

Search begins for members of Women's Commission

A first step in the formation of the Commission for Australian Catholic Women has been taken with an invitation to individual Bishops to nominate possible Commissioners.

The Bishops decided in May to set up the Commission. They asked their Report Implementation Committee for Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus, consisting of six Bishops and five women, to prepare the way for the Commission, which is expected to be established after next December's Plenary Meeting of the Bishops' Conference.

The Implementation Committee, chaired by Bishop Michael Putney, is seeking nominations from Bishops for the Commission, which will have a Chair and eight other members. When the Committee completes its recommendations for membership, they are expected to embrace a wide mix of characteristics, backgrounds and skills. The Commission is intended to be an expert rather than a representative body.

"We are attempting to make the membership as inclusive as possible", Bishop Putney said this week. "We hope that the Commission will be an effective focal point for ongoing dialogue with women. It will assist in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations adopted by the Bishops' Conference in the wake of the research project on Women's Participation in the Church in Australia. We see the establishment of the Commission as one significant step for women as well as for the Church as a whole."

The full text of the Bishops' Response to Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus, including details about the Commission, will be published in September as this year's annual Social Justice Statement. It will appear as a supplement in the widely distributed free publication Australian Catholics and will also be available separately.

The Australian Catholic Social Justice Council is organizing a national launch of the document at the Canberra campus of the Australian Catholic University on Wednesday 13 September. The President of the Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Francis Carroll, will launch the Statement, with a response by Ms Catherine Harris, Deputy Chancellor of the University of New South Wales, who is a member of the Implementation Committee.