



**Media Release
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Australian Catholic Disability Council meets in important first for the Church

A small gathering in Sydney this week marked an important first for the Catholic Church in Australia, with the inaugural meeting of the Australian Catholic Disability Council (ACDC).

The Council was formed as part of the restructure of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. It is responsible for advising the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life in the promotion of full participation and inclusion of people with disability and their families in the life of the Church.

Members of the ACDC are Ms Philomena Billington, Dr Lisa Bridle, Ms Michele Castagna (Chair), Sr Jeanie Heiningers, Mr Glenn Mowbray and Mr Anthony Succar. Bishop Max Davis (Bishops' Delegate for Disability Issues) and Mrs Patricia Mowbray (Disability Projects Officer) are ex officio members of the Council.

Council Chair, Michele Castagna said the ACDC would seek to develop national policies and guidelines that relate to the full participation of people with disability as well as advocacy in support of people with disability.

“The Council believes that its formation is a celebration and expression of the prophetic voice of Jesus in the Catholic Church in Australia,” Ms Castagna said.

“It is a witness and proclamation of the words of Jesus, ‘May they be one, so that the world may believe that you sent me’ (Jn 17:23). It is an opportunity to promote and encourage the building of a truly inclusive Body of Christ where all are welcomed and included.

“We believe that this initiative will also be a vehicle for healing and an opportunity to welcome back those who have felt isolated and distant from the Church.”

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