded by the Diocese of Newcastle. This conference was so successful that a subsequent conference was held again in Morpeth in 2007.

The Ministry Development Officers network seems sufficiently established to sustain itself and organize itself. This network contributes greatly to the culture of ministry development in rural and remote diocese in particular.

Another major piece of work of the Commission has been the investigation of the age profile of clergy within the Anglican Church of Australia. This investigation raises serious concerns about the continued staffing of parishes within dioceses.

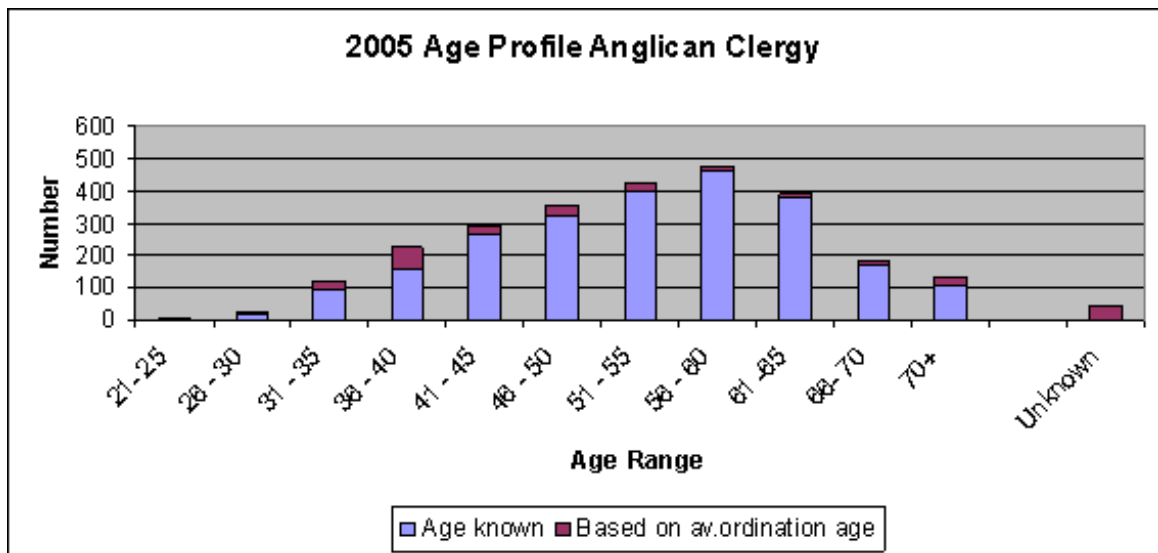
This Church generally has been rather blasé about this situation. However, our research shows there is a looming crisis that will deeply affect this Church within the next five years.

### **Age Profile of Clergy**

The Australian Clergy Directory contains data about the year of ordination as a deacon for almost all clergy holding licence or authority in the Anglican Church of Australia. It has also contains the year of birth for most clergy.

This data for just fewer than 2700 clergy, together with the diocese in which they currently live, was obtained, for the payment of a small fee. It does not include clergy identified on the database as retired. The data came without any other identifying material. From this, the average age at the time of ordination was calculated. It is 35.

A histogram based on year of birth was generated from the data. Where the year of ordination was provided but not the year of birth, the year of birth was estimated by subtracting 35 from the ordination year. Where this data has been used, it is disclosed with a different colour in the histogram.



The histogram reveals that a majority of clergy (461) are aged between 56 and 60. The distribution of clergy between the ages of 56 and 70 is –

Age	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
Number	86	88	106	94	87	91	83	73	71	63	48	42	24	31	29

The initial data on the number of theological students presented to the Ministry Commission in 2005 would suggest that there will be insufficient new clergy to replace clergy retiring from active ministry.

The data does not assist the Ministry Commission to determine in what capacity clergy were ministering. It includes clergy who do not receive a stipend. It is not uncommon for clergy who have retired to undertake significant ministry such as that of a locum tenens.

The Ministry Commission does not have data on the number of people leaving ministry in each year through death, discipline or decision.

The data shows a marked decline in the number of clergy in active ministry aged 66 – 70. This indicates that a significant proportion of the clergy retire at aged 65.

Many dioceses specify the retirement age for clergy. This ranges from 65 – 70. This legislation is in force in some dioceses even though it may contradict Equal Opportunity or Anti-discrimination legislation in their state or territory. Mandatory retirement ages appear to contradict the spirit of the law in those jurisdictions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that mandatory retirement ages are used a mechanism to ensure that clergy will conclude the active exercise of ministry because there are no other mechanisms which ensure the needs of the clergy and the people they serve are considered throughout a person's ministry. The age profiles of some dioceses may be further skewed if they were required not to set a mandatory retirement age.

The data suggests that there may be a decline in the supply of clergy. ***The material would tend to support the hypothesis that the number of people entering ordained ministry will be insufficient to replace those who are retiring.***

The Ministry Commission does not have any data on the decline in stipendiary positions in a number of dioceses. ***It is not able to determine the extent of the reduced demand for clergy.***

## **Conclusion**

The changed context of ministry and mission before the Anglican Church of Australia demands attention by those responsible for ministry formation. Awareness of the kind of leadership now required in a missional church has significant implications for the formation of clergy and for lay leaders and ministers.

In particular rural and remote dioceses face this challenge with few explicit resources and with ageing clergy. The combination of circumstances creates a volatility that needs careful management and visionary leadership.

Significant transitions must occur in the selection of clergy that this Church will require for mission and ministry as well as in their formation and continuing development. Such developments and changes will need monitoring, assessing and resourcing. This will continue to be the work of the Ministry Commission for this Commission has operated as a fertile clearing house of ideas and practices that has benefited this Church, especially those dioceses without substantive ministry development resources.

**Bishop Brian Farran**

**Chair, Ministry Commission**

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