

## **ACL Conference, 18 Feb 2012 – Craig Roberts Financial Perspective on Draft Synod Funding Priorities**

Money's great isn't it? Money allowed my family to have a holiday last month by the beach on the far north coast. And then when it rained, money allowed me to buy hot chips for the kids and a soy chai latte for Libby. Money's great. Its also great because money highlights your priorities. Show me your bank statements or your budget, and I'll show you your priorities, I'll show you who you are.

So as we think about our diocesan money, whether its in an endowment or in a parishioner's pocket, we want to make sure that how we plan to spend our money, and how we actually do spend our money, reflect who we are.

**Who are we?** We are Sydney Anglicans and we want our financial arrangements – and that's what we're thinking about today, how will we arrange our finances – to reflect who we are.

As Anglicans we are episcopally led and synodically governed. If that means anything, it means we have a 3-fold order of ordained ministry – deacons, priests & bishops – and the decision-making power of our diocese rests with the Synod (or its StandComm when Synod isn't meeting).

What about being a Sydney Anglican? [As I survey global and national Anglicanism, I want to stand out from the crowd. I want to stand for the authority of Scripture and the primacy not of a bishop but of the local congregation in informing how we understand 'the church'.<sup>1</sup>]

For me to be a Sydney Anglican means the heart of our diocese is your church. And my church. And your neighbour's church. It's the local church. So to be synodically governed with that view of church, it means that the decision-making power for the allocation of resources will rest with the parishes as they meet in Synod. That's a quick & dirty & imperfect summary of what it means to me to be a Sydney Anglican. And I want to make sure that how we spend our money is consistent with who we are.

Our money comes from 3 rivers – 2 from endowments and 1 from all the parishes together.

It is proposed that the central endowment funds will cover everything except

1. the cost of our ABp and his office,
2. the costs of our synods, and
3. Secretariat head office & insurance expenses.

To be episcopally led – we need an Archbishop. To be synodically governed – we need a Synod. Without those 2 things, whatever we become, it ain't Anglican. So I suggest that they should be the FIRST things paid for out of central funds.

Here's a philosophical question I have of the Draft Principles. As it stands in the example given, parishes are being told, everything's covered by our endowments – things like assistant bishops and mission work, everything except for the very things that make you Anglican. You need to pay for those things. That effectively gives the

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<sup>1</sup> I want to say that God is working through his Word, just like he promises to do, to save sinners and build up saints. And that happens best in the context not of a Cathedral, but a local parish. And it happens even better when the local parish is in fellowship with its overseer, its bishop.

parishes only 1 choice – either pay up or stop being Anglican, which is in reality no choice at all. That is not Synodical governance.

A better way forward, I suggest, is to have the non-negotiable & fixed costs of our Anglican Essentials born out of endowment earnings, and the discretionary costs, assistant bishops and Mission costs, given over to the Synod to determine. You and I know that the last part of a person to be converted is their hip pocket. If you've got someone by their hip pocket, you've got them by their heart as well. I suggest that the parishes be asked to fund mission costs.

What is proposed is for parishes to directly pay for the Abp. If that happens, we can be sure that the Abp will become subject to personal attacks surrounding how much he gets paid, what he does with his time and the rest of it. There are more helpful ways to ensure the integrity and efficiency of our episcopacy than that. But if parish contributions are to mission work, if we can persuade parishes, that is, the Synod, to fund mission work, we will have converted their hip pockets and we will have missional diocese like none other. Instead of our financial structures forcing us to look in at ourselves, they will force us to look out. That is because our financial structures will be focussing us on mission.<sup>2</sup>

There is also some definitional confusion in the Draft as it stands. The Registrar is variously described as an Anglican Essential and as 1 of the Abp's responsibilities. I suggest the Registrar is the latter and should remain funded out of the EOS. And 1 more point on Anglican essentials – it is deacons and priests and bishops that make us Anglican, and pretty much the only way to get ordained in Sydney is to study at Moore College. So that makes Moore College essential to the definition of what it means to be a Sydney Anglican. And that means, if we're going to be consistent, then the bulk of the \$1.657m in the 3<sup>rd</sup> column for Moore College & Youthworks College should be in the 1<sup>st</sup> Column with the other Anglican Essentials. So there's some definitional confusion that need to be refined.

The authors of this draft have done us a great service in promoting critical thinking within fellowship, and they so helpfully draw our attention to the need for a holistic view of our collective finances.

So as we think about the uses of these 3 rivers of money, we need to think not just about their uses, about also about the sources of these financial rivers. They are not infinite. Like a river, we need to consider where its all coming from as well as consider where its all going.

With your own money, you can do whatever you want with it. But with an endowment, when its trust money, the rules change. First rule: The people who earn the money should not be the people who spend the money. We already have that check and balance in the Diocesan Endowment with the Glebe Board earning the money and the Synod deciding how to spend it.

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<sup>2</sup> That would allow the parishes, the Synod, real choice and real opportunity for generosity and sacrifice. At the moment, the Draft calls for \$1.14m, or 1.37% of parish net operating receipts to be paid into the Centre.

Under the current model, no choice is given to the Synod as to how we want to be episcopally governed. I know the Abp & Registrar are of the opinion that the EOS is currently running on bare bones and they do not believe any further headcount cuts are possible. That is predicated on the assumption that we want 5 regions and 5 regional bishops to assist the Abp. That may well be the mood and mind of the Synod, but Synod has not been given the opportunity to declare this. It may be that Synod says, through its collective vote that we want 5 bishops, and since we can only pay for 4, 1 bishop will be like missionaries and AFES workers everywhere – they've got to raise their own funds. So I suggest we pay for our non-negotiable Anglican essentials out of endowment funds.

A problem with the EOS is that the 1 committee is presently in charge of earning the money AND spending it. And so there hasn't been the same level of prudent fiscal discipline.

2. The Central Investment Management Board should not be created. Avoid the extra risk that an overly centralist structure will bring

3. Can I plead for a ban on the phrase 'front line gospel ministry'?<sup>3</sup> I believe its unhelpfully divisive and its unbiblical. Ask me about it in the panel time.

In conclusion, I suggest the very things that make us Sydney Anglicans should be paid first out of endowment earnings, and everything else is funded initially by the residual endowment earnings and then and only then does the Synod decide what other good gospel initiatives we want to the parishes to pay for. This would allow us to remain episcopally led, give us real synodical governance and put the ball deep in our court to allow us to be both generous and sacrificial in our support of mission work outside our own parishes.

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<sup>3</sup> That has been used recently to argue that Parishes should not pay a red cent toward extra-parochial activities. That is an appalling phrase. It implies that the work of chaplains in prisons, hospitals & schools, the work of ministry trainers, the work of our bishops is somehow less valuable than the work that goes on in a parish. That is clearly not the case. Further, it is a denial of the partnership we have in Christ with chaplains, trainers, the Abp and his team.

Can I ask that we abandon that language, and instead, talk in the language of Paul's letter to the Galatians, where he sets out the basis and nature of gospel partnership, and in ch.6 of each one carrying, doing, paying for their fair share, whilst being ready to step in and bear the burdens, the temporary extraordinary loads that a sinful world places on each of us from time to time.

Which is what we did as a Synod the other year when we collectively decided to help the EOS out of its financial hole for 12 months. We helped carry their burden to give the EOS the breathing space to be able to once again stand and carry its own load.