



Anglican Church of Australia

Public Affairs Commission

Submission of the Public Affairs Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia on the Governor-General Amendment (Cessation of Allowances in the Public Interest) Bill 2023.

05/04/2023

1. This submission is made by the Public Affairs Commission (PAC) of the Anglican Church of Australia (ACA) in response to the proposed amendments to the Governor-General Act 1974.
2. The PAC is a body set up, amongst other matters, to respond to aspects of public affairs as referred by the Primate, Standing Committee or General Synod of the ACA or initiated by the PAC. The views expressed in this submission are only the views of the PAC and should not be taken to reflect the opinion of the ACA, the Primate, the Standing Committee, or any of the Dioceses.
3. Good public policy will allow for the review of entitlements based upon the allowance holder's probity and the general expectation that the dignity of high office should be maintained.
4. This policy should be standard across all publicly held positions. This is necessary to uphold confidence in public institutions and their related offices.
5. Ministerial declaration may be the appropriate mechanism to trigger the cessation of allowances. This is framed as '...if the Minister is satisfied that a former Governor-General had engaged in serious misconduct.' (4AGB) Given the weighty responsibility this implies an external standard should be present to assist the minister in making this declaration.
6. It is fruitful to note that this Bill explicitly allows for misconduct, including omissions, which precedes and succeeds the time of service as Governor-General, to be considered as serious misconduct and therefore potentially subject to a Ministerial declaration. This is of clear public interest at this time but the wide net this casts should be considered in the progress of this Bill.
7. The Anglican Church of Australia has an interest in this Bill for matters of public policy, and as the institution from which the former Governor-General Rt Rev'd the Honourable Dr Peter Hollingsworth AC OBE was drawn prior to his time in office. The Anglican Church of Australia is committed to being a safe church where those responsible for ensuring safety are held to account. Safe Church legislation and processes, and clergy discipline and standards are continually reviewed to ensure effectiveness and accountability.

Yours faithfully,

Bishop Matt Brain

Chairperson of the Public Affairs Commission