



## **News from the May 2007 Plenary Meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference**

### **Two new Bishops attend meeting**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference held its Plenary Meeting at Mary Mackillop Place, North Sydney from May 3-10.

The two recently announced new Auxiliary Bishops for the Melbourne Archdiocese joined the meeting at various stages.

During the meeting, Bishop-Elect Timothy Costelloe sdb was seconded to the Bishops' Commission for Doctrine and Morals, while Bishop-Elect Peter Elliott was seconded to the Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Life.

Archbishop John Bathersby, Archbishop Adrian Doyle, Bishop Michael Putney and Bishop David Walker were re-elected to the Permanent Committee, following the expiration of their terms.

The Bishops noted with sadness the death of Bishop Patrick Murphy, Emeritus Bishop of Broken Bay, since their last meeting.

### **Archbishop Ncube speaks out on desperate situation in Zimbabwe**

Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo gave a courageous account of the desperate situation in Zimbabwe under the rule of Robert Mugabe when he visited the ACBC plenary meeting.

Archbishop Ncube, who was in Australia as a guest of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, said the situation was getting worse every day.

“Our government in Zimbabwe has gone against its own people and will use all sorts of false arguments to stay in power,” he said. “For example, they have called me the Prophet of the West”.

Archbishop Ncube said things were so bad in Zimbabwe that life expectancy now stood at just 34 years for women and 37 years for men.

He said that since March this year, the Mugabe regime had picked up more than 600 members of the opposition at national, provincial, district and local level, and bashed or tortured them.

With inflation running at 4,000 per cent and a loaf of bread costing \$6,000 the economy was out of control and people were starving, he said.

“Right now the humanitarian situation is very bad in Zimbabwe. So many families eat only once in two days. It is a very distressing situation. There is so much depression and so much fear.”

Archbishop Ncube appealed for Australians to support humanitarian appeals for Zimbabwe and to keep the international pressure on the Mugabe regime. He said the cancellation of the Australian cricket tour to Zimbabwe would have an effect.

“I support a boycott so as the tour will not be used to boost the image of Mugabe,” he said. “We have to do everything we can. We cannot just soft pedal.”

Archbishop Ncube said that in taking the decision to speak out against the Mugabe regime, he had placed his personal safety in the hands of God.

“Something broke in me and I thought we just can’t let this man walk on our head,” he said.

“I meditate every morning, I pray the Rosary daily for our country and if possible, I pray another Rosary in the evening for my own safety.

“I can’t explain why I’ve kept alive. It is just God’s presence.”

To see the Australian Bishops’ statement regarding Zimbabwe, issued at the conclusion of their Plenary Meeting, go to [www.acbc.catholic.org.au](http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au).



ACBC President Archbishop Philip Wilson with Archbishop Pius Ncube of Bulawayo.

## **Bishops tune in to Guy Sebastian**

In a special presentation, the Bishops were treated to a sample recording of the WYD08 official song, written and performed by Australian Idol winner Guy Sebastian.

“Receive the Power” will become the anthem for Australia’s hosting of World Youth Day in Sydney next year.

“We wanted a song that was stirring and uplifting,” WYD08 Coordinator Bishop Anthony Fisher OP said.

“Above all, it had to engage young people and capture the theme of World Youth Day 2008 – namely, that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses.”

Bishop Fisher and WYD08 Chief Operating Officer, Danny Casey gave a presentation to the bishops on preparations for World Youth Day, followed by a lengthy question and answer session.

Following the presentation, ACBC President, Archbishop Philip Wilson joined Bishop Fisher and some local high school students to launch the Pilgrim Partnership Support Programme.

Under the program, Catholic communities in Australia and New Zealand will help young people from disadvantaged communities in our region attend World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney under a new scheme of partnership and cooperation.

To see full press release on the launch of the programme, go to [http://www.wyd2008.org/index.php/en/events\\_news\\_programs/news\\_archive/australian\\_nz\\_catholics\\_to\\_help\\_disadvantaged\\_pilgrims\\_attend\\_world\\_youth\\_day\\_2008](http://www.wyd2008.org/index.php/en/events_news_programs/news_archive/australian_nz_catholics_to_help_disadvantaged_pilgrims_attend_world_youth_day_2008).

## **Research presented**

Professor Tony Vinson, with Fr Joe Caddy and Fr Peter Norden sj gave a presentation on the research project: Dropping off the Edge: the Distribution of Disadvantage in Australia.

The project was a joint work of Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia and identified and described the complex web of disadvantage that ensnares generations of Australians.

A discussion followed on possible ways for the Church and its agencies to pick up on the findings of the report and to find practical ways of addressing and arresting this entrenched disadvantage.

The Plenary Meeting was also addressed by Mr Bob Dixon of the ACBC Pastoral Projects Office.

Mr Dixon gave a broad overview of the results of the National Count of Mass Attendance and the National Church Life Survey undertaken last year, the results of which will be made public over coming weeks.

Bishops were invited to provide feedback on their local consultation regarding the Disconnected Catholics report for consideration at the November Plenary meeting.

## **A young heart needed for Church in Australia – YCS/YCW leaders tell Bishops**

The Church in Australia needs a young heart, and a nationally consistent method for training young leaders would go a long way towards achieving this, two youth leaders told the Bishops at their Plenary Meeting.

Devitt O'Brien of the Young Christian Students movement and Sarah Taylor of the Young Christian Workers movement addressed the bishops and took part in a discussion on the role of their organisations in the Church today.

“The Church should have a young heart,” Devitt said. “Christ lived and died as a young person (and through the election of the apostles) Christ created a young heart for his Church.

“What we see as lacking is a consistent method of training young leaders. YCW and YCS can provide this method and in doing so can provide a way of making the heart of the Church young again.”

Sarah assured the Bishops of the desire of YCS and YCW to stand and work with the Bishops in engaging young people in the life of the Gospel and the life of the Church.

The ‘See, Judge and Act’ method of self examination called young people to be Christian witnesses and proclaim the Gospel, she said.

“Central to this is the Eucharist and other sacraments; we must encourage young people to be in a relationship with Jesus.”

The presentation followed an earlier session in which the Bishops themselves, under the guidance of the Bishops Commission for Education, had engaged in a pastoral discussion on Passing the Faith on to Young People.



Devitt O'Brien, Sarah Taylor and Bishop Eugene Hurley

## **Australia to host Bishops of Oceania in 2010**

The Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) Plenary Meeting will be held in Sydney in May 2010.

The Bishops accepted the proposal that the meeting be held from May 10-13, in conjunction with the ACBC Plenary Meeting which would commence on Tuesday, May 4, 2010.

Bishop Julian Porteous and Bishop Christopher Toohey were selected to join with Bishop Peter Ingham and Bishop Christopher Prowse to be part of a reference group to assist with the planning of the FCBCO Plenary.

The Bishops also agreed that there be an exchange of observers at the various plenary meetings of the FCBCO members.

### **2007 Social Justice Statement to focus on Australia's role as a global citizen**

The Bishops approved a draft of the 2007 Social Justice Sunday Statement, on the theme: 'Australia's role as a global citizen'. The statement draws on theological concept of solidarity and neighbourliness as addressed by the Holy Father and in the encyclicals *Populorum progressio* and *Sollicitudo rei socialis* – celebrating their respective 40th and 20th anniversaries this year. The document addresses particular Australian issues, including foreign aid, war, the United Nations, environmental issues, and refugees.

### **Bishops back initiative for inactive Catholics**

Conference gave its support in principle for an initiative to develop programs aimed at welcoming Catholics back to the practice of their faith.

The Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation proposed the initiative as a positive response to the challenge of the decline in the practice of the faith by:

- Recognising that this is an important national issue
- Proposing that a revised program for the care of returning Catholics be considered as an appropriate national response to the Report on Disconnected Catholics by the Pastoral Projects Office
- Addressing this at a diocesan level
- Arranging for training workshops to be held in individual dioceses so that people can be trained in this valuable ministry
- Encouraging parishes in their diocese to undertake an outreach program to welcome Catholics back to the practice of the faith.

The initiative will be a project of the newly formed National Office of Evangelization which incorporates the Catholic Enquiry Centre.

### **Catholic students receive multi-media tool to learn about media and faith**

Catholic school students across Australia will have the opportunity to become 'cadet reporters' and learn more about the life of Jesus in a new multi-media resource sponsored by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

This multi-media resource is the second part in the Bishops Pastoral document on the media entitled *Go Tell Everyone* which was released for World Communications Day in 2006.

Specifically, through using this web-based learning tool, students are being educated to be wise consumers of the media.

The Resource was launched at the Bishops' Plenary Meeting in time for World Communications Day 2007. A press release, with a link to the resource, can be viewed at <http://www.acbc.catholic.org.au/bc/evanmis/20070509952.htm>.



Adalgisa Portelli from St Scholasticas College, Glebe demonstrates for the Bishops the new “Go Tell Everyone” educational resource.

### **Bishops establish Australian Catholic Youth Council**

Conference approved the establishment of a national advisory council for youth, to be known as the Australian Catholic Youth Council.

The Council will advise the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life on the views and pastoral care needs of young people.

The Commission considers that the pastoral care and evangelisation of our youth, including arrangements to continue and build on the experience of World Youth Day 2008, are of critical importance. An Australian Catholic Youth Council will enable it to carry this work forward.

### **Ecumenical visit**

The General Secretary of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA), Rev John Henderson addressed the bishops during their Plenary meeting.

His address was followed by a discussion with the Bishops about the NCCA (of which the Catholic Church is a member) and ecumenical affairs.

Rev Henderson then joined the Bishops for lunch.

### **Towards Healing**

Conference accepted amendments to the Towards Healing document relating to the review of process provisions.

### **Eucharistic Hospitality**

The Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Relations is to produce a document for national guidelines for Eucharistic hospitality.

### **General Instruction of the Roman Missal**

The Australian version of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal with adaptations approved by Conference in accordance with Chapter IX of the Instruction was submitted to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in June of 2006 and awaits *recognitio*.

### **Appointments/Elections**

Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Bishop David Walker were elected to represent the ACBC at the October 2008 Synod on *The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. Archbishop John Bathersby was elected as an alternate delegate, if required.

Bishop Christopher Prowse was nominated as the Chairman of the Anglican dialogue, AustARCC.

Bishop Luc Matthys was appointed as a member of the Home Mission Fund.

Conference appointed Sr Patricia Hannon op to the office of Defender of the Bond for the National Appeal Tribunal of Second Instance; her appointment is to be co-terminus with other current appointments to the Appeal Tribunal.

Fr Frank Devoy was appointed as Director of the Office for Clergy Life and Ministry for a term of three years commencing 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2007.

Conference endorsed the appointment of Sr Veronica McCluskie sgs as the Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia Executive Officer for a term of three years commencing January 2007.

It was noted that Mr Kevin Croker, Mr Michael Hogan and Mrs Carmel Crawford be appointed to the Australian Catholic Council for Clergy Life and Ministry for a term of three years commencing November 2006. Rev Anthony Aspinall is the representative of the Permanent Diaconate. The representatives of ACLRI are Sr Sue Richardson pbvm and Paul Cashen msc.

It was noted that Beth Nolen, Patricia Walsh, Patricia Bannister and Fr Mark Freeman be appointed to the Council for Australian Catholic Women for terms of three years commencing November 2006.

Conference agreed to the appointment of Rev Paul Simmons of the Broken Bay Diocese as the new coordinator of the Permanent Diaconate, for a term of three years commencing on 1 June 2007.

Fr Tim Brennan msc has been appointed to the National Committee for Professional Standards.

Conference appointed Bishop Gregory O'Kelly sj and Fr Laurence McNamara cm to the Lutheran-Catholic Dialogue.

Conference appointed Fr Greg Brett cm to AustARCC.

It has been necessary to revise the proposed membership of the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) Forums and Networks. The revised list of three-year appointments, is as follows:

NCCA Executive:

Archbishop Philip Wilson  
Bishop Michael Putney  
Mrs Loretta Wholley –WA

Head of Church  
Alternate member  
Designated member

Directors of NCCA Limited (Sydney based)

Mr Danny Casey – NSW  
Mr David Penny – NSW

Christian World Service (Sydney/Melbourne based)

Ms Trish Ryan (Diocesan Director of Caritas, Brisbane)  
Fr Michael Delaney - Tasmania

Faith & Unity (Melbourne based)

Dr Ann Hunt (ACU / Ballarat)  
Fr Peter Matheson (Melbourne)

Finance Committee (Sydney based)

Mr David Penny- NSW

Gender Commission (Sydney based)

Ms Zara Tai – proposed by the Council of Australian Catholic Women

Ms Bernice Moore – NSW

National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Ecumenical Commission (Sydney based)

Mrs Elsie Heiss – NSW (Chair of NATSICC)

Social Justice Network (Sydney based)

Mr John Ferguson – NSW

Sr Libby Rogerson IBVM – NSW

Youth Network (Sydney based) – to be nominated by ANDYMC.

The following have been appointed to the National Liturgical Council for a three year term commencing November 2006.

Rev Paul Bird CSsR (Melbourne)

Mrs Jenny O'Brien (Adelaide)

Rev Patrick O'Regan (Bathurst)

Sr Ursula O'Rourke SGS (Brisbane)

Very Rev David Orr OSB (Broken Bay)

Rev Christopher Willcock SJ (Melbourne)

Sr Kerry Willison RSM (Perth)

Conference appointed Mr Brian Maher as the ACNFP Inc nominee to the NFP Board of Management and re-appoint the ACBC nominees, Mr. Dennis Morris and Mr. Bruce Ryan, and ACNFP nominee Noelle Melrose, for a further two years.

Conference appointed Sr Pauline Staunton RSC OAM to be the official delegate of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to the XII International Congress on Catholic Prison Pastoral Care.

The members of the newly formed Australian Catholic Youth Council are:

Bishop Joseph Grech

Erica Bernard – WA

Victoria Burrows – WA

Fr Christian Fini – Vic

Timothy Davis – Vic

Maryanne Hacker – NSW

Malcolm Hart – Qld

Steve Lawrence – NSW

Yvette Nehme – NSW

Mearon O'Brien – Vic

Lyndon Cox – NSW

Paul Salmon – Vic

Teresa Wilson – Vic

Bruce Ryan – ACT – General Secretariat