

THE DOCTRINE PANEL
of
The Anglican Church of Australia

REPORT TO THE GENERAL SYNOD - APRIL 2001

The Doctrine Panel met some five times since October 1998 and conducted three teleconferences. The chief area of inquiry during this time has been the reference from Standing Committee to General Synod Resolution 70/98 on the Kuala Lumpur Statement and human sexuality.

Very early in discussions, the panel decided that the most responsible way to address the many and varied questions raised by the resolution was through careful and deliberate study. The panel judged that such study would also be of value to the Church and so committed to the idea of publishing background papers on the various aspects of Scripture, Theology, Science, etc that come to bear in any discussion of human sexuality. John Garratt Publishers agreed to publish the fruits of these labours. The result, *Faithfulness in Fellowship*, has been supplied to members of General Synod.

Most of the papers are the result not only of the personal study, reflection and prayer of the individual authors, but of discussion, debate, and criticism from the entire panel. In their published form they are preceded by an Introduction that outlines the issues we hoped to address and the process used in addressing them. The collection is punctuated by a Conclusion that outlines points of agreement amongst members of the panel and that briefly discusses the divergence of viewpoints on two questions of discipline: the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of gay and lesbian people who are involved in committed, sexual relationships.

The Conclusion does not make any recommendation beyond the recommendation for further study and prayer on these issues. It is clear that not only on questions about human sexuality, but in matters of biblical interpretation and authority as well as biblical and historical hermeneutics, members of the Panel represent a broad range of views. However, no consensus ever emerged that suggested that now is the time for legislative action in the Church on this matter.

We therefore submit these papers, *Faithfulness in Fellowship*, to General Synod as the report of the Doctrine Panel on GS Resolution 70/98. It is our hope that General Synod will receive this report and commend it to the Church at large for further study, prayer and discussion.

We submit this report with the recommendation that neither General Synod nor any Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia pass any substantive legislation on the issues raised in our papers pending continued dialogue in the Church. In the current climate, such legislation would only serve to complicate the discussion and cause unnecessary divisions in the Church.