

Australia's Anglican church still divided over women's ordination

by [David Crampton](#)

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(ENInews)--Australia's Anglican Church has its third female bishop, Genieve Blackwell, but her March 31 consecration was boycotted by her archbishop, Sydney's Peter Jensen, a strong opponent of women clergy.

Blackwell, the first Anglican woman bishop in the state of New South Wales, was appointed regional bishop of Wagga Wagga, located between Sydney and Melbourne, by Bishop Stuart Robinson of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. Jensen is archbishop of the region, which also includes Sydney, one of the most conservative dioceses in the Anglican Communion.

Of her new role, Blackwood told ENInews, "It is about promoting Christ's church in the world, and encouraging parishes in what they are doing now and in the future." She told the Sydney Morning Herald that she was "a bit nervous but I look on this as meeting a great challenge that faces the rural and regional church ... It is a great thing that the gifts of women are being recognized and confirmed as being able to be used in Christ's service."

A daughter of a Methodist minister, raised in the Uniting Church, Blackwell joined the Anglican Church while studying at university. She undertook further study at Moore Theological Anglican College from 1989 to 1992 under Jensen, and was ordained as a deacon in Sydney in 1993. (Deacons may not celebrate the Eucharist and have been ordained in Sydney since 1989.)

Jensen, along with all his Sydney bishops, did not attend Blackwell's ordination service for "reasons of conscience." Instead, he asked Bishop Brian Farran of Newcastle, New South Wales' second senior Anglican clergyman, to take his place.

Australia's second female bishop, Melbourne's Barbara Darling, was among the 18 bishops who laid hands on Blackwell during the ordination service.

As the Sydney diocese opposes women priests, Blackwell entered the priesthood in 1998 within Canberra-Goulburn, and headed four parishes, the first woman to do so at each. In her new post, she has authority over 15 parishes.

When Robinson became bishop in 2009, he expressed a desire to see more women appointed to higher clerical office.

"Genieve Blackwell is so capable, I hope I can keep her - she is made for the job," he told ENInews. "She's an extremely gifted and able leader, pastor, teacher and administrator. We are delighted to be a part of history."

Canberra-Goulburn has been a pioneer in women's ordination for 20 years despite being sued by the Sydney diocese in an attempt to stop ordination of 11 female priests in 1992. Sydney eventually had its action thrown out of court and Kay Goldsworthy was ordained as priest, one of the first ten female Anglican priests worldwide. She was Australia's first woman Anglican bishop in 2008, followed by Darling nine days later.

Goldsworthy's 20th anniversary in the priesthood was marked in a February service.