

## Helping churches with the law

Each week across the Sydney Diocese, parishes conduct services, carry out ministries and put on evangelistic events, all of which are essential to the life of the church. These activities are carried out against the backdrop of a regulatory environment that is becoming more complex. This in turn makes the work of the Secretariat's Legal Services team increasingly important as it helps churches to understand their legal obligations and monitors changes in the law that affect churches.

Legal Services Manager Robert Wicks and Legal Officer Steve Lucas continually deal

with a wide range of laws that affect churches, such as anti-discrimination, taxation and employment relations. Robert says that it is important for churches to understand and submit to the law. However this does not prevent churches expressing opposition to laws that undermine their work and, if necessary, seeking changes to the law.

Today, anti-discrimination law is one area of particular concern. "There is a mood in some sections of society which is starting to encroach on religious freedoms, especially the right to speak out about religious matters and the right for

church groups to remain distinctively Christian by, for example, the people they can and can't employ," Robert says.

Another issue that churches face is that laws are often drafted without much consideration of church structure. This makes some laws difficult to apply to the church situation. By acting as an 'interface', Robert's department can apply the laws to the church and then make legal requirements accessible to parishes through guidelines and circulars. Advice can also be given in writing or over the telephone. "We aim to make ourselves as accessible as possible," Robert says.



### From the CEO

We are leaving behind an astonishing 2004. The Glebe Board result (around \$48 million) was a record, and we also accomplished an enormous change in the organisation. I have been asked to offer you the congratulations of the Archbishop and the whole of the Standing Committee. They honour you for your part in a great year. So be encouraged.

There are two dangers at a time like this. First, we risk resting on our laurels and taking things easy. The reality of life is that we are only ever going to be judged by our most recent performance. Last year was fantastic, but it was last year. 2005 now needs our attention. Second, we must remain humble. The 2004 results were achieved because faithful people applied their God-given gifts in a professional manner. In God's providence, we have the right people in the right places; it is not of our doing. Read Luke 14:7-11.

2005 has started well. The Parish Cost Recoveries (PCR) team is launching our upgraded systems and we anticipate major improvements. PCR is the core of our Parish Services initiative. Our Development Fund is proceeding well but, being very new to the church, this business will take much effort to design and build. The Communications course has begun and all reports are positive. On top of this, the GAB had a good January with a surplus over \$3 million.

We are off to a good start. I am looking forward to 2005. I hope you are as well.

Rodney Dredge

## Accounts prepared for success

The Finance and Accounting team's preparation for audit this year has been the best on record, which means quality financial statements and ultimately more money for mission.

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, the year-end audit for 2004 began in the Secretariat's Finance and Accounting division. The four-week audit is the culmination of months of hard work in preparation and the team's hopes for an efficient and high-quality outcome are by all accounts well-grounded.

Preparing for audit has been a concentrated effort, which began in October last year. The first ever joint briefing session was run for auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers and SDS accounting staff last year in preparation. This allowed PWC to explain their auditing approach and gave SDS staff the opportunity to outline the improvements that had been made to the preparation of financial statements for 2004. Chief Financial Officer Michael Blaxland says this gave PWC auditors a better understanding of the Secretariat's history and culture and allowed both teams to get to know each other.

Michael Codling, Partner, Financial Services Group at PWC, has been impressed so far by the Secretariat's level of readiness. "The preparations for this year's audit have been very thorough, very professional - I'd say the best we've seen

for several years. I'm very encouraged."

In 2004, the accounting team put substantial effort into reviewing processes for producing financial statements and statutory disclosures. This has significantly improved the consistency of financial documents and the speed at which they can be prepared. These improvements are supported by those already put in place when the general ledger was upgraded in 2003.

Chief Financial Officer Michael Blaxland points out that Sydney is the only diocese to produce financial statements that are "General Purpose". This means they are compliant with all accounting standards and prepared to the highest standard of financial disclosure. These documents include a corporate governance statement in tune with the Australian Stock Exchange listing rules, a CEO's report and a five-year financial summary for voluntary additional disclosures.

In fact, Michael says the financial statements for the Glebe Administration Board are prepared to the same standards as a publicly-listed company.

Michael Blaxland says there is much value in being well-

Sydney Anglicans Schools Corporation in both our programs. We are also happy to field enquiries from parishes regarding these personal development programs.

The uptake of the desktop/technology training through New Horizons has also been positive. Please be encouraged to complete the Personal Development Plans provided in *The Big Three* training kit. These plans are designed to help the

organisation understand, coordinate and cater for the training needs of all staff.

Staff training underway



Senior Financial Accountant Velysia Mock (top) and her colleagues has worked hard to ensure the audit, currently undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers (bottom), runs smoothly.

prepared for audit. "Auditing costs are on the increase due to a more stringent regulatory environment, so being able to produce accounts efficiently will help us to keep auditing costs

contained."

He adds that this relates directly to parish ministry. "Every dollar we spend on auditing is a dollar we can't spend on mission."

## SDS lightens up!

### Diary Dates

- March 8  
ALCO meeting
- March 9  
Finance & Loans Board meeting
- March 14  
Standing Committee meeting
- March 16  
Secretariat Board meeting
- March 25  
Good Friday
- March 28  
Easter Monday
- April 12  
Compliance Committee meeting  
ALCO meeting
- April 13  
Finance & Loans Board meeting
- April 18  
Standing Committee meeting



Someone has taken my Pretzel World coffee voucher and we're not leaving until it's returned!



"You put your left leg in, you put... Stop, stop. Rodney, your left leg!"



### HR NEWS

The launch of the Communications training initiative is well underway, as most staff have completed module one. In March, we will be commencing the Management Development Program (MDP).

It is pleasing to be able to involve participants from Anglican Youthworks and



### IT gears up for service

The Secretariat's increased focus on service delivery will affect functions and departments differently. For Technology, it will be a visible and dramatic change.

We are developing a series of strategies to give Technology a greater role in supporting parishes directly, as well as the Secretariat's internal functions.

Currently, we have over 20 distinct parish services across the accounting, legal, and property areas.

We will assess the viability of developing online applications to improve the delivery of services. This may involve simple web-based interface structures to existing systems, or the complete rebuild of some

of our platforms.

"Whatever the strategy, it will be a challenging and stimulating period for this part of the organisation," says Andrew Tilsley, Manager, Corporate Services.

As this edition of *SDS News* goes to print, we are actively recruiting for one or two technical support specialists, as well as reviewing our service/support contracts with our main software suppliers.

Our knowledge base/intranet will also be launched soon and individuals from various departments will soon be involved in content and publishing activities for this project.





# Faces of the future

As the new year begins in earnest, Mark Payne and David Cannings have moved into newly-created positions to spearhead the Secretariat's focus on parish services. Robert Wicks and Michael Blaxland have taken on with enthusiasm the positions Mark and David have left behind.

Robert Wicks, who was appointed Diocesan Secretary in December, is committed to ensuring that Synod and Standing Committee are administered well and that the decisions of both bodies are implemented. Robert is keen to run Synod in a way that will encourage parishes to pursue mission under the umbrella of the Diocesan mission and says he has a strong foundation to build on. "Mark Payne did a tremendous job as Diocesan Secretary by getting things pointed in a mission direction."

Michael Blaxland will move into the role of Chief Financial Officer in early March and is looking forward to contributing to the Secretariat's strategy, assisting the Chief Executive Officer, and having more



Robert Wicks and Michael Blaxland



David Cannings



Mark Payne

contact with other Diocesan organisations. Michael expects that the knowledge and understanding of the organisation he gained in his three years as Financial Controller will make this transition smooth.

Mark Payne became Parish

Services Manager at the beginning of the year, a role that will be driven by the aim of delivering excellence to parishes through new and existing services. Mark is naturally excited by this prospect. "We have great potential to help

our parishes significantly and what excites me is being able to realise that potential for the sake of the mission."

David Cannings' new role responds to the need for substantial additional funding to Synod. David will establish an entity designed to centralise the major borrowings of the Diocese, with Glebe Income Accounts as the base through which many of the Diocese's funding needs will be processed. "I'm looking forward to being at the opening of church buildings which are there because of what we're doing," he says.

Chief Executive Officer, Rodney Dredge, is encouraged by the ease in which these new appointments have been achieved. "In God's great providence, we have Michael and Robert ready to step into their new roles. Both men have served faithfully in their previous positions and proven their skills and commitment. The smoothness of the changeover is testimony to the effort David Cannings and Mark Payne put into preparing these men to succeed them."

## welcome! Jacoro Raduva



Jacoro (Joe) Raduva joined the Secretariat in December as Payroll Accountant. Joe will be responsible for the payroll of the Diocese and all the accounting for the Appeal Funds.

Joe comes to the Secretariat from Boral and brings with him substantial payroll experience, including 10 years as payroll accountant with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

Joe enjoys the atmosphere at the Secretariat. "You

couldn't ask for a better boss than Michael Blaxland," he says.

Joe is a committed Christian and is a member of Corrimal Uniting Church. He also occasionally attends the Fiji Uniting Church in Canterbury.

He finds the Christian aspect of his job and the contact he has with other

Christians in his workplace meaningful.

"I have worked in other places where, when you mention your Christian belief, you are definitely not the norm," he says. "Here, I can talk with colleagues who share the same faith."



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# SDS News

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## Supporting the Mission

In 2005, Parish Services will be the Secretariat's key focus. The ball is already rolling in the Property Trust with Client Manager, Evelyn Beaver, hard at work. Prior to her appointment in December last year, Evelyn worked for over 20 years in the legal and property industry. In her time at the Secretariat, she has contacted all the parishes in the Sydney Diocese who have leases or licensing agreements, introducing herself as a port of call and reviewing each parish's property interests.

Evelyn is keen to take the pain out of property matters for parishes. She hopes to achieve this by coordinating new leases and licensing agreements and simplifying the leases and licensing section on the Diocesan web site. "Property is a very valuable resource for parishes and it can contribute to their ministry by providing an additional financial resource," she says.

Evelyn also looks after parish heritage matters, which involves liaising with government departments and reviewing files, packages and questionnaires for heritage audits.

"Evelyn's work is a practical example of how we contribute significantly to the support of our parishes and their mission," says Parish Services Manager, Mark Payne.



Client Manager, Evelyn Beaver, is helping parish administrators like Penelope Read of St John's, Darlinghurst as they look after property resources which support vital ministries such as Rough Edges, a drop-in centre for the homeless.

St John's, Darlinghurst is one of the parishes Evelyn has contacted and Parish Administrator, Penelope Read, says this has decreased her stress levels. "It was a beautiful day when Evelyn first phoned me," she smiles.

Penelope's job as administrator of the church's business and property-related issues is significant. The church building at Darlinghurst is over 150 years old and there are other buildings to maintain in which vital ministries to the local

community are held. One of these is Rough Edges, a drop-in centre catering mainly for older homeless men.

Penelope says a good working relationship with the Secretariat is "incredibly important" in her job, especially as finance and property matters directly impact the church's ability to conduct ministry. "When you need information and you don't know who to contact or how to get it, you feel powerless," she explains.

Penelope has high hopes for

the future as her relationship with SDS develops. "We have a lot of property that is underutilised and we want to do the best we can with the resources we have. That's where the Property Trust comes in," she explains.

Penelope believes the Property Trust can help St John's as they strive to achieve their hopes and ambitions for ministry in their community. "Everything is easier when there's someone at the other end of the telephone who you know is on your side."

## passion in profile Donny Yohanes

Position: Portfolio Accountant



What does your job involve?

I'm part of the investment accounting team, which is responsible for unit pricing and investment-related accounting. I support fund managers and liaise with custodians and internal departments to make sure daily investment transactions

are done promptly.

What drives you as you do your job?

Colossians 4:23-24 helps me to remember that, wherever I work, God wants me to give my best. God has a special plan for each of us individually and His

plan is good. I know He wants me to fulfil my potential. At the Secretariat, it is interesting to see the way Christians work together. I once heard a preacher say "none of us have got it all together, but together we have got it all". I would like to think that is the way we work here at SDS, now and in the future.

