

totally justifying their mission to spread their brand of Anglicanism into other dioceses and other countries. On the international and national scene, they are determined to get their way and to disenfran-

not need to be written. However, Muriel Porter's book on the Sydney Diocese does need to have been written. It is an important book about complex matters and a 'must read' in these confusing and often

classical forms of Anglican worship and habits of faithful living that have sustained us for centuries.

"This is a necessary book for those who want to understand what... is going on in our Church nationally and beyond... The

internationally. A sustained and systematic course has been set to gain influence in many places, including Melbourne, through various ways of training people for ministry, evangelism at universities, [and] youth work in schools.

Dr Peter Jensen to respond, both to this report and to the Book, but he declined.

See Canon Alan Nichols review of the book on page 25; and a viewpoint 'A passionate balance – the Anglican genius', by the Revd Dr Kevin Giles, on page 19.

# Changing times take Anglican agency well beyond its nest

by Mark Brolly

FOR NEARLY 11 years, Kaye Swanton has led an organisation that began life in 1947 as The Church of England Marriage Guidance and Education Council, became the Anglican Marriage Guidance Council and that now, as LifeWorks, is fully government-funded and obliged to be non-sectarian.

That evolution – combined with changes ranging from feminism, the Family Law Act, increasing acceptance of same-sex relationships and a breakdown of divisions between the domestic and the workplace – means that Ms Swanton and her colleagues are dealing with a vastly changed context in which relationships are born, grow, struggle and, sometimes, die. Seven out of every 10 marriages are conducted by non-denominational civil celebrants.

Ms Swanton makes no apologies for moving the agency beyond its Anglican, and broader Christian, roots.

"I would like to think that we remain a values-based organisation and that those values are broadly held in a non-denominational sense," she tells *TMA*.

That said, Ms Swanton acknowledges that "there is no doubt that our history is in the Anglican Church and the Anglican community". But now that it is fully funded by government and doesn't receive any funding from the Church as once it might have done, LifeWorks must operate "from a non-judgmental, tolerant, inclusive perspective".

"I do feel as CEO of Lifeworks that I have a significant responsibility to the history of the organisation and I hope it's one that we conduct very respectfully," she says.

LifeWorks grew from a response to the difficulties encountered by servicemen returning to their partners and families after World War II. The Mothers' Union of Victoria was concerned about the rising divorce rate after the war and helped set up the organisation to offer "preparation for marriage" courses. Social, legislative and economic changes, along with a move from volunteers to professionals, have taken LifeWorks some way from its Anglican roots, though not severed them.

Four directors require the assent of Archbishop in Council and the chairperson needs to be ratified by the Archbishop. Mr Peter Harcourt, who has served as a churchwarden



Kaye Swanton, CEO of LifeWorks.

at St Mark's Camberwell and as Secretary and Treasurer of the National Home Mission Fund, is the first non-cleric to chair the agency.

But Ms Swanton flagged her perspective from the start. In her

commissioning speech in St Paul's Cathedral on 29 November 2000, she said: "It was the case that I didn't agree lightly to this ceremony... As I indicated in my job interview, it's not that I am anti-religion or anti-church. On the contrary, spirituality is a very important part of my life and a very important part of how, I hope, I make my way through the world.

"But I did hesitate because I have held the view that Christianity and the Church as a community leader has not always been inclusive enough. Not only has it failed at times to be inclusive enough of women and the gay and lesbian community but in my view it has often failed to offer, if not acceptance, then at least real understanding with real loving kindness.

"... The business I think we are really in, the business LifeWorks is really in, is hope and happiness."

Ms Swanton cites feminism and the Family Law Act as two of the biggest drivers of change. Feminism, she says, helped move what once was private into the public domain, while Family Law, by introducing no-fault provisions in divorce, encouraged authenticity and opened up opportunities for counselling.

Acceptance of same-sex relationships has changed markedly, too, but problems remain, she says. It is still common enough that while one member of a couple is "out", the other's sexual preference remains a secret to his or her family and colleagues.

"These are burdensome things to carry and... I don't think as a society that we ought to be doing to anyone," she says.

"I think more is required of a kind and civil society."

LifeWorks has moved beyond the domestic into the workplace, introducing workplace relationship services through Employee Assistance Programs and, in 2008, LifeWorks in the Workplace.

At the recent Melbourne diocesan clergy conference in Bendigo, LifeWorks introduced its latest brand and logo.

Ms Swanton says she considers herself "spiritual and intrigued with theological questions but I am not religious in a formal way, I suppose".

"I think the work we do and the work of the Church are quite similar," she says. "We try to develop a reflective capacity, 'mindfulness'.

"We deal with the very fragile human psyche."