

# SDS stays ahead



Ensuring a smooth upgrade: Technical Specialist Paul Semple.

At 9am on Saturday 28 May, SDS's offices were buzzing with life as staff from Accounting, Investment Accounting and IT undertook the D360 General Ledger upgrade. The weekend shift was worth the effort as the implementation ran smoothly on the day, the result of much preparation in the previous weeks.

The upgrade was so successful that the following week, which had been set aside to rectify any problems, could be used instead to further enhance the system to suit SDS's needs. "To have both the upgrade and the enhancements done was a bonus," says Chief Financial Officer, Michael Blaxland. Staff then went through two days of intensive D360 training on June 9 and 10, which also provided the opportunity for newer staff, who have had to learn the system on the job, to have formal training.

Michael says the success of the upgrade is encouraging and vindicating. "It proved we had made the right choice in selecting Evolve 360 as our supplier and that we have controlled the customisation of the system so it can be upgraded in future," he says. "Evolve 360 is still being enhanced and has vastly

improved the functionality of our financial systems, as it is a well-supported and fully-documented system with appropriate training." Evolve 360 incorporated the enhancements requested by SDS before the upgrade into their core D360 product. "This shows that our enhancements were highly valued by Evolve 360 and this in turn reduces our business risk", Michael says.

On the day, Senior Financial Accountant Velysia Mock says there were no complaints when it was realised the weekend would be the best time to upgrade. "I think a huge reason why the upgrade went so smoothly is that the staff were so cooperative," she says. "There was lots of work before the Go Live, in terms of giving feedback and patiently testing and retesting changes, and people did all this in the middle of their everyday work." Applications & Development Specialist Lesley Lim says that the few inevitable hiccups on the day were able to be resolved. "Everyone was very cheerful and cooperative," she says. "Whatever problems we had were small and we managed to resolve all the issues – it went better than I expected!"

## SDS lightens up!

SDS splurges on going away present for Stanley Leong.



"Silly Walk Day" gets off to a good start at SDS.



## From the CEO

A clergyman visiting our offices recently said to me: "the atmosphere feels different". When I probed a little, he was able to identify that our people were moving faster, they were more focused than he recalled and his questions were actually being answered! This confirms that our client service culture is becoming visible outside our organisation.

As you know we are presenting New Capital Project mid-project reports to ministers, churchwardens and synod representatives. As a result of the response, Mark Payne and I are more convinced than ever that our culture and practice has to include us taking our services out to the parishes.

The effect of visiting a parish or making a presentation is twofold. Firstly, we learn that we can help people at the sharp end of ministry by tailoring our work to fit their needs. We will never find out how best to shape our services from our desks: we must go out to those in direct ministry and talk to them. Secondly, when we visit, ministers and churchwardens discover that we too are human and that our mission imperatives are just as strong as theirs. It is fascinating to see just how quickly issues can be resolved when we talk face to face in a non-combative environment. We discover that we are all on the same side.

Over the next six months, I will work on getting everyone out on a parish visit so as to experience first-hand the relevance and importance of our work in the mission. Be encouraged. God is at work in our midst.

Rodney Dredge

# Taking IT to the regions

George Lyubers has visited regions in the Diocese as part of a strategy to bolster IT services, save on costs and make ministry easier for regional clergy.

In his first month at SDS as Manager, Technology Services, George Lyubers has already started the ball rolling as he works to broaden our IT services to the Diocese, visiting regional offices and meeting with bishops and archdeacons to discuss the IT needs of their areas.

George says the visits have been a good reminder that SDS is on track so far and indicate that the foundation laid during Stanley Leong's time at SDS as Technology Manager is a strong one. "The parishes enjoy the services we provide and Stanley has worked hard to take the pressure off parishes in the area of IT and keep them up to date with technology," he says.

Assistant to the Bishop of Wollongong, Geoff Kyngdon, says technology is vital to the ministry of regional areas. "We need to constantly be looking at how to work faster and smarter," he says. "The need

for technology in regions is growing and the Diocese has been able to do for us what we couldn't do ourselves."

George says these meetings allow SDS to look at the special needs of each area. For example, Wollongong faces the significant issue of the cost of travel. A possible solution being discussed is web-based videoconferencing, which would allow the regional office to conduct a conference with clergy in different deaneries without needing to be in the one place. "It is absolutely vital for us to have this video link – it would provide us with flexibility beyond comprehension," says Geoff. Adds George, "videoconferencing is like being in the same room and it would mean we can save on car costs, not to mention the time and strain on clergy."

Other plans in the pipeline are centralised buying for facilities such as phones,



George Lyubers has recently met with Bishop Ivan Lee and other regional clergy to discuss possibilities for IT services and support.

computers and whitegoods, so the Anglican Church can deal with suppliers as one entity rather than individual parishes, hopefully with better pricing and deals as a result. Other arrangements such as software, web hosting and mobile phones, voiceover

internet and broadband for parish offices are also being explored. "All the parishes want these technologies, so we're looking at ways to roll them out," George says. "We have big plans for helping parishes and passing on the benefit of any savings we can make."

## SDS Women do Lunch!

SDS Women came together to munch and mingle at our first women's lunch on Wednesday 22 June. Lesley Lim talked about her journey with breast cancer and gave some general information on the topic. She says she hopes her insight might help other women. "At the time of my illness, I panicked and didn't let myself digest what was happening and get the best treatment, so I told myself that when I was better, I would share my experience, so others wouldn't make the same mistake".

Especially as Lesley had worked at SDS through the time of her illness, women admired Lesley's courage and appreciated her willingness to share an experience close to her heart. "It was really nice of Lesley to share her story," says Velysia Mock. "It was informative and personal to hear someone's life experience, rather than just reading information."

The lunch itself gave SDS



women the chance to chat and catch up. "I think that this was a good bonding time for everyone," says Julie-Anne Barry. "I really enjoyed the talk and had the chance to catch up with other women," says Christine Kim. Velysia adds that the value of times like these filters through to the everyday work environment. "It's nice that SDS organises these things – it shows they care about women in this workplace and see ministry to individuals as important. As women in the workforce, we need to support each other."

## Serving with vision

As Val McEachern retires, SDS celebrates her contribution administering the Vision funds and also with the property services area. Val started at SDS in 1995 with the Appeals Unit, helping administer the different donor funds. When all other funds were transferred out of SDS, Val remained to look after the Vision fund, which SDS still administers.

In this capacity, Val has seen a side of the Anglican Church's ministry that most SDS staff don't get to see. She has been encouraged by the contact she has had with donors, who have often amazed her with their faithfulness.

Her role has helped her to see how the Anglican Church works with other organisations such as the Red Cross when disaster strikes. "I have learnt a lot during my time here and seen a lot of the good that is done," she says.

Val is very appreciative of the work environment at



SDS. "I found working in the commercial world could be quite self-centred, whereas here, you are encouraged to be aware of other people's needs," she says. "The support I have received here has also helped me to deal with the illness in my family and reminded me that God is there to see us through." Chief Financial Officer Michael Blaxland says: "Val has been a faithful employee, always willing and able to help, and she has modelled her Christian convictions in her work".

# Training for Excellence!



We are now over half-way through our communications training course with Human Synthesis. So far, the modules have covered communication styles, conflict resolution, empathy, assertiveness and cooperative power.

During June and July, Natasha Percy and I conducted analysis on the program by seeking feedback from representatives from each group. As a result of this feedback, a number of important changes to the program will be introduced.

From August, the relevance of content to our beliefs and priorities will continue to be examined as we look at including Christian material and references, and deleting any overly secular material that might conflict with our beliefs.

You may also notice a difference in the structure

of future modules. Classes will include fewer learning outcomes and less written material. Instead, there will be greater interaction including group discussions, role-plays and SDS-specific scenarios to address the issues that come up in each module. Overall, we aim to shift the delivery away from training to facilitation.

All this will hopefully help us as an organisation to make the most of this training opportunity and make sure that we retain the benefits for years to come.

Whilst the first half of the year has been challenging for some to commit to our program, I am confident that what we are doing is right. I continue to call on the support of all staff to eagerly participate in the remaining four modules in 2005.

**Andrew Tilsley**  
Manager, HR & Corporate Services

## New recruit! Angela Newby

The Legal Services team has recently welcomed Angela Newby, who joined SDS in June as Secretary/PA. In this role, Angela provides administrative assistance to Compliance Manager Peter MacLean and Corporate Secretary Andrew Sillar as they prepare agendas, minutes, risk and compliance material.

Angela has performed roles in administration for Canterbury City Council and Flight Centre in the past and is enjoying SDS's distinctive atmosphere. "I didn't know before that there were jobs that encompassed Christianity as this one does," she says. "It's really good to be in an environment where I can freely express my faith."

Angela's current goal is to learn as much as she can so that she can make the most of her role. "I want to enhance my skills in this area so I can provide Andrew and Peter with the best possible support," she says.

Angela says working for SDS is helping her to realise the size and scope of the Anglican Church. Hailing from Georgia, USA, she thoroughly enjoys Sydney life. "Sydney is the most beautiful city I've seen," she smiles. "I love the architecture and the way the water glitters on the harbour and also the diversity of food, art and theatre." Angela and her husband Mark attend Haberfield Baptist Church.



## Congratulations!



**Stephanie Fisher and husband Ryan welcomed baby Zack Jacob into the world on July 6!**



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# SDS News

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## Reaching regions with NCP

The New Capital Project continues to forge ahead with encouraging signs as presentations on its progress are being held in all regions of the Diocese. Throughout June and July, Database Manager Peter Peters and Consultant Warren Stanley have given a total of 18 presentations to rectors, churchwardens, parish councillors and Synod representatives.

These presentations are the fulfilment of a commitment made last year to brief parishes on progress midway through the Project and give parish representatives the opportunity to ask questions and voice any concerns. The presentations have included a summary of the objectives and rationale of the New Capital Project, placing the Project in the context of the Diocesan mission, and an explanation of the database containing the information that will be used in the next stage of the Project. Attendees were also given Parish Packs containing database information relating to their parish.

As the Project is a major priority for the senior management of the Secretariat, Chief Executive Officer, Rodney Dredge and General

Manager, Parish Services, Mark Payne also attend the majority of these presentations. Personal Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer, Maria Karamihas and Jenny Dredge serve supper before the presentations.

Synod 2005 will decide whether or not to advance the Project to the next stage. Warren says that, by bringing parishes up to date with the Project and hearing their comments and questions now, the process at Synod will hopefully run smoothly. "The general reaction has been mixed: all have been welcoming and the discussion has been open and honest, but there has been a whole spectrum of reactions ranging from localised concern to positive encouragement," he says.

Warren and Peter emphasise however that transparency and sensitivity is key at this stage. "Our aim is to acquaint parishes with the challenge and opportunities for ministry involved in the Project, while acknowledging that the process might be difficult for some," says Warren.

Peter says the general feedback has indicated that parishes have found the presentations helpful and clear. "The presentations have gone as



The NCP presentations run by Peter Peters and Warren Stanley (pictured at Menai Anglican church) provided a forum for open and honest discussion.

well as or better than anticipated, with a mood of questioning rather than criticism."

The Rev Rob Barrie, rector of St Paul's, Menai, was impressed with the clarity and thoroughness of the presentations. "Every aspect was covered and it's great that the approach is pastorally sensitive," he says. "I feel well-informed and I'm very impressed with the

database's ability to assess assets accurately."

Warren says the presentations have given the parishes a chance to think about the magnitude of moving resources around within the Diocese so that ministry can go forward. "It's a huge thing: both for people who give and receive resources, from a property and a ministry perspective."

## passion in profile Benita Ong



**What does your role at SDS involve?**

I am managing the Glebe Diversified Property Fund while Stephanie Fisher is on maternity leave. I analyse the listed and unlisted property trusts and then decide whether or not to invest in them, aiming to beat the benchmark return.

**What excites you about your job at SDS?**

Working with mostly Christian colleagues is a new experience for me, especially when the organisation meets and opens in prayer. This never happens in secular workplaces.

**How do you express your faith outside work?**

I attend Cabramatta Anglican Church with my husband John, where I'm part of a bible study

**Position:** Assistant Portfolio Manager, Property Securities

group. I love the fellowship and do the bible readings. I also perform the role of treasurer, which for me emphasises the importance of investing money wisely in my job. I'm encouraged to remember that God knows where my gifts can best be used and that He is my strength.

