



News from the November Plenary Meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

New Bishops attend Plenary Meeting

There were two new faces at the Bishops' Plenary Meeting, held at Mary Mackillop Place in Sydney from November 27 to December 1.

It was also the first Plenary Meeting since the appointment of Archbishop Mark Coleridge to the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

The new Auxiliary Bishop of Adelaide, Bishop Gregory O'Kelly SJ, attended his first meeting since his episcopal ordination in September. During the meeting, Bishop O'Kelly, who has had a long and distinguished career in education, was seconded to the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education.

The Bishops also welcomed the newly installed Eparch of the Chaldean Eparchy of Oceania, Archbishop Jibrail Kassab, who attended the Plenary Meeting. Archbishop Kassab was seconded to the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations.

In other Commission appointments, Bishop Peter Ingham was elected to the Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation.

The Bishops noted with sadness the death of Bishop Leo Clarke, Emeritus Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle, since their last meeting.

Divorce and the Catholic Church – Booklet approved

A new booklet entitled “Divorce and the Catholic Church – Frequently Asked Questions” was approved by the Plenary Meeting.

The booklet will be a companion to the extremely popular “Marriage in the Catholic Church – Frequently Asked Questions”, which was published earlier this year by the former Bishops' Committee for the Family and for Life. The Marriage booklet, available for order through the ACBC has been in huge demand from parishes, engaged couples and those involved in marriage preparation.

The new booklet, on Divorce and the Catholic Church is a project of the Bishops' Commission for Pastoral Life and has been approved by the Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals.

“This small booklet is an attempt to explain some of the principles underlying the Church's approach to issues around divorce, remarriage and the Eucharist,” the introduction says.

“It is hoped that it provides encouragement and guidance to all who are grappling with the pain of divorce and, in particular, with its implications for their life as members of the body of Christ, the Church.”

A publication date for the booklet has not yet been set. Upon publication it will be available for order through the ACBC secretariat.

Pastoral Research

Bob Dixon and the staff of the Pastoral Projects Office, Melbourne, presented an update to the Bishops on the National Church Life Survey which has been conducted throughout Australia in all the main Christian Churches, including Catholic parishes.

Mr Dixon also outlined the results of a research project on Catholics who had ceased attending Mass.

The Bishops received the report and said it “would be a valuable tool in forming pastoral strategies to help people return to the practice of their faith”. For a copy of their full statement on the research, go to www.acbc.catholic.org.au.

World Youth Day

World Youth Day Chief Operating Officer Danny Casey and staff from the World Youth Day Office presented an update to the bishops on current planning for World Youth Day.

The Bishops formally approved the itinerary for the pilgrimage of the World Youth Day Cross and Icon.

The WYD Cross and Icon will arrive in Sydney on July 1, 2007 and travel right around Australia before arriving back in Sydney for the World Youth Day celebration in July 2008.

Inter-religious Event

The Australian Catholic Bishops will host a Congress on *Peace in the Middle East* at the NSW Parliament House in May.

The day-long Congress will be a significant event in Australian Inter-religious affairs, featuring participants from the Christian, Muslim and Jewish religions.

International speakers will join local experts to consider the topic: “*The Role of Religion in Achieving Peace in the Middle East*”.

The Forum is an initiative of the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations and it will be presided over by the President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Philip Wilson.

New ACBC Commissions

The November Plenary was the first meeting held since the reorganisation of the ACBC.

All of the Bishops Commissions had their mandates approved and put forward nominees for the various Advisory Councils.

The new Commissions are:

The Permanent Committee
Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals
Bishops Commission for Liturgy
Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation
Bishops Commission for Catholic Education
Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life
Bishops Commission for Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders
Bishops Commission for Justice and Service
Bishops Commission for Church Ministry
Bishops Commission for Caritas
Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations
Bishops Commission for Canon Law
Bishops Commission for Administration and Information
Membership Panel

Membership of the Commissions can be seen at www.acbc.catholic.org.au

Appointments.

Conference approved the following staff and Advisory Council appointments:

The five Diocesan Directors of Clergy Life and Ministry – Fr Peter Bianchini (Perth), Mgr Ian Dempsey (Adelaide), Mgr Vincent Redden (Sydney), Fr David O’Connor (Brisbane), Fr Martin Ashe (Melbourne) were appointed to the Australian Council for Catholic Clergy Life and Ministry for a term of three years.

The Bishops agree in principle to the appointment of a Deacon to the ACCCLM

Conference approved the appointment of Sr Patty Fawkner sgs, Mr Carey McIver, Ms Zara Tai, Mrs Joan Hendriks, Dr Tracey Rowland for terms of three years to the Council for Australian Catholic Women.

Fr Francis Devoy was reappointed to the position of the Director of the Office of Clergy Life and Ministry for a period of at least twelve months.

Elisabeth Cowie, who has served the Conference for 25 years in the area of Clergy Life and Ministry is retiring. Conference formally expressed its appreciation for her generous service.

Geraldine Hawkes is not continuing as Chair of the Commission for Australian Catholic Women. Conference formally expressed its appreciation for her generous service

Conference appointed the following as members of the Council for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations:

Sr Giovanni Farquer rsj
Fr Gerard Kelly
Mgr Peter Kenny
Fr Pat McInerney ssc
Ms Margaret Naylor
Sr Mary Raeburn
Mr Michael Brown

Conference approved the following people as participants in the National Council of Churches of Australia Forum from 13 to 17 July 2007, in addition to Archbishop Wilson:

Bishop Michael Putney
Bishop Issam Darwish
Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett
Mr Michael Brown
Sr Elizabeth Delaney sjc
Sr Giovanni Farquer rsj
Mrs Elizabeth Harrington
Mrs Joan Hendricks
Fr Gerard Kelly
Mgr Peter Kenny
Mrs Margaret Naylor
Ms Loreta Wooley

Conference approved the nomination by the Commission of Sister Vivienne Keely to the Board of the Australian Catholic University Centre for Inter religious Dialogue

Father Joe Caddy was re-appointed as Chairman of the Catholic Social Services Australia Board for a second, three year term.

Professor John Warhurst and Ms Liz Orupold were appointed as Members of the Catholic Social Services Australia Board for a term of three years.

Mr Tony Davies was appointed to the Catholic Social Services Australia Board for a further year.

Conference re-appointed the Rev Peter Williams as Executive Secretary of the Bishops Commission for Liturgy and the National Liturgical Council for a three-year term.

Conference appointed the following persons as consultants of the National Liturgical Council for a three-year term:

Sr Eileen Brown SGS (Wollongong)
Rev Jim Cronin (Towoomba)
Rev Timothy Deeter (Sydney)
Rev Thomas Elich (Brisbane)
Rev Patrick Flanagan (Ballarat)
Rev Russell Hardiman (Bunbury)
Mrs Elizabeth Harrington (Brisbane)
Sr Anne McMillan RSM (Ballarat)
Mrs Cathy Murrowood (Hobart)
Rev Brian Nichols (Hobart)
Sr Ilsa Neicinieks RSM (Adelaide)
Mrs Jenny O'Brien (Adelaide)
Rev Frank O'Loughlin (Melbourne)
Mr Paul Taylor (Melbourne)

Conference appointed the following persons as music consultants of the National Liturgical Council for a three-year term:

Dr Geoffrey Cox (Melbourne)
Rev Timothy Deeter (Sydney)
Rev Kenneth Howell (Brisbane)
Rev William Jordan (Melbourne)
Mr Bernard Kirkpatrick (Parramatta)
Mrs Cathy Murrowood (Hobart)
Mrs Jenny O'Brien (Adelaide)
Mr Paul Taylor (Melbourne)
Rev Christopher Willcock SJ (Melbourne)

Conference approved the following persons as members of the Catholic Media Advisory Council:

Bishop Peter Ingham, Commission nominee
Marita Winters, Commission nominee
Debra Vermeer, ACBC Communications Officer
Jane Favotto, Australasian Catholic Press Association President
Fr Richard Leonard SJ, Catholic Church Television and Catholic Film Office Director
Peter Thomas, Signis representative
Fr Michael Kelly SJ, Church Resources representative
Fr Michael Goonan SSP, St Paul's Publications representative.

The Conference noted that by 1st January 2007, Catholic Church Television Australia (CCTVA) will merge with the Australian Catholic Film Office (ACFO) and the National Catholic Television Library (NCTL) to become the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting (ACOFB).

Rev Dr Richard Leonard SJ was appointed the first director of the ACOFB.

The present advisory group for CCTVA, listed as following, were appointed for a three year term as the Advisory Council of the ACOFB

Most Rev Peter Ingham, Wollongong (chair)

Mr Peter Matthey, Melbourne

Ms Robyn Wunder, Sydney

Mr Peter Thomas, Melbourne

Fr Stephen Curtin SJ

Mr Peter Selwood, Brisbane

Mr Peter Tehan, Melbourne

Mr Shane Collins, Beechworth

Mr Bill Lang, Melbourne

Consultant: Fr. Brian Lucas

Conference re-appointed Sr Jan Barnett rsj for a second term as the Chaplain for the Australian Young Catholic Workers.

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life proposed that the existing Task Force on Pastoral Responses to Abortion be renamed the Australian Catholic Life Council.

Conference approval will also be sought at a later date for a member of the Australian Catholic Women's Council and a scientist to be added to the group when these nominations have been finalised:

Bishop Eugene Hurley

Bishop Anthonhy Fisher

Maria Kirkwood

Francis Sullivan

Frank Quinlan

Clare Pike

Marcia Riordan

Dr Brigid Vout

Mary Joseph

Sarah Taylor

Margo Nancarrow

Debra Vermeer

Bruce Ryan

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life proposed that the existing Family Working Group be re-named the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council

Conference approved the membership, as listed below, for this Council:

Bishop Eugene Hurley

Dr and Mrs Ron and Mavis Pirola

Mr and Mrs Byron and Francine Pirola

Mr and Mrs Margaret and Kevin Andrews

Mr and Mrs Keith and Anna Linard

Mr and Mrs Glenn and Trish Mowbray

Mr and Mrs Harry and Madge Martin

Mr and Mrs Bernie and Pauline Victory
Mr Bruce Ryan

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life proposed that a new advisory council be created under the restructure to undertake and further develop work for Australian Catholics with disabilities, and their families that has been undertaken to date by the Disability Consultant to the Commission, Mrs Trish Mowbray.

Conference approved the membership for this Council:

Lisa Bridle
Anthony Succar
Sr Jeanie Heininger SGS
Michele Castagna
Glenn Mowbray
Phil Billington

Conference approved the establishment of a position of Disability Projects Officer for the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life to undertake project work for the Commission and to provide administrative support for the Australian Catholic Disability Council.

Conference re-appointed Monsignor John Murphy to the position of Director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office for a further period of three years.

Conference accepted the nomination by the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life of the Most Rev Justin Bianchini, Bishop of Geraldton, as the Episcopal Promoter for Australia of the Apostleship of the Sea, for a period of three years.

Statements issued from the Plenary Meeting

There were three statements issued from the Plenary Meeting. They are at the following links to the ACBC website:

[*Statement from the Australian Catholic Bishops on the detention of David Hicks*](#)

[*Pastoral Letter to those suffering from the Drought*](#)

[*Bishops welcome new research*](#)