

*Anglicare Australia Conference 2013*

**JOHN ROFFEY LECTURE**

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**The Future of Faith Based Agencies in a Big Society**

I would like to begin by thanking Anglicare Australia for the opportunity to deliver this year's John Roffey Lecture. I only knew John a little but he was a rare combination of theologian and agency director. That skill base is few and far between and the establishment of this lecture is an initiative of Anglicare Australia that recognises the unique partnership between the Church and its welfare agencies and the delivery of services to many Australians.

Anglicare Australia as far as I am aware is without parallel in the rest of the Anglican Communion and I want to begin this address by recognising this network within the Anglican Church of Australia and the enormous contribution it makes not only to the people it serves and employs, but the credibility of the Church at this time. Last weekend Australia elected a new Federal Government and Prime Minister elect Tony Abbot promised to govern fairly for all Australians. I am sure the staff of Anglicare Australia will be very busy in coming days and weeks as they seek to build a strong relationship with the new government.

Australia is amongst a small group of nations in the world which has over a long period of time shown a commitment to working with the most disadvantaged members of our society and nearly all political parties in Australia in their rhetoric commit to a "fair go" for all Australians. Indeed the overall bipartisan support for the NDIS showed that there is a commitment by our politicians to work for the common good of all people in our country. Another example I would cite is the recent finding by the Save the Children Fund that Australia has been ranked as the 10<sup>th</sup> best country to be a mother. Australia is the only non-European country listed in the top ten and the United Kingdom was ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> and the United States 30<sup>th</sup>. The research showed that the rating for each nation had a lot to do with

health and welfare services and government support for mothers and children. “When mothers are strong and stable – physically, financially and socially – their children are more likely to survive and thrive”, the report stated.

But, while there is some good news there are some signs that we should be on watch. In the United Kingdom significant changes to welfare were introduced earlier this year. In an edition of The Tablet, an International Catholic Weekly, published earlier this year it stated:

*“The biggest upheaval in the welfare state since its inception in 1948 got underway on Monday, hailed by the Minister responsible, Iain Smith, as an assault on dependency. It is predicted to cut the welfare budget by 2.3 billion GBP in the first year and 28 billion GBP by 2015, and is supposed to do this not by making people poorer but by ‘helping’ them - his word - to find work where they would be better off. ‘Helping’ in fact means facing them with a choice between work or poverty, and hoping, that, in their own financial interests, they will choose the former. This is known as ‘making work pay’ and it presupposes despite the gloomy economic situation, that work is available.*

*All the predictions that these changes will actually increase poverty are based on the supposition that these incentives will not achieve their object, and people will continue relying on benefits – through necessity rather than choice - even though their value is shrinking. In that case, ‘the saving’ of 28 billion GBP will be simply taken from the pockets of the poor. But they will be told they have deserved their fate by their idleness”. (The Tablet, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2013, page 11)*

I don’t think we have reached this state in Australia, but we need to be on guard. Governments in Australia are under enormous pressure to sustain income. In Victoria, the share of state funding from the GST is declining, and income from gaming is starting to wane from a position of where just over 20% of state revenues were coming from gaming. As we know as a nation we were largely insulated from the GFC due to government spending and the mining boom, but we are not there now and the signs are more ominous. No matter what Federal Government we have in power the pressure is on to sustain welfare spending and limit cuts in a wide range of services.

Anglican Agencies are also facing the coming of the new Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the associated Federal legislation that will come with it. A recent article by Clifford Fram in the Company Director Magazine (June 2013) stated:

*“The not-for-profit sector is under pressure. New regulations, tax changes, donor scrutiny and a challenging economy are difficult enough. A potentially bigger problem is that there are too many organisations with too little differentiation, all competing for the same government grants and donor dollars”. (Page 26)*

In this context what is the future for Anglicare Agencies? As we know church related welfare agencies are responsible for the provision of 60% of community services across Australia and Anglicare Australia and its associated agencies are a major part of this sector. In contemporary pluralistic Australia how does a diocese/church and agency work together to address the context we now find ourselves in? If the Anglican Church through its Welfare Agencies is to be at the forefront of working and supporting the most marginalised in this country what is to be the nature of the relationship between Church and Agency? Furthermore, if the Anglican Church and its agencies are to make a contribution to the conscience of our nation and its moral and social thinking how is this to be achieved? To put it simply are faith based agencies sustainable?

I have been around Anglican welfare agencies for most of my ordained ministry of forty years and have over time been very involved with The Brotherhood of St Laurence, Anglicare Victoria, Benetas and St. Luke’s Anglicare. I was also one of the founders of Anglicare Australia. Over those years I have seen agencies go from being directly run by a diocese to being incorporated independently and some even moving away completely from their church base or foundation. Over the years I have also heard many a CEO wonder what is the basis of the relationship with the diocese, find the interference of the church very frustrating, and wonder what on earth the role of the bishop is. In more recent times some agencies have begun to worry about the diocese wanting to apply some sort of financial assessment on an agency similar to that of a parish. In other words it is a tax for being part of an Anglican diocese. Ray Cleary in his helpful book, *Reclaiming Mission for Welfare*, argues that the problem is not new:

*“At the beginning of a new millennium many church welfare agencies find themselves living in a state of ambivalence, unsure of both their identity and future. The present lack of certainty is not new. The history of church welfare in Victoria shows there has always been a degree of ambivalence within and between the agencies concerning their mission and role. The cause of this ambivalence has been the church welfare agency’s relationship with the church. In part this has been due to the ongoing tension on the meaning of mission while on other occasions the tensions have been maintained by those who lead the agencies”.* (Ray Cleary, *Reclaiming Welfare for Mission*, Barton Books, 2012 p16).

I would also add that this ambivalence and even at times tension between churches and agencies has not only been fuelled by agencies, but also by diocesan councils and bishops. The leadership of church welfare agencies may have failed to name the Christian narrative that is the foundation of the agency, but bishops and other members of diocesan councils often fail to comprehensively understand the work of the agency and corporate governance as demanded by government. For many years since church welfare agencies were established the main way of maintaining and defining the relationship was through the appointment of the CEO, often a member of the clergy or at least a practising Anglican usually well involved in the life of the diocese. But, as the church has struggled in recent times and become more concerned with its own survival, there are less and less clergy and lay people who seem to have the ability to lead church welfare agencies. This has further contributed to the complex issue of diocese/church welfare agency relationships.

Incorporation and contemporary governance and the new NFP legislation also raise many questions about the nature of the relationship between church and agency. I am a strong and passionate advocate for the church to be involved in welfare and in the future well-being of this nation. So, I want to see strong and positive relationships between dioceses and their welfare agencies, but how do we achieve this?

The starting point for this relationship I believe has to be a common commitment to the purpose and mission of both the church and agency. Both have to feel a deep and abiding commitment as to why they exist and what their purpose is. Obviously, welfare agencies are not in the business of proselytising, and largely focus on the provision of services for the

disadvantaged in our society. Is it possible to separate the various roles of the Church's mission and how they may be undertaken?

At the recent meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council held in Auckland New Zealand late last year The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission were redefined and unanimously adopted. This was an important achievement as the Council is the only world forum of the Anglican Church that seeks to express the mind of the Communion and is made up of both clergy and laity.

I am going to list the five marks, although as you will see the first two are very much to do with the religious nurture of mission and the latter three are about the social justice aspects of mission. The Marks have been adopted by most dioceses across the Anglican Church as a means by which to state clearly and briefly what is the role of the Church in both the Christian community and the society.

The Five Marks of Mission are:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The last three Marks of Mission clearly focus on the Church's role in social justice and helping to build strong and sustainable communities. To do this well the church has encouraged the growth and involvement of its welfare agencies. It is vital for both the church and agency to be very clear about this as the basis as to why they exist and the churches involvement. So in addressing the issue of the church and agency relationship let me make some specific suggestions:

- 1. The Agency's Mission:** The diocese/church and the agency must work together to have a clear theological basis and set of common values to which they are committed. These

values must reflect I believe the Christian religious base of the organisation as well as human values that undergird it:

*“Central to the mission of the church is the outpouring of God’s love for the whole of creation. It is to be seen in the life of a faith community, the local parish and in the expressions and activities of agencies. It is to be built upon the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the ultimate sign of God’s love and generosity”. (Cleary p13)*

In the case of St. Luke’s, to build on this theological foundation we have drawn on the Marks of Mission that are to do with a just society by placing them into the Strategic Plan, but I believe it has to go further than that. In an agency’s constitution there needs to be a preamble that sets out clearly and succinctly the core theological understanding of the agency and its values. This should also be in a form that can be used in the orientation process for new employees and also handed out to all existing employees. It should also be part of the Board pack. It is not asking employees and directors to have a faith commitment, but it is saying to staff and directors what is the intellectual/theological basis of the agency. In addressing the Christian mission of church welfare agencies today, I do not want to embarrass or comprise those with different faith or no faith perspectives. Indeed there should be an open and frank dialogue and discussion and this can only happen if we are clear about our own theological rationale. Over time many agencies have come to rely upon the historical relationship in terms of their foundation in explaining their faith connection, but it has to be more than that. Initially it was the church or diocese itself that ran services and sourced the funds for them and this kept the agency directly under the diocese, but from the 1960s and 1970s onwards state governments began to fund a range of services through church based agencies. An article that I read from the UK earlier this year explains this transition well. Although talking about the English context, I think it applies to us as well:

*“In the spirit of the times, these services adopted a secular and ‘mechanical’ world view, inspired in particular by the achievements of the National Health Service and the part it played in a major historical shift in the treatment of the sick, from spiritual care in the Victorian age to modern medical science. These services saw the homeless person as*

*someone who could be 'signed up' for material support and prescribed a flat, benefits, job training and treatment for addiction if needed. A rights based approach replaced religiously motivated notions of charity for homeless people, which had aimed at the alleviation of misery, at comfort and consolation, rather than outright cure...Now the mainstream service model for homeless people has evolved to focus almost exclusively on fixing physical problems and meeting material needs, which are necessary, but not sufficient for a fulfilling life. And with many faith based organisations prohibiting the promotion of religion by their staff, faith and spirituality are largely absent from today's services on offer". (The Tablet April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013, page 8)*

Cleary tends to support this view in an Australian context:

*"Today's church welfare response and agenda is therefore broader and seeks to address more than emergency relief and handouts. A justice approach involves not only meeting immediate needs, but also addressing the causes. It stands in contrast to a charity model embracing research, education and advocacy". (Cleary p14)*

However, I want to go further than this and say why are we as a church and agencies so committed to addressing the causes? Because, we believe that unjust structures should be transformed and this is not a political point of view, but a theological view of a just society based on an understanding of what God intends for humanity.

This is a sensitive area and raises questions about how faith based agencies providing government funded services care for the whole person. How does the agency be true to its Christian understanding of a person and at the same time provide a secular service? Certainly government is insistent that the provision of organisations with their roots in a religion must offer their services in a neutral way, and in a pluralistic society there is no other way. Roman Catholic religious orders running hospitals are some way ahead of the welfare sector in addressing this complex issue. They provide a very clear mission statement to all staff and patients which clearly communicates the religious base of the hospital, usually have chapels in their larger facilities and maintain a very strong pastoral care department for staff and patients. All of this is done without compromising the rights of staff and patients and respects the diversity of belief

systems, while at the same time leaving all involved with the clear knowledge what they stand for. It is up to the individual if they want to explore the religious and pastoral services that are available.

Overall our welfare agencies have very clear sets of values, and some have an explicit mission statement that acknowledges the theological or religious base of the agency:

For example Anglicare Victoria:

*“Anglicare Victoria exists to create a more just society by expressing God’s love through service, education and advocacy”.*

The challenge for agencies is to be able to more adequately articulate what the mission statement means. One can point to all the services, but I think there has to be more than that. Values and Mission Statements need to be interpreted and spelt out. When I look at Annual Reports of Anglican Agencies there is a lot of material about services and statistics and often very evocative photographs, but I want to know more about why they are involved in service delivery. I want to know why you are working to make local communities more human and people’s lives more fulfilling.

In another recent book on welfare agencies in Australia, *Driven by Purpose*, the following comment is made:

*“While the ‘faith factor’ and the dominance of religious charities in Australia has become the proverbial ‘elephant in the room’, it need not be this way. Christian charities need to clearly understand and then effectively articulate and **communicate** their **identity** and **purpose**. In doing so they will be better placed to counter the destructive misunderstandings of motive, promote an inclusive public sphere in which religious motives can be discussed and speak from a clear Christian perspective on the role of charities in the here and now. When these drivers are clearly understood and articulated, they will deliver the added benefit of helping charities cultivate healthy relationships with both the government and the community”.*

(Stephen Judd, Anne Robinson, Felicity Errington, *Driven by Purpose*, Charities that Make the Difference, Hammond Press, Sydney 2012, page 103)

The quote serves to underline that faith based agencies need to be quite clear about where they are coming from, not just in terms of their historical journey or foundation, but their current purpose and values. The point here is that if an agency is connected with the Anglican Church this area has to be thrashed out if the issue of the relationship between diocese and agency is to be clear. The theological and value statement has to be acceptable to Bishops, CEOs, Boards and Diocesan Councils. I am well aware this is a significant challenge, but it has to be done if this area is to be addressed. At present we tend to ignore it, drive around it, or just make do with the historical basis of the relationship.

**2. The Agency's Constitution:** I accept that agencies today for a whole lot of reasons need to be incorporated separately. At the same time I believe that the governance arrangements of agencies while accepting all the requirements of ASIC or state government Incorporated Associations rules can make provision for a strong relationship with the diocese/church. In the case of St. Luke's the diocese is clearly the residual owner of the agency and also in day to day governance has the capacity to have a vital influence through the following provisions in the Constitution.

- The Bishop or his/her nominee is the President (Chair) of the Board.
- The selection of the CEO by the Board must be confirmed by the Bishop of the Diocese
- The Council of the Diocese gets to make three appointments to the Board. They do not necessarily have to members of the Anglican Church.
- The Board can appoint up to seven other members, but these appointments must be confirmed by the Council of the Diocese
- The constitution cannot be changed without the approval of the Council of the Diocese
- The CEO is not a member of the Board, but fully participates in Board meetings

Building a strong connection between the CEO of an agency and a diocese is critical to building a strong and sustainable relationship between the entities and makes for better

communication and understanding. When David Pugh was CEO he was a Bishop's Appointment to the Council of the Diocese (non-voting ) and attended most Diocesan Council meetings and not only spoke to matters relating to St. Luke's, but was a contributor in many other areas including being on a working group that put together the current Diocesan Strategic Plan.

- 3. Establish an MOU** between agency and diocese/church. This is something that we have done with St. Luke's and the Diocese of Bendigo. The idea of an MOU is to try and cover many other areas of the relationship that are not constitutional in nature. The MOU is not trying to set boundaries, but aims to encourage the development of a deeper more committed relationship. It seeks to acknowledge the different nature and roles of the agency and diocese, and respect the characteristics of each entity, but at the same time build on what there is in common. The MOU establishes the foundation on which to keep building and developing a stronger relationship. As the Diocese of Bendigo and St. Luke's Memorandum states under the heading of Purpose and Scope:

*"St. Luke's relies strongly on the guidance and support of the Diocese in order to fulfil its purposes. St. Luke's constitution states that St. Luke's exists to fulfil the mission of the Diocese and to do this St. Luke's relies on an ongoing dialogue and partnership with the Diocese".*

In some dioceses there has been the development of relationships that go further than an MOU. In these dioceses, the diocese and an Anglicare organisation have entered into structural or organisational and administrative relationships. In the Diocese of Brisbane, Anglicare South East QLD, operates under the diocesan incorporation and is very integrated though a Shared Services Management Structure into the life of the diocese. In the Diocese of Adelaide I understand that Anglicare SA and the diocese share a common hub for their respective head offices and the same has taken place recently in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn. There could be other arrangements in place as well which I am sure will be shared at this Conference.

- 4. Another Way:** In the Diocese of Melbourne, the Archbishop, Dr Philip Freier has established a Heads of Anglican Agencies meeting which convenes at least twice a year to share and discuss common issues. It is in a way a pre MOU type initiative, but could

even be part of an MOU between a diocese and its agencies, particularly where there is more than one Anglican Agency in a diocese. Although largely concerned with the Diocese of Melbourne the Archbishop has invited any other Anglican Agencies in Victoria to attend and St. Luke's is represented. The meeting while largely sharing information does provide an opportunity for the Archbishop to raise any matter and for the agencies as well. It has proved to be a very worthwhile forum in which to discuss the current Victorian Parliamentary Enquiry into Sexual Abuse and the Royal Commission at the Federal level. More recently this forum has been at the forefront of framing a response on behalf of the Anglican Church in Victoria and its agencies to the two major political parties, policies on asylum seekers.

The September issue of The Melbourne Anglican proclaimed in a banner headline across its front page:

### **Anglican leaders deplore harsh stands**

The article then goes on to report on a joint statement drawn up by Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne Dr. Philip Freier, Brotherhood of St. Laurence Executive director Tony Nicholson and CEO of Anglicare Victoria Paul McDonald in which they speak on behalf of the church and nine agencies in labelling the policies of the two major parties as "unspeakably cruel". On page six of the same edition Paul McDonald, Tony Nicholson and Benetas CEO Sandra Hills all comment on what they would like from the new federal government. I salute The Melbourne Anglican for giving such prominence to the article and the statements, but even more importantly it showed church and agencies speaking with one voice!

It has also been a way in which agencies have agreed to share information, resources, and support at least one joint initiative across the agencies on a project Against Violence to Women. I am also aware of another initiative that Benetas took last year in Victoria which was to commission a research paper on the Theology of Aging. All of these initiatives are about building stronger relationships with the Church.

- 5. An Academic Position or Partnership:** I am aware the Brotherhood of St. Laurence for some time with its Research and Policy Centre has been in partnership with the University of Melbourne and the head of the Centre is also a professorial fellow of the University. I am sure this partnership strengthens the Brotherhood's position and influence, not only in academic social research, but in influencing government and private enterprise. It makes a unique contribution form, which all agencies can benefit. However, I would like agencies to consider an appointment that might be shared with a theological school or body on Social Justice or Social Conscience. In Melbourne we have Australia's first University of Divinity, the MCD University of Divinity. I would see it as a great initiative if Anglicare Australia through its member agencies was to create and fund an academic position at the university that would address the area of Church and Society with an emphasis on social justice. There are in many universities across Australia academic positions in social work and related areas, but nothing as far as I am aware that brings together the work of the church and its welfare agencies. I see here an opportunity by which again the relationship can be strengthened and from which we would both benefit.
- 6. A Director of Mission:** Some Roman Catholic agencies in seeking to address the area of the connection between their faith base and service delivery have appointed within the agency a Director of Mission. The purpose of this appointment is help the agency be true to its religious base and calling and see that reflected in the services delivered and understood by staff and clients. Cabrini Hospital in Melbourne and the St John of God Hospitals have such appointments. Much of the role at a practical level seems to concentrate on staff orientation programmes and in seeing that there is quality literature available for patients and clients to help understand their religious calling to health services. I understand that there is also now a social media presentation available all for inpatients. The Director of Mission will also work with Executive Staff to see that services are consistent with the mission of the charity. I do not know of similar role in any Anglican Agency, but I am sure I will soon learn at this conference if there is. Perhaps the closet role to this that of a chaplain in some of our agencies.

**7. Board and Senior Staff Retreats:** My last suggestion is a practical one and more aimed at Agency Boards and Senior Staff or Executive Retreats. Even with Board packs containing a theological rationale of the agency, Directors of Mission and other initiatives there is still more that can be done. With Boards it is vital that they not only understand and know the history of the agency, but something of the nature of the religious principles that undergirded it then and how they are reflected now. In the case of my own Board at St. Luke's only recently did I give a presentation about this for the present Board who all seemed to find it enlightening. It told me that speaking about it is probably more effective than printed material, or that the printed material needs to be interpreted to or workshopped. Similarly, with senior or executive staff of the agency. I don't think in thirty years of being involved with Anglican agencies I have ever once been invited to a staff retreat or meeting to speak about the nature of the religious or theological basis of the agency.

Finally, some words of caution about the future for agencies from the church side of the equation. There are two things I would particularly like to say:

Firstly, try not to become too beholden to government. This is not always an easy tightrope to walk. In the Kennett years of state government in Victoria and in the Howard era in federal government criticism of the government by agencies receiving government funding was not welcomed. However agencies must always be a voice for their constituents and clients as in most cases they have no other advocate. Nearly all members of Anglicare Australia I am sure see advocacy as a significant part of their role, but in the increasingly complex world of service delivery it will not be easy to sustain. Governments under severe financial restraints will look for agencies that can deliver the best possible service for the cheapest cost. In Victoria the area we see this most is in prisons where over half the prisons in Victoria are run by private service organisations. There is nothing to stop government in future looking to similar companies to run a variety of other community services. In the area of disability services following the major reforms the client will have the purchasing power. There is much that is good about this. However, I recently found myself at a state government reception having a conversation with an executive from a very large English based health and aged care provider who told me they could easily get into disability care and children's services.

As faith based, not for profits that have a proud history and a very strong value based model of service delivery, the challenge will be to improve upon that base, but still present ourselves to government as competitive and able to advocate for our clients and the wellbeing of our society.

The second area of concern is the balancing of being a strongly principled agency and at the same time having an effective corporate structure. This area and the above are related as identified in a recent article by Andrew Hamilton in Eureka Street where he writes:

*“Over the last 30 years governments have reduced their role in the provision of services, contracting them mainly to community and for-profit organisations. Most recently they have sought single contractors that can tender for all the services. Some of these have been large charitable organisations, particularly in health care. But many have been multinational corporations which tender for a wide variety of services. So, a visitor to immigration detention centres may be surprised to find people in Serco uniforms mowing their nature strips and also staffing the centre.*

*One result of this change is that in order to continue to serve the disadvantaged, smaller community agencies, which once tendered for relatively small projects, will be forced to combine with one another or to enter partnerships with for-profit groups.*

*The preference for large service providers is attractive to governments which choose to acquiesce in a narrowing revenue base and also face the higher costs of an ageing population. Large corporations can promise economy of scale and so save costs. The government public service has only to establish and monitor the regulatory framework within which the service is provided.*

*Outsourcing also offers political advantages. Governments can sheet home to corporations failures in delivering public services in prisons, mental health, and even public transport. Ministers can divert public anger against the service providers from whom they then demand answers and improvements. Contracts signed by the governments with corporations, too, can be kept secret for commercial reasons, so hindering public scrutiny. The employment contracts of the providers can also include confidentiality provisions.*

*What is at issue for society in these developments? Services provided by large corporations are certainly not necessarily worse than those provided directly by the state. In my experience in detention centres the quality of service depends on the attention given to detail in the rules of operation and to the culture of the organisation and its local leadership. The decisive test lies in how those who use the service experience it.*

*The risk to society and to the quality of service is longer term and more subtle. It lies in the managerial culture that these changes encourage. The interest of government will focus almost exclusively on financial efficiency, and the regulatory framework generally measures the delivery of services by only quantitative criteria.*

*The quality of the relationships on which effective service rests and other intangible factors that are central to human growth are easily ignored. As a result the care of the most vulnerable and needy will increasingly be neglected by the large providers. They will be blamed for not meeting benchmarks, and responsibility for their care abandoned to charities.*

*Within this culture the health of community organisations will be vital. But it will also be under threat. Community organisations are generally inspired by a vision of the human dignity of the less fortunate in society, and a commitment to them as persons. They represent community groups such as churches. Generally, too, they privilege the building of relationships as the path to growth in those they work with, and so insist on the quality of the relationship between worker and client.*

*This emphasis on the personal quality of service is important in making services effective. It emphasises the fact, otherwise forgotten in the focus on what is economically effective, that service to people cannot be commodified.*

*Although community organisations are often a burr in the saddle of a managerially minded government, they are important because they represent a humane vision and because they can reflect back to government an intimate experience of what is happening to the people whom they serve. Their advocacy, even when unwanted, keeps governments in touch with human needs”.*

<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=37063#.UilLaDakwpk> (14<sup>th</sup> August, 2013)

The strength of the article amongst many things that it has to say is that as faith based agencies committed to the most vulnerable and needy we must not compromise who we are to simply become a another managerially driven provider acceptable to government. At the same time I want to argue that we need to be there to be a constant reminder to government and other for profit providers that we are the best in the game at what we do and what we stand for. However, we just can't stand on our laurels and need to be proactive in engaging government and our stakeholders, promoting robust debate, excellent research and a knowledge and understanding of our clients that is second to none.

Thank you for your patience and the opportunity to honour the late John Roffey and I hope offer encouragement to you, the members of Anglicare Australia.

**Andrew W. Curnow AM**

**Bishop of Bendigo**

**September 2013**