



Anne Hywood: A life of faithful service and steady leadership

By Keith Stephens



As Anne Hywood prepares to retire from her role as General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Australia, it is an opportunity to reflect on a ministry of service that has been both extraordinary in its scope and deeply faithful in its execution.

Anne's contribution to the life of the Church spans almost 25 years and some of the most challenging chapters in our recent history. She has served with intelligence, courage and an unwavering commitment to the Church's wellbeing, often in circumstances where leadership was required not only in the public eye, but also in the quieter, unseen spaces where institutions are held together.

Anne commenced her senior service to the Church in the Diocese of Adelaide, where she was appointed Registrar and General Manager in 2003. During her tenure, the Diocese faced a major inquiry into the handling of child sexual abuse allegations, an inquiry that resulted in deeply confronting findings and, ultimately, the resignation of Archbishop Ian George following a motion of no confidence by Diocesan Council. Anne was at the centre of this period, overseeing the administrative, governance and synodical processes required to stabilise the Diocese and conduct the complex election of a new Archbishop.

Importantly, Anne was also instrumental in establishing one of the earliest diocesan redress schemes for survivors of church-related abuse. *Healing Steps* served the Diocese of Adelaide for many years and represented a significant early commitment by the Church to justice, accountability and pastoral responsibility, well before national frameworks for similar schemes were in place.

Following this demanding period, Anne transitioned into the public service as Chief of Protocol at the Department of Premier and Cabinet, bringing her leadership skills into a new setting and having the opportunity to be part of some extraordinary state events and occasions. Yet, as many in the Church will recognise, the call to serve never entirely recedes. After relocating to Port Macquarie, Anne was again drawn into diocesan life through governance roles with Anglicare and eventually into the Acting Registrar role in the Diocese of Grafton, at a time when that Diocese itself was navigating profound institutional challenges.

It was perhaps inevitable that Anne's breadth of experience, calm authority and willingness to confront difficult realities would lead to her appointment as General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Australia in 2015. Over the ensuing decade, Anne worked alongside three Primates, delivered two sessions of General Synod, and navigated the unprecedented disruption of one of those synods during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of Anne's most enduring contributions has been her leadership in the development and implementation of the National Redress Scheme and, critically, the Anglican Representative Scheme. Through complex consultation with government and dioceses alike, Anne articulated with clarity and conviction why full participation was essential by the Anglican Church of Australia, in all its guises. Achieving near-universal uptake across a historically independent and diverse church was no small feat, it was, quite simply, remarkable, and has been seen as a significant response by the whole Church confronting its shared responsibility to survivors of child sexual abuse.

Those who have worked closely with Anne know that her effectiveness lay not only in formal leadership moments, but in the daily discipline of preparation, briefing, and patient engagement with standing committees, tribunals, commissions, and diocesan leaders across the country. She understood the Church's structures, politics and culture with rare depth, and importantly, used that understanding to serve and deliver the best outcomes possible.

Anne retires having been a loyal and faithful servant of the Church during a period when such service has often been costly and rarely glamorous. In a time when the Church has struggled to name its heroes, Anne Hywood stands as a quiet saint, a consummate administrator, a wise leader, and a trusted colleague.

Anne, you will be missed, by your team, your colleagues, and the many across the Church who are grateful to call you both a collaborator and friend. Go well, and thank you.

Keith Stephens is Diocesan Secretary & Executive Officer of the Anglican Diocese of Perth. He is a former Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of Adelaide, and a former Treasurer of General Synod. He has known and worked with Anne Hywood for more than 15 years.

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