

Australian Catholic Disability Council

Statement to the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

The Australian Catholic Disability Council (ACDC) held its inaugural meeting on 19 and 20 February 2007 at 'The Centre' in Randwick.

ACDC members are Ms Philomena Billington, Dr Lisa Bridle, Ms Michele Castagna (Chair), Sr Jeanie Heininger, Mr Glenn Mowbray and Mr Anthony Succar. Bishop Max Davis and Mrs Patricia Mowbray are ex officio members of the Council.

The main responsibilities of the ACDC are to advise the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life in the promotion of the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in the areas of full participation and inclusion of people with disability. To develop national policies and guidelines that relate to the full participation of people with disability and public and private advocacy in support of people with disability, in accordance with Conference policy, and in co-operation with the Bishops Commission for Justice and Service.

The Council believes that its formation is a celebration and expression of the prophetic voice of Jesus in the Catholic Church of Australia. 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" (John17:23). It is an opportunity to promote and encourage the building of a truly inclusive 'Body of Christ' where all are welcomed and included.

The Council believes 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.

The members of the ACDC express their heartfelt thanks to the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life for their support and encouragement in this initiative. The Council looks forward to working with the BCPL in an advisory and active role.

The Council invites the BCPL to join in their prayer for a more inclusive and welcoming Church - Jesus, give us the courage to be the light of welcome in the darkness of exclusion, a voice of gentleness in the wildness of the unheard and an outstretched hand of love to those longing for community.

Ms Michele Castagna
Chairperson
Australian Catholic Disability Council

