

Australian Catholic Disability Council

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference established the Australian Catholic Disability Council (ACDC) at its Plenary meeting in November 2006.

In approving the Mandate of the ACDC, the ACBC appointed the following as Councillors for a term of three years: Ms Philomena Billington, Dr Lisa Bridle, Ms Michele Castagna, 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, were *ex officio* members of the Council.

The Council first met in conference on 19 and 20 February 2007 at *The Centre* in Randwick, New South Wales.

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life appointed Mrs Barbara Harris, Dr Robert Zoa Manga, Sr Helen Merrin and Fr Paul Pitzen to fill casual vacancies following the resignation of Sr Jeanie Heiningers and Mr Anthony Succar in May 2009. The full complement of the Council first met in conference on 7 and 8 August 2009 in Alice Springs, Northern Territory. Bishop Peter Elliott has been the Bishops' Delegate for Disability Issues and an *ex officio* member of the Council since 2008.

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.

The Council believes that its formation is a celebration and expression of the prophetic voice of Jesus in the Catholic Church in 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." (John 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.

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 Council invites everyone 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 wilderness of the unheard and an outstretched hand of love to those longing for community.

Ms Michele Castagna
Chairperson
Australian Catholic Disability Council



Contact:

Patricia M Mowbray
Disability Projects Officer
Secretariat for Pastoral Life
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

GPO Box 368 CANBERRA ACT 2601

E disability@catholic.org.au

F 02 6247 6083

T 02 6201 9868

W catholic.org.au