



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Summary of the Plenary Meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference November 25-29, 2013

The November Plenary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference took place between 25-29 November, 2013. The Mass of the Holy Spirit was concelebrated on 26 November 2014 in the chapel of Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney at 7am. The President of Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart, was the principal celebrant and preached the homily.

The President welcomed the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Paul Gallagher who was warmly greeted. He addressed the Plenary Meeting on Wednesday 27 November and participated in discussions.

*The President welcomed the **observers** from the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (Catholic Religious Australia)*

Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc

Sr Marion Gambin rsj

Fr Anthony Banks osa

BISHOPS WHO HAVE DIED SINCE THE LAST PLENARY

-Bishop William Brennan, Emeritus Bishop of Wagga Wagga, 31 August 2013

-Bishop Anthony Burgess, Emeritus Bishop of Wewak, Papua New Guinea, 23 October 2013

EPISCOPAL APPOINTMENTS SINCE THE LAST PLENARY

-Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay olm, Eparch of Saint Maroun of Sydney (Maronite)
Ordained Bishop 25 May 2013

-Archbishop Adrian Doyle, Retired Archbishop of Hobart 19 July 2013

-Archbishop Julian Porteous, Archbishop of Hobart 17 September 2013

-Bishop Brian Heenan, Retired Bishop of Rockhampton 1 October 2013

-Diocesan Administrator of Rockhampton, Fr John Grace 1 October 2013

-Bishop David Walker, Retired Bishop of Broken Bay 13 November 2013

-Diocesan Administrator of Broken Bay, Fr Vincent Casey 14 November 2013

-Archbishop Christopher Prowse, Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn 19 November 2013

-Diocesan Administrator of Sale, Fr Peter Slater 20 November 2013

MESSAGE TO THE HOLY FATHER FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

The following message was sent to the Holy Father:

Most Holy Father,

As we gather for our plenary meeting in Sydney around the tomb of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, the Bishops of Australia send you greetings of peace in the Lord Jesus as a sign of our communion in Him. In the College of Bishops, we greet the Successor of Peter.

We extend our sincere gratitude for your thoughts and prayers for the bushfires in New South Wales. Your words were deeply appreciated by the people affected by the fires and touched many hearts.

At this time, we are striving to meet the challenges presented by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse and seeking to move to a moment of truth, justice and healing for the victims of abuse and for the whole Church in Australia.

During our meeting of 25-29 November, we will pray in thanks for your Petrine ministry and for the inspiring way you are leading the universal Church.

We entrust our meeting to your prayer and seek your Apostolic Blessing upon all that we think, say, do and decide in Sydney.

United with you in the bond of charity, we remain [etc]

A reply from Archbishop Angela Becciu, Substitute on behalf of the Holy Father was received.

FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCES OF OCEANIA (FCBCO)

The Conference elected as its representatives for the next four year term:

-Bishop Robert McGuckin

-Bishop Vincent Long

MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSIONS

-Bishop Antoine-Charbel Tarabay olm was seconded to the Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Relations.

-Bishop Les Tomlinson was appointed acting Chair of the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry.

ROYAL COMMISSION

The Hon Barry O'Keefe QC, Chair of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, and CEO, Francis Sullivan together with Peter Rush, CEO of Catholic Church Insurance Limited attended on the morning of 27 November and made presentations to the bishops and 55 representatives of Religious Institutes. This was followed by extensive questioning and discussion.

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

On the morning of 28 November the Conference considered a dossier of initial responses to the material sent from the Synod of Bishops in preparation for the Extraordinary Synod in October 2014. There was lengthy discussion of various aspects of the Synod request for preparatory information. The Conference formed a drafting committee of Archbishop Wilson, Archbishop Coleridge, Bishop Hurley and Bishop Fisher op to be assisted by Bruce Ryan, Executive Secretary of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life. This Committee will prepare a draft for circulation to all bishops by 10 January, with responses by 17 January with a further draft being circulated on 24 January.

EVANGELII GAUDIUM

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe sdb and Archbishop Christopher Prowse led a discussion on their experience of the Synod in 2012 on the New Evangelisation. This included a discussion

of the newly released Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The following media release was issued.

The Holy Father's Exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel
Media Release
27 November, 2013

Since his election, Pope Francis has surprised and refreshed the Church and the world in many ways. He has done it again with the publication of the first text which is definitely his own, the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium. The Australian Catholic Bishops welcome its publication and thank the Holy Father for the gift which he has given the Church.

His first Encyclical Letter Lumen Fidei was, as he said, "The work of four hands". In it, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis spoke with a single voice. But now Pope Francis speaks with a voice that is very direct and very personal. He gathers up the work of the Synod on the New Evangelisation, and the voice of the universal Church is heard in what he writes. But it is also the voice of Francis that we hear unmistakably.

The Bishops not only recommend this very readable document to all people, but will do all we can to ensure that its teaching is widely known. The document is long; there are many words. But it is geared essentially to action. That is why the Bishops are keen for it to be known as widely as possible. We need action – in our own lives, in the Church and in society as a whole.

There is much in what the Pope writes that is challenging, especially to us as Bishops. We will read and re-read his words as an examination of conscience. Much of what the Holy Father writes goes to the heart of our episcopal ministry, and we cannot ignore it. In it, we hear the voice of Christ.

The same voice speaks to the whole Church. Therefore, we ask all the baptised to listen to what the Pope has said, that we may together hear more deeply the voice of Christ.

At a time when we are under pressure, these words come as deep encouragement. We want that encouragement and the refreshment it brings to go forth far and wide.

YEAR OF GRACE REPORT

Fr Peter Brock, on behalf of the national planning team, presented a report and recommendations which was circulated to all bishops. Archbishop Coleridge then led a discussion on the outcomes of the Year of Grace. The Conference formally expressed appreciation to Fr Brock for his dedication, creativity, zeal and commitment to the project.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC COUNCIL FOR EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

The Commission informed the Conference of the death of Mr Michael Cusack on 24 June 2013 following a long battle with cancer. Mr Cusack was an inaugural Councillor and will be sorely missed. The Commission accepted the recommendation of the Council to appoint Mrs Jane Comensoli to fill the vacancy to the end of the current term.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC COUNCIL FOR PASTORAL RESEARCH

The Commission was pleased to report its appointments of Professor Peter G Carpenter and Mrs Sophy A Morley to the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research for the current term, which expires in November 2015.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

The NCEC commenced on 1 July with the Hon Greg Crafter AO as Chair and Ross Fox as Executive Director under the new terms of reference and statutes recommended by the ACBC. David Hutton, formerly Director of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, has been appointed to the part-time position of Coordinator of Faith Formation and Religious Education Programs.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PARENT BODY

The first annual general meeting of Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) was held on 15 October in Sydney. All states and territories, except the Northern Territory, have agreed to join CSPA.

Bishops Commission for Church Ministry

NEW CO-ORDINATOR OF THE PERMANENT DIACONATE

Deacon Paul Simmons has completed two terms as the Coordinator of the Permanent Diaconate. The Commission has selected as the replacement Deacon Anthony Aspinall. Deacon Anthony was ordained a Deacon for Sale Diocese on 14th August 1998 and works in the Parish of Iona/Maryknoll/Nar Nar Goon.

WOMAN AND MAN: ONE IN CHRIST JESUS E-BOOK AND STUDY GUIDE

An eBook of the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus Report* on Women's Participation in the Catholic Church in Australia (1999) will be published in 2014 and will be made available from the Office for the Participation of Women website. (www.opw.catholic.org.au)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY PARISH RESOURCE 2014

This annual resource is produced by the Commission for Australian Catholic Women and will be available to all parishes to assist with the celebration of International Women's Day on the 8th March 2014. Copies can be downloaded from the OPW website from February 2014. (www.opw.catholic.org.au)

CATHOLIC VOCATIONS MINISTRY AUSTRALIA

A new executive was elected to CVMA: Sr Kathy Kettle rsm (WA), Br John Webb cfc (SA), Sr Janette Murphy rsj (Chairperson), Br Lindsay Rust sac (VIC), Sr Anne Taylor rsc (NSW), Fr Peter Hendriks msc (NSW), Sr Claire Cooke SSpS (QLD), Vacant (TAS), Fr Anthony Cox ssc (VIC) Executive Officer.

Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations

ROMAN CATHOLIC – UNITING CHURCH DIALOGUE

The Roman Catholic – Uniting Church Dialogue takes place in Brisbane. Until his illness Bishop Michael Putney co-chaired the dialogue. With his resignation, it is appropriate to appoint another Catholic member. Bishop Brian Finnigan has accepted the role of Catholic co-Chair of the dialogue.

ISLAMIC – CATHOLIC LIAISON COMMITTEE

Fr Patrick McInerney SSC was invited by Cardinal Tauran to attend a meeting of the Islamic–Catholic Liaison Committee. The theme was: 'Believers confronting materialism and secularism in society'.

RESOURCE – PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR ECUMENISM

There is now available on the Conference website a Practical Resource on Ecumenism, a collection of resources related to ecumenism. It is intended that this resource is not final and that new elements can be added in a timely way. The intention of the resource is to provide assistance to diocesan and local ecumenical groups.

Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services

APPOINTMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA (CSSA)

The Conference appointed Dr Maria Harries AM as Chairperson of the Board(s) of Catholic Social Services Australia for a three year term. Mr Peter Selwood to the Board(s) of Catholic Social Services Australia was appointed for a further three year term. Conference noted the retirement from the position of Chairperson on the Catholic Social Services Australia Board(s) of Fr Joe Caddy, following a ten-year appointment to this position, and extended its sincere appreciation to him for his high calibre of leadership of the Church's social services ministry over the last decade. Conference noted the retirement from the position of Treasurer on the Catholic Social Services Australia Board(s) of Mr Trevor Murphy, following a six-year appointment to this position, and extends its sincere appreciation for his significant contribution to the life of the Catholic Church's social services ministry in Australia.

SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON FAMILIES

The Commission noted the receipt of the Vatican's advice on 24 October regarding the Synod of Bishops on Families in 2014 under the theme *The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelisation*. The Commission welcomed the announcement of the Synod and Fr Joe Caddy indicated that the CSSA network would be able to provide substantial assistance and advice in the development of a Conference response.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA

The Commission reported the awarding of the inaugural CSSA Scholarship to Ms Romaine Moss, of CatholicCare Broken Bay, on the subject of ameliorating the effects of vicarious trauma in the workplace.

CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA

The Commission reported that matters under the consideration of the CHA Bioethics Forum included the ACBC/CHA's advance care planning documents, surrogate birth arrangements, electronic health care records and euthanasia. The Commission discussed with CHA issues

relating to natural assistance to fertility. In particular the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) non-rebatable status of *Napro* and noted CHA would pursue previous efforts to have its inclusion under the MBS.

Bishops Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development

John Ferguson is the new Executive Secretary of the BCJED following Jack de Groot's resignation from Caritas. Amendments will be made to the Mandate of the Commission which recognise that the role of Executive Secretary is no longer necessarily linked to the position of CEO of Caritas and recognising that the number of members of the BCJED has been reduced from six to five.

SOLIDARITY WITH THOSE SUFFERING IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Conference agreed that dioceses and parishes would offer prayers on the second Sunday of Advent for the intention of those who have been suffering in the Philippines due to the recent typhoon. Archbishop Wilson reported that the Caritas appeal raised \$2m and he expressed appreciation for this generosity. Arrangements are in place with Catholic Relief Services, Caritas Philippines and Caritas Internationalis.

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR CARITAS AUSTRALIA

The Commission reported that Paul O'Callaghan has been named the successful candidate for the position of CEO of Caritas Australia. Paul has had diverse experience in aid and development and has held leadership roles in the not-for-profit sector and in the Department of Foreign Affairs. He has served as the Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia since April 2011.

2013 PROJECT COMPASSION

Once again, Caritas was overwhelmed with the generosity of the Australian Catholic community in supporting Project Compassion this year. It was through the support of the bishops, local church and the dedicated group of Diocesan Directors that \$11.04 million was raised this year, up from \$10.7 million last year.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA 50TH ANNIVERSARY

In 2014, Caritas Australia will mark 50 years of working with the world's poorest and most marginalised communities. Caritas has employed a part-time archivist (an internal redeployment) to assist in identifying relevant documentation for story-telling and promotional purposes. July to November 2014 (excluding October Mission month) will be the key months for recognising the 50th anniversary. Caritas plans to hold a 50th Year Commissioning Mass for the Diocesan Directors at their annual conference in July next year.

LAUNCH OF SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENT 2013 – 2014

On 11 September, the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council (ASCJC) convened the launch of the Catholic Bishops' 2013-2014 Social Justice Statement – *Lazarus at Our Gates*. By mid-October, over 36,600 of the 40,000 printed copies have been sold and distributed. There have been over 13,100 visits to Social Justice Statement page of the ACSJC website, which includes the free electronic version of the statement.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Commission has approved the appointment of Professor Paul Smyth of the Archdiocese of Melbourne as a member of the Council.

UNITED NATIONS CONSULTATIVE STATUS

On 30 May 2013, the ACSJC submitted its quadrennial report to the United Nations for the period 2009-2012; a requirement for continuing Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, which the ACSJC has had since 1997. A key initiative of the ACSJC during this period was involvement in the UN's Universal Periodic Review of Australia's human rights performance, particularly regarding treatment of indigenous people, treatment of asylum seekers, implementation of anti-terror legislation, and the prohibition of capital punishment from ever being reintroduced in State and Territory jurisdictions.

COLLECTION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE STATEMENTS

The ASCJC is in the process of producing the publication of collected Social Justice Statements for the period 1988 – 2013. This book will add to two previous volumes covering the periods 1940–1966 and 1973 – 1987. Altogether, this collection amounts to around 200,000 words.

2014 AIDS CONFERENCE

Caritas hosted Mgrs Bob Vitillo on a visit to Australia in late August. Mgrs Vitillo is Head of Delegation, Caritas Internationalis and Attaché for Health, Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the UN in Geneva. He is also the Caritas Internationalis Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS. Next year, Melbourne will host the 20th International AIDS Conference (20-25 July 2014) and more than 15,000 people are expected to attend. Prior to the conference (18-20 July 2014), Caritas and the Catholic HIV and AIDS Network plan to hold a pre-conference event for the Catholic community.

CATHOLIC EARTHCARE AUSTRALIA

As part of its Sustainability Initiative for the Catholic Church in Australia (ASSISI), Catholic Earthcare has begun a process to design formation sessions for existing structures such as 'committees' within Diocese for ecological conversion to be experienced, embodied and steered for whole Diocese and organisations.

NATIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY NOT FOR PROFIT NETWORK

The Commission reported that Catholic Earthcare Australia was successful in its application for Federal Government funding for \$1.6 million for the period July 2013 – June 2015 for an Energy Efficiency Information Grant. Catholic Earthcare Australia is the lead organisation in partnership with Church Resources, Uniting Church Sydney Vic/Tas, and Envisi (previously Global Carbon Systems) and with the suppliers/contractors Energetix, Institute for Sustainable Futures, CiEvents and associates ARRCC and ACF.

A Board has been established to oversee the project management of the NEEN Network. This will include all budgeting decisions taken under defined delegations, information content schedules, event management activities, and all internal and government reporting obligations.

New Resource – The Awesome Cosmic Story

An environmental education resource, entitled The Awesome Cosmic Story, was launched on 5 June (World Environment Day). This resource was developed for the purpose of providing a requested resource for educators to share the story of the universe in a contemporary Catholic way with their students. The graphics, short movies and narrative provide the tools for learning to take place. Contributors include Fr Denis Edwards, Sr Monica Sparks sgs and Ms Beth Riolo at the Catholic Education Office in Wollongong. The resource is free and accessible from the home page of Catholic Earthcare's website: www.catholicearthcare.org.au

'Creation and Reconciliation Pilgrimage' formation programs

Jacqui Remond recently visited parts of the northern Flinders Ranges with Br Peter Faulkner and Dr Norman Habel to meet with traditional owners of the country and scope out the possible locations and venues for a future program. The program will be targeted at leaders or emerging leaders who are currently working in the Catholic Church from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds, particularly from the local Province. The vision of the Creation and Reconciliation Pilgrimage is to enable Church leaders to become active participants in the processes of creation and reconciliation experienced in the program.

Bishops Commission for Evangelisation

PROCLAIM 2014

Building on the success of PROCLAIM 2012, PROCLAIM 2014 will be held from 21-23 August 2014 at The Concourse in Chatswood. This national conference is focused on equipping and inspiring those involved in parish ministry (supported at a diocesan level) to gain some effective and practical strategies so that parishes and faith communities have more life and vitality. The aim of the PROCLAIM Conference is to give bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay people an understanding of the new evangelisation and to start to build their confidence and competencies in building parishes that can evangelise effectively today.

MEMBERSHIP OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC MEDIA COUNCIL

The Commission approved the appointment of Daniel Hopper from the Diocese of Wollongong to the Australian Catholic Media Council. Daniel is Media Director of the Diocese and is also a professional photographer.

Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH COUNCIL

In 2007 Conference established the Australian Catholic Youth Council (ACYC) in the light of the coming WYD 2008 in Sydney, and in November 2008 approved and advertised a fulltime position to support the work of the ACYC and youth ministry requirements of the Commission. This position began in February 2009. The Conference subsequently approved a non-ongoing position to assist with the work of the WYD Project and youth ministry. BCPL Youth Ministry has implemented Bishops' decisions and instructions on developing youth ministry in Australia. Achievements include:

- The World Youth Day Project, 2011 and 2013
- The ACBC Youth Vision Document: *Anointed and Sent*
- The Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Convention (ACYMC), 2010 and 2012
- The National Youth Festival, December 2013
- Materials and support for local ministry
- Advice and support to Bishops through the ACYC and diocesan consultations
- Support for sustainable youth ministry employment
- Support for research into understanding youth evangelisation.

YOUTH RESEARCH TASK GROUP

Over the past two years the Youth Council has identified the need for a more strategic approach to research into youth evangelisation and ministry efforts in the Catholic Church in Australia. To support the development of the evangelisation of young people in Australia, the Council has developed a proposal and recommendation for a small task group focused on this area. Its purpose would be to identify existing research and establish a strategic plan for future research; advocate for that research with the field; and collaborate with other youth research organisations.

WALKING WITH LOVE TRAINING WORKSHOP UPDATE

The first *Walking with Love* Regional Seminar was held in Armidale, NSW in September 2013 and was very successful. Some 30 people from across the Catholic spectrum of agencies and organisations, and other denominations attended. Participants in the two-day workshop appreciated the opportunity to examine and discuss this approach of support for women as mothers, espoused by Pope John Paul II, and will be working locally to develop parish, school and agency responses to support women who may be challenged by their circumstances to consider abortion. Further regional seminars will be offered and expressions of interest from dioceses will be sought in the New Year.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

A tender for Natural Fertility Australia (NFA) for the 2013-2016 funding period has been successful, although it resulted in a further decrease in funding. The tender was submitted in the name of the Conference with the expectation that if it was successful, the contractual arrangements will be transferred to NFA Inc. This has now been established as an independent incorporated association, with Bishop Gerard Hanna a member of the Board as Bishops Delegate, and arrangements are proceeding to transfer responsibility for the government grant to the new association as soon as practicable.

Bishops Commission for Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

MINISTRY TO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

A number of diocesan bishops have responded to a letter from the Commission Chairman seeking the names of people involved in ministry to indigenous people. This letter developed from a concern for the priests who often minister in isolated situations, or in

ministry in which there may not be fraternal support. The responses received so far indicate that there are many lay and religious people working with indigenous communities.

INCLUSION OF ABORIGINAL ELEMENTS IN LITURGY

The Commission has frequently heard requests from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities for the inclusion of aboriginal elements in liturgy. The Commission has encouraged NATSICC to engage with the question, "With regard to liturgy and devotions, what issues of enculturation have you found helpful and what areas would you like to explore?" The matter will be taken up at the next NATSICC Conference.

MS MARY NEWPORT

Bishop Michael McKenna paid tribute to Ms Mary Newport who died recently. Mary was the founding officer of the ACBC Media Office. By acclamation the Bishops acknowledged all that she contributed to the work of the Conference and pledged prayers for the repose of her soul.

GRATITUDE

Archbishop Wilson acknowledged the chairmanship of Archbishop Hart. Archbishop Hart expressed thanks to Father Brian Lucas, the General Secretary, to the staff of the Secretariat at North Sydney and Canberra, to the Communications Director Beth Doherty and her assistant Aoife Connors, to seminarian Tom Zaranski and to Dr Paul Taylor for organising the liturgies. Archbishop Hart expressed thanks to the Sisters of St Joseph and all the management and personnel at Anderledy Lodge, Mary MacKillop Place, who contributed to the hospitality and smooth running of the meeting. Thanks were expressed to the members of the Drafting Committee for their assistance at this meeting.