



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY OF THE PLENARY MEETING OF THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE 24-28 NOV 2014

The November Plenary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference took place between 24 – 28 November 2014.

The Mass of the Holy Spirit was concelebrated on 25 November in the chapel of Mary MacKillop Place, North Sydney at 7 am. The President of Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart, was the principal celebrant and preached the homily.

The President welcomed the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Paul Gallagher together with Archbishop Dominique Mamberti who was warmly greeted. Archbishop Gallagher met bishops informally, addressed the Plenary Meeting and participated in a general discussion on Tuesday 25 November 2014.

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

Sr Berneice Loch RSM

Sr Ruth Durick OSU

Fr Tom McDonough CP

Bishops who have died since the last plenary

5 July 2014 John Jobst, S.A.C. Bishop Emeritus of Broome

3 August 2014 Cardinal Edward Clancy, Archbishop Emeritus of Sydney

8 August 2014 Edmund John Collins, M.S.C., Bishop Emeritus of Darwin

19 November 2014 Jeremiah Coffey, Bishop Emeritus of Sale

Episcopal appointments since the last plenary

28 June, 2014 - Appointed Mgr Peter O'Keefe, Administrator Military Ordinariate

18 September 2014 – Appointed; 12 November – Installed - Anthony Fisher, O.P. Archbishop of Sydney

7 November 2014 – Appointed Terrence Curtin, Auxiliary Bishop in Melbourne

7 November 2014 – Appointed Mark Edwards, Auxiliary Bishop in Melbourne

13 November 2014 – Elected Very Rev. Peter Williams, Diocesan Administrator Parramatta

20 November 2014 – Appointed Peter Comensoli, Bishop of Broken Bay

MESSAGE TO THE HOLY FATHER FROM THE AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Most Holy Father,

As we gather for our plenary meeting in North Sydney around the tomb of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, the Bishops of Australia send you greetings of joy, health and peace in this period before advent.

We extend our thanks and best wishes on the recent appointment of the ninth Archbishop of Sydney Most Reverend Anthony Fisher OP. We joined together to celebrate the liturgical reception and Mass of Installation at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney on 12 November 2014.

On this occasion, we express our gratitude and interest in your Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world. In particular, we pay attention to your guidance on 'preparing to preach', we recognise that "each week a sufficient portion of personal and community time be dedicated to this task, even if less time has to be given to other important activities".

We thank you for your leadership throughout the II Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. In particular, we pay attention to your reference to the "temptation to hostile inflexibility", wanting to close oneself within the written word, and not allowing oneself to be surprised by God, by the God of surprises; the spirit.

During our episcopal conference between 24 – 28 November 2014, we are fully conscious of the challenges involved in the governance of the Church in Australia. We are mindful of words to "trust in the Holy Spirit" to guide us in our decision-making and to serve our people wisely.

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

Archbishop Hart
President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference

MESSAGE TO RETIRED BISHOPS

Conference agreed to send greetings to retired Bishops:

- + Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy, Emeritus President PCPCU
- + Myles McKeon, Emeritus Bishop of Bunbury
- + Ronald Mulkearns, Emeritus Bishop of Ballarat
- + Bede Heather, Emeritus Bishop of Parramatta
- + Ray Benjamin, Emeritus Bishop of Townsville
- + Joseph Hitti, Emeritus Eparch of St Maroun of Sydney (Maronite)

- + Len Faulkner, Emeritus Archbishop of Adelaide
- + John Satterthwaite, Emeritus Bishop of Lismore
- + John Gerry, Former Auxiliary of Brisbane
- + Geoffrey Robinson, Former Auxiliary of Sydney
- + David Cremin, Former Auxiliary of Sydney
- + Francis P Carroll, Emeritus Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn
- + Hilton Deakin, Former Auxiliary of Melbourne
- + Christopher Toohey, Emeritus Bishop of Wilcannia-Forbes
- + Michael Malone, Emeritus Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle
- + William Morris, Emeritus Bishop of Toowoomba
- + Luc Matthys, Emeritus Bishop of Armidale
- + John Bathersby, Emeritus Archbishop of Brisbane
- + Barry Hickey, Emeritus Archbishop of Perth
- + Patrick Power, Former Auxiliary Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn
- + Peter Connors, Emeritus Bishop of Ballarat
- + Ad Abikaram, Emeritus Eparch of St Maroun of Sydney (Maronite)
- + Adrian Doyle, Emeritus Archbishop of Hobart
- + Brian Heenan, Emeritus Bishop of Rockhampton
- + David Walker, Bishop of Broken Bay

MEMBERSHIP PANEL

Archbishop Costelloe SDB reported that, after consultation, Bishop-elect Terence Curtin will be seconded to the Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals and that Bishop-elect Mark Edwards OMI will be seconded to the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education.

ELECTED TO ATTEND THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS 2015

First Member – Bishop Eugene Hurley

Second Member – Archbishop Mark Coleridge

Substitute – Archbishop Philip Wilson

A number of special sessions took place on the following issues:

PROFESSOR GREG CRAVEN (ABORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES)

Professor Craven outlined the political, legal and constitutional issues relating to the proposal to modify the Australian Constitution to give better recognition to indigenous people. An alternative to extensive constitutional amendment could be a separate Act of Recognition. He counselled a moderate approach that would have a good outcome for indigenous people. His presentation was followed by lengthy questions and discussion among the bishops.

ARCHBISHOP DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI

His Excellency, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States, addressed the Plenary Meeting in honour of the occasion of the centenary of papal representation in Australia and forty years of diplomatic relations between Australia

and the Holy See. His presentation was well received and followed by lengthy questions and discussion among the bishops.

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Archbishop Hart gave an outline of the discussions at the Extraordinary Synod.

PASTORAL DISCUSSION ON EUTHANASIA

Archbishop Fisher OP led a discussion on the current issues relating to Euthanasia. He circulated a draft brochure, which set out the myths and some information to dispel them. The Conference agreed that the brochure be published and widely circulated to parishes and schools.

PASTORAL DISCUSSION ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Archbishop Costelloe SDB and Bishop Hurley led a discussion on issues relating to pressure for same – sex marriage. The Conference considered a paper *Implications of Same – Sex Marriage* detailing some of the practical outcomes and challenges connected. A suggestion was presented that a colloquium, involving Jewish and Muslim and other faith leadership, might be convened to consider complementarity of man and woman. The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life will consider the possibilities.

PASTORAL DISCUSSION ON EXORCISM

Archbishop Wilson and Archbishop Porteous led a discussion on the Rite of Exorcism. This dealt with the liturgical and pastoral dimensions of Exorcism as well as the need for prudent assessment of requests for Exorcism and the supervision of Deliverance Ministries.

PERMANENT COMMITTEE

The Conference issued a [media statement](#) on plans to hold a day of solidarity with Christians in the Middle East

The Conference issued a [media statement](#) following the death of cricketer Phillip Hughes

BISHOPS COMMISSION FOR CHURCH MINISTRY

Lay Pastoral Ministry Project Proposal

The Commission recommended to the Conference that the Bishops Commission for Church Ministry gather information by using internal resources of the Secretariat for Church Ministry and facilitated by technological solutions available from the General Secretariat at minimal cost. The Bishops Commission for Church Ministry would then be in a better position to propose a project in the future to address the current situation with a well-scoped business case and project budget.

CATHOLIC RESOURCES TRUST (CR)

CR launched in July CathNews Retrospective, a special series looking back at fifteen years of Church Resources Publishing. CR won four awards for CathNews and CathNews Perspectives at the annual Australasian Catholic Press Association and Australasian Religious Press Association conferences.

CR Publishing is collaborating with the Australian Catholic University, Catholic Religious Australia and the National Council of Priests to hold evening events in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne for The Year of Consecrated Life. Scheduled for the first half of 2015 to support this Papal initiative, these evenings will feature panels of three priests, religious, and lay consecrated at each event. CR also launched, in May 2014, a Bulletin Notes Facebook page.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Bishops Commission for Evangelisation has appointed the Communications Office to project manage, with the assistance of the Australian Catholic Media Council, the next triennial Australian Catholic Media Congress from 4 to 6 May 2015 in North Sydney. In order to broaden the audience reach of the Congress, the Commission decided to extend its title to Australian Catholic Communications Congress.

The keynote address will be from Archbishop Celli, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. He will be travelling to Australia to attend the May Plenary Meeting and a number of engagements in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. As in previous years, the Congress will fund itself with registration fees, sponsorship and donations.

PASTORAL RESEARCH

The Conference, under the new memorandum of understanding dated 1 July 2014 with NCLS Research, has appointed three persons to the Board of Governors. They are Dr Robert Dixon, Director of the Pastoral Research Office, Mr Luke Kenny, Chief Executive Officer of Church Resources, and Rev Brian Lucas, General Secretary of the ACBC.

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council has commissioned the Pastoral Research Office to provide an accurate count of all priests, diocesan and religious, who held any appointment in Australia in the period from 1950 to 2010.

Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia has commissioned the Pastoral Research Office to carry out an Australian study similar to the one carried out by the National Religious Vocation Conference in the United States of America in 2009. The purpose of the study is to understand the characteristics of men and women who have entered religious life and diocesan seminaries, and to identify the characteristics of the religious institutes, societies and diocesan seminaries that are attracting and successfully retaining new members.

The Pastoral Research Office has begun preparing parish-specific extended profiles, which will include commentary that is specific to each parish, taking into account the circumstances of the area and suggesting pastoral strategies to suit the situation. The Pastoral Research Office is now in the stage of data analysis and reporting of the Building Stronger Parishes project.

PUBLIC POLICY

The Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life approved a submission, which the General Secretariat's Public Policy Office drafted, for the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Greens' Recognition of Foreign Marriages Bill 2014.

The Public Policy Office completed the first draft of a submission to a Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee inquiry into the Greens' exposure draft of the *Medical Services (Dying with Dignity) Bill 2014*.

The Public Policy Office published the first Public Policy Briefing on 27 June as an electronic newsletter, which will continue at the end of each sitting fortnight of the Australian Parliament.

Bishops Commission for Church Ministry

RATIO NATIONALIS INSTITUTIONIS SACERDOTALIS

A taskforce was established to review the need for revision of this document in the light of the requirements of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The Commission suggested that the Major Superiors of Clerical Religious Orders be invited to take on this or a similar document so as to have a consistent policy for the formation of all Australian Clergy.

The Conference approved the revised *Ratio Nationalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* for use in Seminaries in Australia. A copy will be sent to the Catholic Religious Australia, to distribute to the Major Superiors of Clerical Religious Orders, inviting them to take on this document or a similar document so as to have a consistent policy for the formation of all Australian Clergy.

SUPPORTING THE YEAR OF CONSECRATED LIFE

Archbishop Gallagher sent a letter to the Commission encouraging the involvement of the Australian Church in the Year of Consecrated Life. The annual gathering of the Bishops and Religious on Wednesday 26 November had this for its focus.

The bishops were invited to discuss how best to celebrate this Year of Consecrated Life at the national, provincial, diocesan and parish level.

OFFICE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND COUNCIL FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC WOMEN (CACW)

The Young Women's Interfaith Fellowship (2013-2014) cohort of sixteen is now completing their final subject, Advanced Studies in Leadership for Mission, in the Graduate Certificate in Theology. Fourteen women will be offered a place in the 2015-2016 program.

One of the proposals the bishops recommended as a result of the *Women and Man: One in Christ Jesus Report on the Participation of Women in the Catholic Church in Australia (1999)* was that a database of Catholic Women and their qualifications and skills be developed to help promote the participation of women in the Catholic Church, especially their involvement in decision making processes and leadership roles (see Social Justice Statement 2000). Women can now register their skills at www.opw.catholic.org.au/skills-database.

September 2016 has been chosen as a suitable time for the next colloquium. The primary purpose of the colloquium is for formation and education but it also provides an opportunity for CACW members to connect and consult with Diocesan Contacts and for Diocesan Councils to network. "Witnesses to hope" was flagged as a possible theme of the July Council meeting.

The Council for Australian Catholic Women Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan Contact Group recently conducted a survey in the Diocese - Listening to Local Women. A draft report was presented at a consultation with women of the Diocese and CACW in July. The draft report is available on the Maitland-Newcastle website.

To mark the 15th anniversary of its original publication, a digital version of the *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus* report will be available for download in 2015. It will mark the 15th anniversary of the Social Justice Sunday Statement 2000 *Woman & Man: the Bishops Respond*.

Bishops Commission for Doctrine and Morals

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The *Relatio Synodi* of the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: "Pastoral Challenges to the Family in the Context of Evangelisation" (5-19 October 2014) concludes as follows:

"These proposed reflections, the fruit of the synodal work which took place in great freedom and with a spirit of reciprocal listening, are intended to raise questions and indicate points of view which will later be developed and clarified through reflection in the local Churches in the intervening year leading to the XIV Ordinary General

Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, scheduled for October, 2015, to treat *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World.*”

The matter proposed for discussion is how to formulate a plan for responding to the call to develop and clarify questions and points of view through reflection in the Australian Church.

Bishops Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations

SEEDS OF UNITY

The Commission’s document, *Seeds of Unity*, published on the 50th Anniversary of the issuing of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, has now been posted on the ACBC website.

AUSTRALIAN ANGLICAN AND ROMAN CATHOLIC NATIONAL DIALOGUE

Called to Holiness in Australia, an agreed statement of the Australian Anglican and Roman Catholic National Dialogue, May 2014, is to be posted on the ACBC website. The statement is intended as a study document, with questions for reflection and discussion after each of its four parts.

The 2014 document from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue on pastoral orientations for interreligious dialogue was noted. *Dialogue in Truth and Charity* can be accessed at http://www.dimmid.org/vertical/sites/%7BD52F3ABF-B999-49DF-BFAB-845A690CF39B%7D4500/uploads/DIALOGUE_IN_TRUTH_AND_CHARITY_website-1.pdf

Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services

CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA (CSSA) – BOARD MEMBERSHIP

CSSA advised that two Board members have been elected by CSSA members at its Annual General Meeting in October in line with the CSSA Constitution. The Board members are Ms Paula La Rosa, Deputy Director at Centacare North Queensland for the Diocese of Townsville and Ms Micaela Cronin, Chief Executive Officer for MacKillop Family Services. Under the CSSA Constitution, Board members of CSSA are appointed by the Conference upon the recommendation of the Bishops Commission for Health and Community Services.

CSSA STAFFING

Ms Marcelle Mogg commenced as CSSA CEO on 3 July and is currently engaged in visiting each of the CSSA Member Organisations to establish relationships and understand the immediate challenges each agency faces.

CSSA Board and Staff also thanked and bid farewell to Ms Jackie Brady who has been appointed as Executive Director of Family Relationship Services Australia. Family Relationship Services Australia has close links to both CSSA and Member Organisations’.

Ms Brady's new appointment concludes some 20 years of service that has extended to the agencies of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, including 14 years at CSSA.

CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA (CHA)

CHA CEO Resignation and Appointment of new CEO

The CHA Stewardship Board accepted Martin Laverty's resignation as the CEO effective 1 August 2014. The Stewardship Board has appointed Suzanne Greenwood to the position of CEO with a start date of 7 October 2014.

CHA Annual General Meeting

CHA conducted its Annual General Meeting in Brisbane on 24 August. Rowena McNally was re-elected as Chair of the Stewardship Board, and Mr Brendan Bowler and Ms Kate Birrell retired as members of the Stewardship Board.

The meeting welcomed the first CHA international members, the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood with their Asian ministries, Mount Alvernia Hospital and Mount Miriam Cancer Care Hospital.

POTENTIAL CO-LOCATION OF CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA OFFICES

CHA has confirmed that it will move from its present offices in Deakin to Favier House, Braddon in 2015. A proposal for CSSA to move from its present location in Curtin to share the same floor as CHA at Favier House will be considered by the CSSA Board. It is anticipated that the co-location of CHA and CSSA will bring benefits to both ministries in terms of sharing of expertise, common policy and strategy, as well as representing some cost savings to both groups with some potential for shared 'back of house' services.

ADVOCACY AND POLICY

CSSA has been engaged on many fronts in the Advocacy and Policy arena, particularly in light of the Federal Budget that was delivered in May and proposed changes not only to programs in the welfare sector, but in models of payments to individuals.

Recent CSSA policy submissions include: Funding for Natural Disasters, Northern Australia Green Paper, Employment Services Exposure draft and contribution to the Conference's submission to the Senate Inquiry into the repeal of the ACNC. The submissions are available on request or through the CSSA website, www.cssa.org.au

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HOUSING ALLIANCE

A group of Catholic run social service providers, predominantly members of CSSA, have recently set-up an alliance, tentatively named the Australian Catholic Housing Alliance (ACHA), to pursue housing and employment endeavours as a collective entity.

The origins of the ACHA stem from a program established and delivered by CSSA Member Agency, Marist Youth Care, known as the *Affordable Housing for Life* social enterprise. Through this program, Marist Youth Care pursued opportunities under the Federal Government's Jobs Fund Scheme and built into the program training and employment opportunities for young people at risk in their care. The model was shared and promoted among other CSSA Member Organisations. Recently, the previous CEO of CHA and the Board of CSSA have agreed to jointly auspice ACHA as a means of advancing our collective response to affordable housing and alleviating homelessness within the Catholic health and welfare sectors.

The establishment of the ACHA has provided the necessary mechanism to pursue housing and employment opportunities more broadly across the CSSA network and the broader Church. The Alliance will seek to work directly with local Archbishops and Bishops and their respective diocesan agencies, Heads of Religious Orders and Catholic social service agencies in an effort to encourage a greater involvement by the Church community in alleviating homelessness, and to assist in the provision of much needed housing stock and supply to disadvantaged people and their families.

ACHA wrote to the Conference to request formal acknowledgement and endorsement of the organisation by the Conference, specifically the use of the word *Catholic* in its title. This matter considered by the Permanent Committee on 26 August 2014, suggested the title should be *An Alliance of Catholic Housing Providers*.

Bishops Commission for Justice, Ecology and Development

CATHOLIC EARTHCARE

Further to consideration given by the Conference in May 2014 to a paper by Catholic Earthcare Australia and the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, the Commission proposed more Plenary consideration noting that there had been several developments since its last consideration of these issues.

These include:

- The position of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on climate change public statements by the Holy Father
- The advice received from the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change
- A more widespread and mainstream debate in Australia about ethical investment principles

The Conference was also noted that the Holy Father is expected to deliver his Encyclical on Ecology in April 2015, just prior to the May Plenary.

The bishops decided that at the May 2015 Plenary, a Pastoral Discussion will take place to allow consideration of a number of complex issues related to ethical investment, mining, fracking and alternative energy.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

This year Caritas Australia has been actively engaged with its sister Caritas agencies in responding to the humanitarian crises in the Middle East, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has also taken a direct role in the response to Ebola in Sierra Leone, including a \$625,000 grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A meeting of Bishops, religious and lay leaders from the *Caritas Internationalis* network met last September to develop a joint response to the humanitarian challenges in the Middle East. The contribution of Caritas Australia to this process was commended by the region's Bishops.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE COUNCIL (ACSJC)

Publication of 'Building Bridges'

On behalf of the Conference, ACSJC has produced the collected Social Justice Statements since 1988, titled *Building Bridges: Social Justice Statements from Australia's Catholic Bishops 1988 to 2013*.

The volume is fully indexed, making it an ideal resource for students and social justice groups. It is an exceptional resource for everybody wanting to learn about the Church's social doctrine and it is especially valuable for schools, universities, parish and diocesan groups.

Bishops Commission for Liturgy

National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board

The National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board has dedicated its attention, this year, to two projects: a document on church architecture and art; and a symposium on the church design process. The document, *And When Churches are to be Built: Preparation, Planning and Construction of Places of Worship*, was finalised in September 2014 and approved by Conference at the November Plenary.

The symposium, *God is in the Detail: Making Architecture and Art for Catholic Worship*, will be hosted by the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Board and Australian Catholic University at the Melbourne campus of the University from 11 - 13 February 2015. The symposium is intended for architects, designers, artists, craftspeople, bishops, priests, deacons, liturgists, academics, seminarians, students of theology and architecture, diocesan liturgy and property personnel, and anyone interested in the church design process. ACU is coordinating promotion and registration for the symposium.

Bishops Commission for Evangelisation

FORMATION OF STAFF IN CATHOLIC AGENCIES

The Commission noted that formation of Catholic staff in Diocesan agencies is the responsibility of individual bishops and given the wide range of particular

circumstances it is acknowledged that one approach to formation will not fit all cases.

Four key aspects for the formation of staff within Catholic agencies have been identified.

- 1) Recruitment (with a particular emphasis on the notion of personal “fit” for particular mission)
- 2) Induction/Orientation
- 3) Ongoing formation
- 4) Leadership formation (with a particular focus on management and advisory boards in regards to an understanding of Church teaching)

It has been observed that there has been a shift from clerical and religious culture to lay culture and that the move from the sanctuary to the sacral is a manifestation of an impulse of the Holy Spirit. In this light considerations with regard to formation of agency personnel need to be mindful of the genius of the lay vocation.

Formation initiatives currently employed to enhance Catholic Mission and Identity in agencies include:

- Using the Catholicism DVD series by Fr Robert Barron as a resource for professional development
- The development of a clearly articulated diocesan statement of mission and identity
- Partnering with tertiary institutes both locally and internationally to engage in quality research into Catholic Mission and Identity
- Conducting “spirituality” sessions as part of in-service training
- Creating forums for all the various agencies in a diocese to meet, network and discuss a common diocesan vision with a view to the development of productive collaborative relationships

Parish Evangelisation Network

The aim of the Parish Evangelisation Network is to create a body of key diocesan personnel working in evangelisation and mission. Important insights gleaned from PROCLAIM 2014 are that there is no easy or quick solution to bring about parish renewal and that doing the basics well forms the foundation for a vibrant parish community. Parish basics identified include: liturgy, planning, leadership, preaching, small groups, hospitality, adult faith education and outreach. Regular webinars in “Parish Basics” will form and inform those in the Parish Evangelisation Network.

Research on Parish Revitalisation

The National Office for Evangelisation (NOE) is working with the Conference Pastoral Research Office to explore ways in which the two offices can assist each other in working to achieve their common aim of renewing and revitalising Parish life. Dr John Collins, currently Acting Director NOE, represents the Conference as a member of the National Church Life Survey Research sub-committee. The principal project of

the sub-committee is the development and implementation of the 2016 National Church Life Survey.

AUSTRALIAN OFFICE FOR FILM AND BROADCASTING

Mass for You at Home

“Mass for you at Home” is now being shown on Channel 11 on Sundays at 5.30am as well as Channel 10 at 6am. “TV Mass” on Foxtel’s Aurora: Mass is shown six days a week, although current schedule shows more than that.

Mass On-Line

Positive feedback from nursing homes and Catholic hospitals about this service with Mass webcast from the Cathedral in Waitara and St Mary’s Church, North Sydney.

Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life

8TH WORLD MEETING OF FAMILIES – 22-27 SEPTEMBER 2015, PHILADELPHIA

The 8th World Meeting of Families, the first to be held in an English-speaking country, is to be held in Philadelphia 22-27 September 2015. Bishops are asked to encourage participation from their dioceses and to support a married couple or family from their diocese to join in the Australian pilgrimage.

As has been the case for previous World Meetings of Families, Bishops are also asked to consider nominating a couple to be the official delegate couple for the Conference, to be appointed by the Commission. A letter will be sent to Bishops seeking their nomination. In the past, two couples have on occasion been selected as delegates, with costs shared by the nominating dioceses. A budget has been approved for this item. Nominations may be forwarded to the executive Secretary of the Commission Alison Burt at pastoral.life@catholic.org.au.

The Conference agreed to promote the participation of couples and families in the 8th World Meeting of Families by:

- Bishops nominating couples for consideration as official delegates from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference;
- Encouraging and supporting married couples from their dioceses to join the Australian pilgrimage to the WMF;
- Bishops themselves participating, where possible, in the Australian WMF pilgrimage.

AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMANS (ACRATH) - PRESENTATION TO THE COMMISSION

At the request of the Permanent Committee, the Commission invited representatives from Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) for a presentation. Sr Ann Tormey rsm, National Chairperson and Christine Carolan, Executive Officer attended the Bishops meeting 25 September 2014.

The ACRATH representatives made the following recommendations to the Commission:

1. Support ACRATH initiatives in dioceses working with schools and parishes;
2. Promulgate the Pope's Message for the 48th World Day of Peace 1 January 2015: *"Slaves no more, but brothers and sisters"*: www.news.va/en/news/slavery-to-be-theme-of-2015-world-day-of-peace;
3. Promote the purchase of Easter chocolate that has been ethically sourced;
4. Provide funding for the work of ACRATH;
5. Link the work of ACRATH into any suitable training or social justice programs, for example through the YCS and YCW, and in schools;
6. Uphold the importance of prayer in the work against trafficking in human beings, for example in the prayers of the faithful at Mass and in the prayer of the church;
7. Raise the awareness of the Catholic community about trafficking.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY WORK-RELATED ABSENCES.

The Commission noted the phenomenon of "Fly in Fly Out" (FIFO) work arrangement is a growing problem in our society, increasingly being recognised in the secular media. A short collection of practical suggestions has been prepared for married couples who are regularly separated by work, and will be available from the ACMFC website at: www.acmfc.org.au

WALKING WITH LOVE (WWL) REGIONAL SEMINARS

The first WWL Regional Seminar was held in Armidale NSW in September 2013. Participants are working locally to develop parish, school and agency responses to support women who may be challenged by their circumstances to consider abortion. Following this successful workshop in Armidale, a workshop was held in the Wagga Wagga Diocese, in Albury, 3-4 December 2014.

Further regional workshops will be offered and Bishops are encouraged to nominate their dioceses for a workshop by contacting the Executive Secretary of the Commission Alison Burt on 02 6201 9865 or by email: pastoral.life@catholic.org.au.

EUTHANASIA TASKFORCE CHAIRMAN

The Commission appointed Bishop Peter Comensoli as the Chair of the Euthanasia Taskforce, replacing Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP.

Bishops Commission for Relations with Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COUNCIL (NATSICC) ASSEMBLY 2015

The NATSICC Assembly in 2015 is to be held at Kormilda College, Darwin, 2-6 July 2015. Information concerning the NATSICC Conference has been included in the NATSICC Newsletter at: <http://www.natsicc.org.au/resources/news>

The theme of the Assembly is: *The heart of Jesus beats within us all: New signs, new symbols for spiritual healing*. When registration is open, Craig Arthur has advised that registration forms will be sent to all bishops. All Bishops are asked to consider attending, as they will be made most welcome by the NATSICC membership.

THREATENED CLOSURE OF REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN WA AND POSSIBLY SA

The closure of remote aboriginal communities in WA (up to 275 communities), with potential flow-on to SA (up to 70-80 communities in the NPY Lands) is being threatened by the WA government. The issue was brought to attention most recently in a statement by the WA Premier in the State Parliament. There are budget pressures on the State government, due to the mining downturn and reduction in mining royalties, and the \$90m provided by the Federal government to take on responsibility for maintaining the smaller remote communities has proved to be insufficient.

Resources provided by the government for these communities, including licenses for schools, are to be withdrawn. This will affect Catholic schools in remote communities; the school can be the main point of access to these communities for the Catholic Church.

That the Catholic Bishops of Australia express their deep concern for the Aboriginal people threatened with the closure of their remote homeland villages in Western Australia.

This is a time for Government, State and Federal, to pursue meaningful consultation with those affected while exercising restraint and compassion for the first peoples of this country who enjoy a spiritual affinity with their traditional Lands.

A [media release](#) was published addressing this issue.

Gratitude

The President thanked the observers from Catholic Religious Australia for their presence and participation.

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 Communication Director, Aoife Connors, to seminarian Gerard Woo Ling and to Dr Paul Taylor.

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.