

## Anglican Historical Society Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn

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### Professor Tony Vinson to Speak in Goulburn Cathedral

Professor Tony Vinson will speak about Bishop Mesac Thomas and the development of Goulburn at a public lecture to be held in St Saviour's Cathedral, Goulburn, on **Friday 12 March 2010 beginning at 7.30 p.m.** Professor Vinson was prompted to subtitle his talk "**A Goulburn Hero Caught in a Greek Tragedy**" when he started to investigate the life and times of Mesac Thomas who was the first Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Goulburn (now the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn).

Mesac Thomas arrived in Goulburn from England in 1864 and served the Diocese until his death in 1892. At the time of his arrival, the diocese covered much of the southern half of New South Wales, extending from Batemans Bay westwards to the South Australian border. He made several lengthy tours of his diocese, often accompanied by his wife Mary.

During Mesac Thomas' time in Goulburn, the magnificent Cathedral Church of St Saviour was constructed to a design by the famous architect Edmund Blacket. The Cathedral was built over the existing parish church which was then demolished.

Mesac Thomas is perhaps best remembered for the so-called "Goulburn Cathedral Dispute". The reasons for the dispute are complex but relate to the conflicting roles of St Saviour's as a Diocesan Cathedral and as a parish church. The issue came to a head in 1886 when Captain Francis Rossi locked himself in the Cathedral and refused to allow the Bishop entry.

But there is a lot more to Mesac Thomas than the Cathedral Dispute and it is unfortunate that the Bishop's significant achievements and are not well recognised.

Professor Tony Vinson is one of Australia's leading social scientists. His long and diverse career includes social research, education, government services, the criminal justice system, prison reform and community development. He is an Honorary Professor in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, and Emeritus Professor, University of NSW.

Professor Vinson has visited Goulburn many times in the course of his work. Over the years he has discovered that there is much more to the city than the somewhat depressing environments of the court house and the gaol. A visit by Professor Vinson to St Saviour's Cathedral led to a fascination with the life and times of Mesac Thomas and he felt inspired to delve more into Bishop Thomas' role in the history of the Diocese of Goulburn and the wider community.

Entry to Professor Vinson's talk is free. Supper will be served afterwards. The talk is being organised by the Anglican Historical Society and the Friends of St Saviour's. For more information please contact Charles Body on (02) 6241 4948 or [crmsm@fwi.net.au](mailto:crmsm@fwi.net.au).