

## Know Your Jargon

**Apologetics:** A reasoned defence of the faith. This should be more substantial than using isolated proof-texts as the basis for argument.

**Biblical:** Founded on the authority of the Bible. Frequently misused to give a speaker the moral high ground. Arguably we are all biblical; only our interpretations vary. Variations: *Bible-believing, scriptural, a "high" view of scripture.*

**Conservative:** Cautious; keeping intact or unchanged. In the Christian context it refers to the traditional beliefs and practices of the church

**Evangelical:** Strictly speaking it means "centred on the Good News of Christ", especially relating to the doctrine of justification by faith but is frequently used as a more positive alternative to *fundamentalist*.

**Feminist:** One who advocates equal rights for women. This word can often be misrepresented to suggest advocating the dominance of women.

**Fundamentalist:** Originally a movement supporting the "fundamentals" of the faith but has evolved in Christianity and religion in general to mean anyone with a literal view of the text of scripture.

**Hermeneutics:** Specifically the science of the interpretation of scripture. More correctly it means the science of the interpretation of ancient documents.

**Liberal:** In the Christian context this word means "not rigorous or literal" or alternatively "embracing a breadth of mind" The word is commonly misused to label people negatively.

**Misogyny:** Dislike of women.

**Shibboleth:** A test word, opinion or formula that identifies a person as a member of the "club". The women's issue is an example

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**Men and Women,  
Equal in Christ, Equal in mission.**

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## Text of the Barnes/Middleton Overture

To the venerable Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales

Whereas:

1. the Word of God recognises men and women as equal in creation and redemption in Jesus Christ (Gen.1:26-27; Gal.3:28)
2. women played a recognised and crucial role in supporting the ministries of Jesus and the apostles (Luke 8:2-3; 10:38-42; Rom.16:1-6; 1 Tim.5:3-16; Tit.2:3-5)
3. women were not appointed as priests or elders in the Old Testament nor as elders in the New Testament
4. through the apostle Paul, the Scripture states: 'A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent' (1 Tim. 2:11-12). It states this on biblical and theological, not cultural, grounds (1 Tim.2:13-15)
5. this is in harmony with other passages which deal with male headship (1 Cor.11:3; 1 Tim.3:1-7; Eph.5:22-33)
6. the 1997 General Assembly of Australia (Min.120) ruled that the General Assembly of Australia, 1967 (Min.131 [2]) decision to open the eldership to women was a resolution which was not binding on the various state Assemblies
7. the 1997 General Assembly of Australia (Mins 67 and 121) ruled that it is competent for a state Assembly to restrict admission to the eldership to men
8. diaconal ministry is open to women, along with a variety of other ministries
9. Scripture demands that the ordinary teaching and ruling office of the eldership be open only to spiritually qualified men.

Now therefore the Presbytery of Sydney South humbly overtures the Assembly to take these premises into consideration and to:

1. declare that only suitably qualified men are eligible to be ordained to the eldership;
2. resolve to retain existing women elders in office;
3. resolve that there be no further ordinations of women to the eldership of the Presbyterian Church in NSW;
4. direct that the Code be amended accordingly:  
4.33 - delete the first sentence 'Elders are communicants of the church who have been elected to the session by the communicants of the parish or congregation', to be replaced by 'Elders are male communicants of the church who have been elected to the sessions by the communicants of the parish or congregation.'  
4.37 - delete the whole, to be replaced by 'Election of elders. Elders are elected by the communicants of a parish or congregation from among the male communicants who have attained the age of 21 years.'  
4.40 - delete the whole, to be replaced by 'Names suggested. The Session may nominate men for election by the communicants.'  
Or to otherwise as the Assembly in its wisdom may deem fit.



Information on  
the Overture to  
Stop the Practice  
of Ordaining  
Women to the  
Eldership  
in NSW



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**Men and Women,  
Equal in Christ, Equal in mission.**

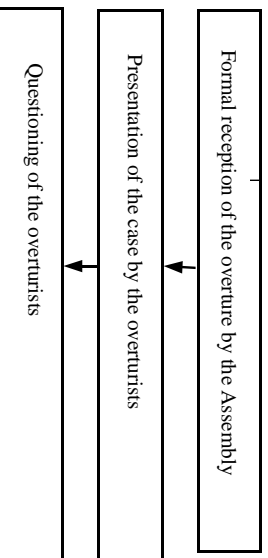
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## Process of the Overture

An *overture* is a formal written proposal either to enact a new church law or to have something done that is perceived as being of benefit to the church.

In the Assembly it can come from a standing committee of the church, a lower court (Session or Presbytery), or from seven individual members of the Assembly. Two people are nominated to state the case at the Assembly.

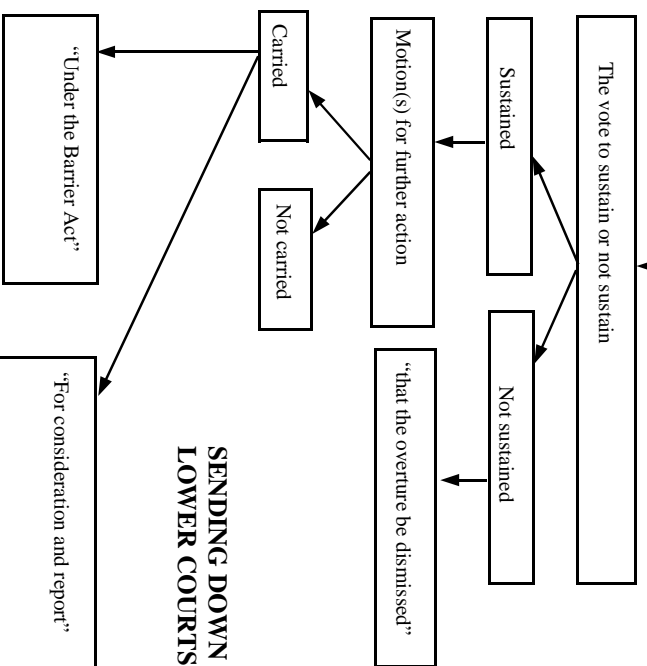
### STATING THE CASE



### THE DEBATE

The first motion is "that the Assembly sustain the overture".

### THE VOTE



### SENDING DOWN TO LOWER COURTS

### RETURNS TO REMITS

It comes in two parts, the *recitals*, or reasons for the proposal, followed by the *prayer* or details of the request for action by the assembly.

The people presenting the overture, if they are members of the court, are called the *overturists* and retain all their rights during the process of the debate.

### STATING THE CASE

This action is a formal decision to hear the case of the overturists. It is normally not debated.

The nominated overturists are allowed a total of 15 minutes to state their case in whatever combination they find suitable.

Questions may come from any member of the court hearing the overture but must relate to the content of the overture and be designed to bring out more information or to clarify points.

### THE DEBATE

The overturists themselves move and second this motion and can speak to it if they wish.

*Sustaining* the overture is an agreement by a simple majority (50% +1) of the Assembly that a case has been made for further action.

This debate is the core of the process and the outcome is a simple YES or NO. It can be a long debate. All members of the Assembly may speak once in this debate.

At some stage the Moderator will announce that in his opinion the matter has been sufficiently debated. At this point a motion "that the motion be put" is voted on by the assembly. If carried the motion to sustain is put to the assembly.

Prior to the vote, the mover of the motion has a right of reply and will seek to refute many of the arguments of opponents.

If the motion to sustain is lost the additional motion to dismiss the overture is put without debate. The matter ends there.

If it is sustained, the next motion, which will be the action that the assembly is being asked to do is considered.

Like the first motion, the prior right to move these motions is vested in the overturists. However *amendments*, or alterations to the wording, may be moved by prior notice of motion from any member of the Assembly.

It is also possible for members to move a *counter-motion*, which is substantially different from the original. The Assembly in this case debates which motion it wants to proceed with, votes on it and then debates the content of that motion. In this instance the mover of the motion has no right of reply.

### SENDING DOWN TO LOWER COURTS

If a church law is to be changed, proposals have to be sent down to presbyteries for approval "under the Barrier Act" of 1698. It requires a majority of presbyteries to agree to it. They only vote to approve or disapprove.

However the Assembly may decide to send the overture down to Presbyteries and Sessions "for consideration and report". This invites full discussion, amendment, suggestions, etc.

### RETURNS TO REMITS

Matters sent down under the Barrier Act are returned from Presbyteries as "Approved" or "Disapproved". If disapproved they are dismissed by the following Assembly.

If approved, the issue can be approved by the Assembly and become law. However, although this is usual, it is not automatic. Full debate and disapproval is still a possibility.

Matters sent down "for consideration and report" do not become law even if approved by a majority of Presbyteries. The Assembly may choose to incorporate suggestions or even reject the whole overture on the basis of responses.

Any outcome which is intended to become law must still be sent down "under the Barrier Act".