



Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

A Brief Guide to Synod Rules



The Synod is the gathering of the 830 or so representatives of the members of the Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney, to govern the affairs of the Diocese. Procedures and rules are important to facilitate fair discussion, efficient debate and wise decisions. The rules for the Synod are set out in the [Synod Standing Orders Ordinance 2019](#) (the **Standing Orders**).

This guide, prepared by the Diocesan Secretary, summarises key procedures and rules of the Synod. It does not contain all the rules of Synod or in any way replace the Standing Orders. Each page has a focus as follows –

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[References in square brackets are to the relevant clauses in the [Standing Orders](#).]

The Business of Synod

Generally, the Synod transacts its business by passing or declining to pass **motions**. Only members of Synod can move motions or speak and vote in debate. Members may only speak when called by the President to do so. A motion that is passed is a **resolution**.

Some key, general rules (and guidelines)

- Members should not sit in the public gallery, and will not be called to speak, or counted in a vote, from the public gallery.
- A member wishing to speak should stand in their place (or if directed to do so, near a microphone) and when given the call to speak, give their name and parish etc, and commence with "Mr President" (or "Chair" if in Committee). [4.2(1A)]
- A speaker may not make a remark which reflects adversely on the personality of any member or imputes an improper or questionable motive to any member, or act in a disorderly way. [4.2(6), (7)]
- With the permission of the President, a member may explain matters of a personal nature. These matters are not to be debated. [6.4]
- If the President stands, all members are to sit. [4.2(3)]
- Different motions have different time limits for speeches [4.6(1)]. In all cases, a single bell chime indicates one minute remaining. Time limits can be extended by a procedural motion moved by a member who is not the speaker at the time [4.6(2)].
- It is helpful whenever giving formal notice of a motion or question, to email Synod staff beforehand or immediately after, providing the text of the motion or question, along with your full name and parish etc. This saves the staff typing up the text and reduces the possibility of transcription error.

If you have any questions, or to give notice of motions or for other Synod Business, please email **Synod staff** at synodbusiness@sydney.anglican.asn.au

Key rules during Formalities (prior to debates on ordinances & motions)

The first part of each Synod day includes prayer, Bible Study, dealing with questions, giving notice of motions, and procedural motions. This **formal** time is concluded with the 'calling of motions'. The **business paper** guides members through this portion of the meeting, listing the relevant item in the order that it will be taken with accompanying information.

Submitting Questions [6.3]

Questions (per Rule 6.3) give opportunity to obtain facts on public matters and policy, and may be asked by any member prior to the session [6.3(2)(a)], or on days 2-3 of Synod [3.3, 3.4].

- To submit a question prior to the session (to be tabled on day 1): email the question, your name and details to [Synod staff](#) at least seven days prior to the session. [6.3(2)(a)]
- To submit a question during the session: during the time for questions (only on days 2 & 3), line up at a microphone. When invited, state your name & parish (etc), briefly describe the subject of the question and hand the full text of the question to the Synod staff. [6.3(2)(c)]
- A question must relate to the business of the Synod (or its committees, boards or commissions) [6.3(3)]; and must not contain an assertion, express an opinion, offer an argument, make any inference or imputation, be expressed in language which is disrespectful or offensive, or seek a legal opinion. [6.3(4)]
- It is helpful to email all questions, your name & details, to [Synod staff](#)
- On a subsequent day, the question is printed on the business paper, and an answer is read by the President and a copy provided on the noticeboard in the foyer. [6.3(5)]

Giving notice of motions [4.3]

Giving notice of a motion allows Synod time to consider a matter before potentially voting on it; and is required for non-procedural motions. [4.3(1), (2)]

- To give notice, when invited to do so, stand and state your name and parish (etc), read the full text of your motion, and hand a copy to the Synod staff.
- It is helpful to email your motion, your name & details, to [Synod staff](#)

Procedural motions

Members may move **procedural motions**, to facilitate the consideration of business (e.g., by scheduling a motion or introducing special rules to govern consideration of a particular matter).

- If the procedural motion seeks to suspend the standing orders and notice was not provided the day before, it may be blocked by 8 members standing to object. [6.5]
- **Time limit:** a member may speak for up to 3 minutes for a procedural motion. [4.6(1)(e)]

Calling of motions (taking a motion 'formally') [4.5]

An ordinary session of Synod typically considers around 50 motions. Some are heavily contended; others need no debate. The **calling of motions** provides an efficient means for uncontentious motions to pass '**formally**' – without speeches, debate or questions.

- The President calls the number of each motion that is not scheduled. [4.5(1)]
- Any eight members may "object" to a motion being passed 'formally' by standing. [4.5(2)]
- Any member who wishes to amend a motion, may call "amendment" (which prevents the motion passing formally). The member should then provide a copy of the amendment to the Secretary and offer to discuss the amendment with the mover of the motion. [4.5(3)(b)]
- Unless eight members "object" or "amendment" is called, the mover is invited to move the motion 'formally', and does so by saying "I move the motion in my name". [4.5(3)(a)]

Key rules when debating motions

A motion, if passed, becomes a 'resolution': a statement of the expressed will of Synod on a particular matter, at the time it is made. This is the main way that Synod expresses its view.

Considering a motion – that it may become a resolution

Generally, two members give notice of a motion either prior to Synod, or during formalities on days 1, 2 or 3. The passage of a motion through Synod (on any day of business) is as follows –

- (A) The motion as it appears on the business paper may pass formally (see page 2), unless it is scheduled for debate, opposed or a member desires to amend it. [4.5]
- (B) If not passed formally, at the appropriate time (and time permitting) in accordance with the Schedule the Synod has agreed to, the mover will be invited to move the motion. At that time, the mover and seconder will speak in favour of the motion. [4.1(c)]
 - If no member wishes to speak against or amend the motion, the motion is put. [4.1(g)]
 - If a member wishes to speak against or amend the motion, debate will proceed [4.1(f)]. During this debate, more amendments may come, and even amendments to amendments. The mover is given opportunity to respond before the amendments are put (to the vote), and then the motion (as amended) is put. [4.1(h)]
 - **Time limits** – *Mover: 10 mins & 5 mins in reply; all others (incl. seconder): 5 mins* [4.6(1)(c)].
- (C) If the matter is not considered that day, a member seeking amendment may agree overnight with the movers on a form of words, which would then be printed in marked form the next day (at which point, return to (A)). [4.5A]

If the motion (including any amendments) is passed, it becomes a **resolution of the Synod**. [4.1(g)]

That the motion 'not be voted on' / 'not be put' / the 'previous question' [4.14]

It may be that the Synod considers it to be improper or unhelpful to resolve a particular motion. A member may move that the motion 'not be voted on' – i.e., cease consideration of the matter.

When this *procedural* motion is moved, Synod ceases debate on the principal motion and debates the *procedural*. If the *procedural* is carried, debate ceases on the principal motion, and it is not put to the vote. If the *procedural* is not carried, debate on the principal motion continues.

That debate cease and a motion be immediately put to the vote [4.14A]

It may be that Synod considers that a motion has been sufficiently debated. A member may move 'that debate cease and the motion be immediately put to the vote'.

When this *procedural* motion is moved, Synod ceases debate on the principal motion and debates the *procedural*. If the *procedural* is carried, the mover of the principal motion may make a speech in reply to any debate made or amendments moved; then the principal motion is put to the vote. If the *procedural* is not carried, debate on the principal motion continues.

Voting on a motion [4.12]

A motion is passed if a majority of the persons present and voting vote in favour of the motion. The majority may be determined...

- on the voices, where the President asks members present who are in favour of the motion to say "Aye", and those members who are against the motion to say "No", [4.12(1)]
- by show of hands (at the option of the President or if requested by a member), [4.12(1)]
- by ballot (if requested by 8 or more members), or [4.12(2)]
- by ballot by houses (if requested by 8 members), where each House (lay and clergy) vote separately (laity first). The motion is passed only if a majority of persons present and voting in each House vote in favour of the motion. [4.12(3), (4)]

Key rules when making an ordinance or policy of the Synod

The Synod makes ordinances to establish formal diocesan structures and set out the rules to conduct activities within those structures. Policies of the Synod establish the standard practice of the Synod in certain circumstances, but do not have the legal standing of ordinances.

Considering an Ordinance [5.1-5.11]

A proposed ordinance (Bill) may be considered over several days. The mover will seek the Bill's passage in one of two ways –

(1) **Formally:** If the mover considers that there is unlikely to be objection to the Bill or amendment to the text of the Bill, they may move a motion (without a speech) whereby Synod agrees to consider passing the Bill “formally”. [5.3(2)]

- When a Bill is moved formally there is no opportunity for speeches for or against, or amendments to be made to the text of the Bill. [5.4] If Synod agrees to consider the Bill formally, the mover may speak for up to three minutes about the Bill [5.4(1)], which is followed by a time for questions [5.4(2)-(6)] before the mover moves that the Bill pass formally as an ordinance of the Synod [5.4(7)].
- If Synod does not wish to consider the Bill formally, the mover will be required to move the Bill ‘in principle’ if either of the motions to consider the Bill formally or pass the Bill formally are not carried; or if any 8 members stand to object at any time after Synod agrees to consider the Bill formally, but prior to a vote to pass the Bill formally. [5.4(9)]
- **Time limits** – Mover: 3 mins (*after the Synod agrees to consider the Bill formally*) [4.6(1)(b)].

(2) **In Principle:** The mover & seconder may make speeches in support of a motion that the Bill be approved “in principle”. (This motion is not voted on until after questions & debate [5.5(1)-(8)].)

- There is a time for questions [5.5(2)-(6)]; followed by a time for speeches for or against, or to amend the motion; before the motion to approve the Bill “in principle” is put [5.5(7), (8)]. Once a Bill is approved in principle, opportunity is given to make amendments to the text of the Bill, by ‘going into Committee’ (see below). [5.5(9), (10)]
- If the text of the Bill is amended in Committee, the mover should move a motion to schedule the Synod to consider passing the Bill on a subsequent day of Synod (this gives the Synod a chance to reflect on the changes made). [5.6(4)]
- If the text is not amended in Committee, unless 8 members object, the mover may immediately move that the Synod pass the Bill as an ordinance of the Synod. [5.6(5)]
- **Time limits** – Mover: 15 mins & 5 mins in reply; all others (incl. seconder): 5 mins [4.6(1)(a)].

Considering the text or detail of a matter “in Committee” [4.17, 5.6]

In order to consider the text of an ordinance or policy (or other matter [4.17]), the Synod may move “into Committee”. This means Synod ‘commits’ itself to the task, operating under rules intended to support efficient deliberation of detailed matters.

- The Committee is chaired by a member of Synod elected for that purpose [2.3, 2.4], who takes the Synod through the text methodically to consider any amendments. [5.6(2)]
- When completed its deliberation, the Committee ‘reports progress’ to Synod. [4.7(3)-(5); 5.6(3)]
- **Time Limits** – All speeches in Committee have a limit of 3 minutes. [4.6(1)(e)]

Considering a Proposed Policy of the Synod [4.18]

The procedure for considering a proposed policy of the Synod is the same as that for an ordinance, save that a proposed policy must be clearly marked as such, does not need to be introduced, cannot be passed formally, & does not require the assent of the Archbishop. [4.18]