

35/08 Human rights framework for Australia

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

1. By resolution 35/08, the Synod –
 - (a) welcomed the proposed Federal Government consultation process on the protection of human rights in Australia, and
 - (b) thanked the Social Issues Executive for the work they had undertaken in the area of human rights to date and requests that they maintain a watching brief on developments in this area, and
 - (c) requested the Diocesan Doctrine Commission, in consultation with the Social Issues Executive, to prepare for the Standing Committee as a matter of priority a paper clarifying our theological understanding of human rights, and
 - (d) requested the Standing Committee to engage with the Federal Government consultation process and report progress to the next session of the Synod.

2. At its meeting on 27 April 2009, the Standing Committee received papers from the Diocesan Doctrine Commission and the Social Issues Executive. The Standing Committee also appointed an ad hoc committee comprising Bishop Robert Forsyth, Dr Karin Sowada, Mr Robert Tong and Mr Robert Wicks to undertake the consultation with the Federal Government referred to in resolution 35/08 by –
 - (a) expressing our support for the protection of human rights drawing on the reasoning expressed in papers from the Diocesan Doctrine Commission and the Social Issues Executive, and
 - (b) expressing our opposition to a charter of rights, and
 - (c) undertaking such other education and lobbying activities on behalf of the Standing Committee as may be appropriate.

3. At its meeting on 29 June 2009, the Standing Committee noted that –
 - (a) a submission had been made by the ad hoc committee on behalf of the Standing Committee to the National Human Rights Consultation on 15 June 2009, and
 - (b) parishes had been alerted to the submission on the Secretariat's website, and

- (c) the ad hoc committee will consider in due course what further lobbying and education activities should be undertaken.
- 4. A copy of the submission made on behalf of the Standing Committee is printed separately.
- 5. On 1 July 2009, Bishop Robert Forsyth participated in a public hearing in Canberra organised by the National Human Rights Consultation Committee. Bishop Forsyth spoke on the subject of religious freedom in employment.

For and on behalf of the Standing Committee

ROBERT WICKS
Diocesan Secretary

14 July 2009