



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Prison reform on the agenda at Anglicans' annual meeting**

Newcastle Anglican Bishop Brian Farran on Saturday will raise the contentious issue of New South Wales prison reform during his annual address at this year's Synod in Maitland Town Hall.

"New South Wales needs a more efficient and effective approach to imprisonment," Bishop Farran said.

"One way to monitor our response to the most disadvantaged people in the community is to take a look at what is happening in our prison system.

"In New South Wales, this is not a pretty picture."

There are over 10,000 people in New South Wales' prisons on any given day, with many disadvantaged groups such as those with an intellectual disability or serious mental illness, those with substance abuse issues or victims of sexual abuse or domestic violence, and people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, disproportionately represented.

In Juvenile Justice Centres, Aboriginal young people make up 51% of the population.

Bishop Farran said that too often in New South Wales young people are remanded in custody before a court has determined their guilt or innocence merely because they are homeless or have troubled home backgrounds.

"The imprisonment rate in New South Wales is 87% higher than in Victoria, yet crime rates are about the same," Bishop Farran said.

"The recidivism rate (defined as reoffending within 2 years of leaving prison) is 42.4% compared with 28.7% in Queensland, so rehabilitation is also not working in New South Wales.

"Why lock up so many people when community supervision of offenders appears to be more effective and cheaper?"

"It costs approximately \$180 per day to keep a person in prison, six times more than community supervision.



“Money saved by reducing our prison population could be used to provide more support to people leaving prison to help them find work and accommodation... reducing that 42.4% recidivism rate.”

The 50<sup>th</sup> Synod of the [Anglican Diocese of Newcastle](#) begins this weekend.

The location of this year’s Synod is significant, as it represents a return to where it all began in 1865, when the First Bishop of Newcastle, Bishop William Tyrell, held the First Synod of the young Newcastle diocese at Morpeth.

Bishop Farran, the Twelfth Bishop of Newcastle, will welcome around 350 delegates from 63 parishes on Saturday morning, delivering his Charge to Synod from 9.00am.

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### **About the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Synod**

- Synod is the governing body of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle and acts like the Parliament of the Church.
- “Synod” means “journeying together”, with the point being to bring Church members together so that agreement may be reached on topics of concern.
- This will be the First Session of the Fiftieth Synod, with the third and final session scheduled for 2013.
- Bishop Tyrell opened the First Session of the First Synod on 15 August 1865 in the School of Arts Hall Morpeth after worship in Saint James’ Church.
- The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle is home to 63 parishes, extending from Woy Woy to Murrurundi and out west to Merriwa.