



***SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS  
CONFERENCE HELD AT MARY MACKILLOP PLACE, MOUNT STREET, NORTH  
SYDNEY, NSW.  
3 – 10 May 2012***

The Mass of the Holy Spirit was concelebrated on Friday 4 May 2012 in the chapel of Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney at 7 am. The President of Conference, ***Archbishop Philip Wilson***, was the principal celebrant and preached the homily. The President welcomed the ***Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Giuseppe Lazzarotto*** who was warmly greeted. He concelebrated the opening Mass, met Bishops informally, addressed the Plenary Meeting and participated in a general discussion.

***Archbishop Denis Hart*** was elected President and ***Archbishop Philip Wilson*** was elected Vice-President.

The following elections were made to Bishops Conference commissions. (Chair of the Commission is highlighted in bold)

**1. Administration and Information**

+**Gerard Hanna**  
+Michael McKenna  
+Julian Porteous  
+Les Tomlinson

**2. Canon Law**

+**Brian Finnigan**  
+Vincent Long ofm conv  
+Philip Wilson

**3. Catholic Education**

+**Greg O'Kelly sj**  
+Timothy Costelloe sdb  
+James Foley  
+Gerard Holohan

**4. Church Ministry**

+**David Walker**  
+Peter Comensoli  
+Peter Ingham  
+Vincent Long ofm conv  
+Les Tomlinson  
+William Wright

**5. Doctrine and Morals**

+**George Pell**  
+Mark Coleridge  
+Tim Costelloe sdb  
+Anthony Fisher op

**6. Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations**

+**Christopher Prowse**  
+Geoffrey Jarrett  
+Michael McKenna  
+William Wright

**7. Health and Community Services**

+**Don Sproxton**  
+Terry Brady  
+Joseph Oudeman ofm cap  
+David Walker

**8. Justice, Ecology and Development**

+**Philip Wilson**  
+Eugene Hurley  
+Greg O'Kelly sj  
+Chris Saunders

**9. Liturgy**

+**Mark Coleridge**  
+Peter Elliott  
+Max Davis  
+Geoffrey Jarrett

**10. Mission and Faith Formation**

+**Michael Putney**  
+Peter Comensoli  
+Peter Ingham  
+Julian Porteous

**11. Pastoral Life**

+**Eugene Hurley**  
+Julian Bianchini  
+Terry Brady  
+Anthony Fisher op  
+Gerard Hanna  
+Michael Kennedy  
+Peter Stasiuk CSsR

**12. Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders**

+**Christopher Saunders**  
+Joseph Oudeman ofm cap  
+Christopher Prowse  
+Don Sproxton

**The following special sessions were held during the Bishops' plenary meeting.**

-On Friday 4 May Monsignor Paul Tighe, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications addressed the Bishops on the significance of social media and the Church's mission of evangelisation.

-On Wednesday 9 May 2012 Father Dennis McManus from Georgetown University and Fr Jeffrey Grob canon law expert from Chicago presented a seminar on the Rite of Exorcism.

-Diocesan delegates for the Year of Grace gathered at Mary MacKillop Place on Tuesday 8 May, and the Year of Grace was formally launched by Archbishop Mark Coleridge during the Midday celebration of the Eucharist. More information is available on the Year of Grace website [www.yearofgrace.catholic.org.au](http://www.yearofgrace.catholic.org.au)

-The Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research held its 50th meeting on 9 March 2012 and has continued to provide advice, most recently in the areas of the Census, the National Church Life Survey, the National Mass Count, the Building Stronger Parishes Project and the Australian Catholic Mapping Online Project. The office reported that 390 Catholic Parishes took part in the 2011 National Church Life Survey. The Office has carried out field research visits to nine urban parishes as part of the Building Stronger Parishes Project, and has begun field research visits to rural parishes and plans to complete all fieldwork by the end of this year. Work is proceeding on the project website [www.buildingstrongerparishes.catholic.org.au](http://www.buildingstrongerparishes.catholic.org.au).

***Bishops Commission for Catholic Education***

The Gonski Report was released by the Prime Minister on 20 February 2012. **The National Catholic Education Commission** has set up a series of meetings and working parties to analyse the implications for the Report for Catholic school funding.

**Review of the National Catholic Education Commission**

The Review Panel has begun its round of meetings with State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions and other key stakeholders. Detailed information about the review, including the terms of reference and some discussion questions, can be found at <http://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au>

***Bishops Commission for Church Ministry***

**Australian Catholic Council for Lay Pastoral Ministry (ACCLPM)**

The ACCLPM had its first face-to-face meeting on 16 February in Sydney. Bishop Comensoli led a general discussion about structure and workings of Conference and terminology surrounding "lay pastoral ministry". The initial focus of ACCLPM is to be parishes. The Mandate has been amended to include the Bishops' recommendation of adding three more members to better represent remote, indigenous, rural, young people, lower social-economic coal-face pastoral backgrounds.

### **Office for the Participation of Women (OPW)**

*Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship* was re-launched in March 2012 with a flexible new structure, allowing young women to take up a program of theology, spiritual development and interfaith, ecumenical and intra-church dialogue. This is a partnership between the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Office for the Participation of Women, The Broken Bay Institute (BBI), and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Upon completion of the Fellowship, participants will be awarded the Graduate Certificate of Theology. The academic program will be supplemented by four-day gatherings at the beginning of each semester for periods of prayer, reflection and personal growth. This will be facilitated in collaboration with the Sisters of the Good Samaritan at their Mount St Benedict Centre in Pennant Hills.

Dr Patricia Madigan op has submitted a *Report on the Post-course Experience* of the Young Catholic Women's Interfaith Fellowship past participants (2006-2009). This research has important implications for women working in Church structures and the formation of lay people for leadership in mission.

### ***National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS)***

#### **Symposium at the Gregorian University, 6-9 February 2012.**

A four day symposium was held at the Gregorian University, Rome, in early February, titled *Towards Healing and Renewal*. More than 100 Bishops and 30 religious superiors attended. Archbishop Philip Wilson, President of the Conference attended. Legal, psychological and theological aspects were covered.

#### **Anglophone Conference, Domus Sanctae Marthae, 10-14 February 2012.**

About 50 delegates attended the conference which was organised by the NCPS Secretariat in Australia. The Australian delegation was: Archbishop Philip Wilson and Sr. Annette Cunliffe RSC, Co-Chairs, Sr. Angela Ryan, CSB and Fr. Tim Brennan, MSC, Executive Officers, Mr Peter Rush, CCI, and Bishop Brian V Finnigan, members of the NCPS National Committee.

### ***Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services***

#### **Not for profit sector reforms**

The pace of Government activity on the NFP reforms had increased since January 2012. CSSA had been engaged in advocacy related to the Australian Charities and NFP Commission Bill, the Unrelated Business Income Tax, the definition of charity and related matters. The Church Tax Working Group is monitoring these proposed reforms and engaging in discussions with Treasury Officials.

#### **Public Policy environment**

The Commission noted the harshness of the current public policy environment in relation to the vulnerable, poor and marginalised. This made advocacy in support of these Australians more difficult. For example, CSSA had found little response from government figures to its concerns about the need for tailored support to assist the tens of thousands of long-term unemployed people who experience multiple disadvantages.

The discussion also focussed on the sometimes parallel work of other Commissions of the Conference, for example on asylum seeker and some bio-ethics issues. It was agreed that close coordination between Commissions was important in these case.

## ***Bishops Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development***

### **10 Year Anniversary for Catholic Earthcare**

Catholic Earthcare are celebrating 10 years this year. Their work includes the ASSISI Initiative which is continuing the systemic engagement of Catholic organisations nationally. The ASSISI Animator for Sustainability Program has been delivered 4 times over the last year with the hope that this will become the model for the future. CEA's intensive Immersion 'Creation and Reconciliation Program' at Mulgoa Winbourne with leaders from Catholic organisations occurred in April 2012. Friends and supporters gathered with the bishops for Mass on 9 May and after the Mass Archbishop Wilson launched Fr Denis Edwards' book *Jesus and the Natural World*

### **Caritas Australia**

- Caritas Australia is currently in the midst of its Strategic Planning process and at the time of the May Plenary, Caritas will have just completed its Workshop titled 'Propositions for the Future'.
- Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, sdb, the President of *Caritas Internationalis* will be visiting Australia as a guest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and Caritas Australia from mid to late August 2012.
- Project Compassion is hoping this year to achieve \$9.9 million. Caritas is deeply thankful for the leadership and encouragement of Bishops throughout the country in promoting this year's campaign.
- Through April to September it is expected that there will be a significant food crisis and possible famine to eventuate throughout the countries of Niger, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso. The Sahel region experienced significant food insecurity in 2010 and has not recovered from that crisis. The learning from the 2011 East African food crisis to establish better early warning systems is being applied. The Caritas Confederation has been responding and will continue operations for a larger response.

### ***Bishops Commission for Liturgy***

Some initial feedback regarding the implementation and reception of the Revised Roman Missal has been received at a National Liturgy Conference attended by the Bishops Commission for Liturgy, National Liturgical Council and Liturgical Consultants from around Australia in Hobart (28 Feb – 2 Mar 2012).. Appreciative comments were received in relation to various supplementary resources, e.g., the Order of Mass Cards and Folder (Brisbane: The Liturgical Commission), the Conference's recommended Mass settings; ICEL's *Become One Body One Spirit in Christ* DVD and the *Together at One Altar* website (Fraynetwork).

Presently, the Bishops Commission for Liturgy is in the process of developing a brief that will help build up the "relatio" or "case" for the recognition of St Mary of the Cross as a Patroness of Australia.

### **National Liturgical Council**

The Hobart Liturgy Conference in March 2012 bid appreciative farewell to outgoing BCL Executive Secretary, Fr Peter Williams, and his administrative assistant Ms Virginia Knight from Parramatta and welcomed Dr Paul Taylor as his successor, assisted by Mrs Janine Hardwick and Mrs Nicky Kitson from Archbishop Denis Hart's Office in Melbourne.

### ***Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation***

### **Conference on the New Evangelisation**

The message about PROCLAIM 2012 has started to become public. The first media release was issued on Friday 24 February 2012 announcing that Archbishop Fisichella will be attending PROCLAIM 2012. It was sent to Bishops, parishes and schools, groups and movements as well as Catholic Media. A full program of Seminars has been prepared, covering faith formation, evangelisation and mission, leadership, culture and creative arts/technology. This is available on the website, [www.proclaimconference.com.au](http://www.proclaimconference.com.au).

### **Catholic Enquiry Centre**

This year there has been a significant rise in the number of enquiries for information on the Catholic faith:

Some factors in this include:

- Commencement of advertising on Facebook in September 2011
- Facebook advertising now accounts for 33.6%, responses then newspaper advertising with 19.9%)responses (and Google with 15.6% responses (

### **Catholic Mission**

- Catholic Mission expanded school fundraising and school formation programs and adult fundraising, while working towards the future expansion of adult mission formation. The first involvement with the Eastern Eparchies came in 2011 with formation and fundraising activities with the Ukrainian and Maronite Eparchies.
- Global Immersions in 2012 have had to be closed at a record 19 groups which will fill out to about 180 participants. There are plans to massively increase the availability of immersions with Aboriginal people as these are in huge demand.
- A current investigation of World Youth Day 2013 options may lead, as it did in 2008, to a need for investment by Catholic Mission in staffing. This is because WYD in 2013 in Brazil is themed on Mission and dioceses are seeking pilgrim mission immersions before or after Brazil. Catholic Mission are talking with Harvest Pilgrimages regarding possible opportunities including offering mission formation and debriefing for their pilgrims.

### ***Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life***

#### **Youth Activities**

- Planning is underway for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Convention in Campbelltown, October 2012 and for an Australian Catholic Youth Gathering in December 2013.

#### **Disability**

- A new parish kit was released in December 2011 comprised an updated *I Have a Story* and *We Have a Story*, parish check list and other resources;
- A captioned YouTube clip, 'One Body in Christ' released for parish communities and organisations for the International Day of People with Disability;
- A diocesan consultation on the services, guidelines and specific pastoral care for people with disability and their families, to be reported to the Commission and Conference;
- A workshop for Homebush Seminary focused on families and disability, and their participation in parish life;
- Networking disability groups and communities nationally through the national newsletter;
- Examination of support for the pastoral care of people who have a mental illness;
- Development of inclusive faith practices for Aboriginal persons who have a disability;

-Development of inclusive faith practices for the deaf and hard of hearing communities, including the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Sub-Committee of the ACDC.

### **Migrants and Refugees**

- Continued implementation and administration of the Labour Agreement;
- Advocacy on behalf of the pastoral care of migrants and refugees
- Continuing, with the ACU, the annual Memorial Lecture in honour of Bishop Joseph Grech;
- Developing, with the Scalabrinian International Migration Institute, a Graduate Diploma in the Pastoral Care of Human Mobility;

### **Life issues**

- Manual for Priests on post-abortion resources, Reconciliation Card and Prayer Card, being advanced
- Development of a diocesan network - still under consideration by the Australian Catholic Life Council;
- Life Issues DVD Series being finalised, will be launched in August 2012.
- WWL National Training Workshop, planned for August 2013, to deepen the experience of the Symposium Series at diocesan and parish levels.

### ***Bishops Commission for Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders***

The Commission has written a Statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday, (first Sunday in July). This statement will be available on the Conference website and will be sent by email to every diocese and parish.