

Anglican synod 'to look at upgrade for diocese'

By HELEN SIGNY

THE Anglican Church's local synod would deliberate at the end of the year on how to upgrade the status of the Diocese of Hongkong and Macau, an informed source said yesterday.

The priest, who did not want to be named, said an 11-member working commission established in 1989 had recently completed its final report on ways of upgrading the diocese into a province - a grouping of dioceses eligible to sit on the Anglican Consultative Council.

The commission had consulted most local parishes and would present its findings to the synod at its biennial meeting in December.

"It is a general policy of the Anglican church that a diocese shouldn't exist in isolation... that is a kind of anomaly," the priest said.

"If an option is accepted by our synod, it doesn't guarantee that other parties would accept the same idea - it might take up to after



Archbishop Carey

1997 [for the changes to occur]."

The final report recommended either making Hongkong and Macau into a province in its own right or forming a province of Southeast Asia along with dioceses in Taiwan, Singapore, Sabah, West Malaysia and Kuching, the priest said.

But the commission had rejected the possibility of

linking the Diocese of Hongkong and Macau to the church in China.

The Basic Law states that China should not interfere in the internal affairs of the church in Hongkong and that religious organisations in Hongkong should maintain their own identity and be members of international organisations.

"We have to maintain our autonomy after 1997, and besides, even if we wanted to be part of the church in China, they might not like the idea at all... because it might make people think China wasn't abiding by the Basic Law," the priest said.

He said the Diocese of Hongkong and Macau had to be upgraded not to secure its future after 1997, but to keep in line with trends in the Anglican church in Asia.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, told local clerics during a one-day visit to Hongkong earlier this week that he favoured the establishment of a province of Southeast Asia.