

Anglicans in revolt over property carve-up

CHURCH SELL GOES TO HELL

LORETTA LOHBERGER

ANGLICAN parishioners angered by the church's fire sale proposal want parishes to have control of donations they receive and want the chance to decide their church's fate.

More than 300 people from all over the state filled the Campbell Town District High School gymnasium yesterday to express their anger at the way the church has pro-

posed to sell properties and to formalise the Save Our Community Soul group.

The state's Anglican synod voted in June to sell 108 properties, including 76 churches, to help fund a redress scheme for victims of childhood abuse.

Save Our Community Soul committee member and Southern Midlands Mayor Tony Bisdee said those at the meeting supported raising

money for redress, but were "outraged" at the process. "The anger in the room was palpable," Cr Bisdee said.

"I would hope that we would have a meeting with the Bishop [Richard Condie] in the next week or two ... we're hoping that the Bishop will reconsider his position and be prepared to sit down and talk with parishes and communities."

CONTINUED PAGE 4



Church battles sell-off revolt

FROM PAGE 1

Those at yesterday's meeting voted to:

REJECT the process of taking the decision of ownership of local churches away from local parishes.

CALL for the funds held by the Anglican Church from donations, and particularly from bequests, remain the property of the parish, not of the Diocesan Council.

CALL for the Burials and Cremations Act to be strengthened.

CALL for a stop to the sale process until legal ownership issues were addressed.

Cr Bisdee said several churches had been built on land gifted by locals in the 18th century. "It was given for a specific purpose and that purpose did not include selling the property," Cr Bisdee said.

Lyons Labor MHA Jen Butler said opposition to the proposed sale of church properties was growing, and called on the



UP IN ARMS: Anglicans from all over Tasmania at Campbell Town District High School yesterday. Picture: BRUCE MOUNSTER

gently to address concerns about access to cemeteries and burial places.

"A review of the Burials and Cremation Act is long overdue and the only solution is to grant presumptive interment perpetuity rights to all gravesites across our state," Ms Butler said.

Attorney-General Elise Archer said community mem-

bers were rightly asking questions about the sale of churches.

"While their sale is ultimately a matter for the Anglican Church, we understand the concerns of local communities, which is why the Tasmanian Government is committed to preserving, protecting, and, where appropriate, strengthening both the rights of community members and the



SHORTFALL: The Anglican diocese has rejected a local offer for St John's Church at Franklin. Picture: MATT THOMPSON

obligations on cemetery managers under our review of the Burials and Cremation Act," Ms Archer said.

Minister Guy Barnett said the review was in progress.

"We are consulting very carefully, the Government has this under way and is getting feedback on how to review and improve and strengthen the burials legislation here in Tas-

mania," Mr Barnett said.

An Anglican Church spokesman said the church had made it clear it was interested in community feedback about its proposals to fund redress.

"We recently released guidelines for that community feedback and extended the deadline for submissions to allow time for local groups to consider their response," he said.

In the lead-up to yesterday's meeting, a group at Franklin in the state's South learnt its bid to purchase the town's Anglican Church was not successful.

The church spokesman said Friends of St John's did not have the capacity to make a satisfactory offer.

"While we still have a way to go in the finalisation of a sale as the submission period is still open, we are comfortable the private offer we have received so far has the resources and passion for the property to ensure it can be enjoyed by the Franklin community long into the future," he said.

Friends of St John's said it was "extremely disappointed" but remained ready to renew negotiations.

The group's committee said if it became apparent there was little chance the group could acquire the church, it would honour its commitment and return funds to those who donated through its crowd-funding campaign.