Review Process used to produce the National Catholic Liturgical Music Repertoire

The process of evaluating hymns and liturgical songs for inclusion on the official repertoire list was conducted by 3 Sub-committees of the National Liturgical Music Board (2005-2009):

(1) Liturgical Evaluation  
(2) Textual evaluation  
(3) Musical evaluation.

These sub-committees reviewed materials from the principal Liturgical music resources most commonly in use throughout the Church in Australia (up to 2009). These included:

- Catholic Worship Book  
- Gather Australia  
- As One Voice, (Volumes 1 & 2)  
- Together in Song  
- New Living Parish Hymnal.

1967 titles from these 5 Australian hymn-collections were evaluated liturgically, textually and musically. Lectionary and ritual music was excluded from the list due to the ongoing revision of the Lectionary and the introduction of the new translation of the Roman Missal in 2011, which rendered obsolete settings of the Mass and other rites which utilised the previous Missal translation.

The National Liturgical Music Board examined and discussed the recommendations of the subcommittees and accepted 1027 titles for inclusion on the proposed national liturgical music list.

The board carefully considered those titles about which there was a musical, textual or liturgical concern, and weighed various factors (such as pastoral necessity) in deciding whether or not to include a particular title on the final list. The issue of hymns which reference the sacred tetragrammaton was discussed, and for pastoral reasons, some of those hymns were included on the list, but required text adjustment to use an alternative name for addressing God.

Some bishops were concerned about the need to consider some materials in use which were not in the main hymnal collections listed above, and a 4th Subcommittee was established, for the purpose of examining such material. A significant portion of the music used by youth and throughout Catholic Education systems came into this category. Approximately 800 titles in 50 ‘albums’ of published music commonly used through the Catholic education sector were identified.
Evaluation Criteria

Textual Evaluation Criteria
- Scripturally-based text
- Apt for the season
- Theologically robust
- Thematically and linguistically coherent
- In ‘modern/classical’ language (rather than in archaic or temporarily contemporary language)
- In common possession and with likely appeal
- With poetic power
- Those versions have been preferred which:
  - Use ‘you’ rather than ‘thou’
  - Do not include words or phrases with an obsolete or archaic ring
  - Use inclusive rather than exclusive language in reference to human beings
  - Do not conflate verses
  - Have more effective rhyme.

Musical Evaluation Criteria
- The music should foster participation
- The technical aspects of musical language – melody, rhythm, pitch etc. / instrumentation/ and accompanimental styles must enable participation
- Musical style must promote a sense of the “sacred” and avoid the profane
- Music must reflect the ideals of true art and beauty
- Music must properly support the text being sung, with the proper relationship of verbal and music accents etc.
- Maintenance and promotion of traditional sacred repertoire – including chant and melodies especially where they remain in the collective consciousness of Catholics

Liturgical Evaluation Criteria
- Relationship of the hymn/song to the scriptural components within official liturgical texts
- Seasonal suitability
- Relationship to Liturgical action
- Ability to express the prayer of the community
- Currency of use in the Australian Church
- Pastoral suitability for a variety of situations
- Consistency with the dignity of the liturgical celebration.
Editorial Notes on the construction of the Hymn List

1) Content of the List Material
The titles which the board voted to include on the list, were agreed upon after examining the recommendations of each of the subcommittees which were assigned to examine 1) Music 2) Text, and 3) liturgical suitability. Not all three subcommittees gave equal value to the hymns considered, and the final decision by the Board to include or reject titles was made after weighing up all aspects. Where there were questions over suitability for inclusion, the Board engaged in discussion and debate of the issues, to determine the balance of the outcome in favour or against.

2) Scope of the Review conducted by the NLC Music Board - in general, examination of titles was restricted to hymns and songs (excluding ritual/service music, Lectionary music) - although as some ritual music and Lectionary music does cross over into the area of general hymn/song usage, these have been included where it has been considered appropriate, e.g., the Sequences of Easter and Pentecost, and Canticles which properly belong to the Liturgy of the Hours (i.e., Magnificat, Benedictus etc.) In some cases, material which may form part of what is more strictly regarded as Lectionary music (e.g. Responsorial Psalms) is sometimes used as hymns and songs at Mass. In such cases, the most commonly identified titles were added in an appendix at the end of the main alphabetical list.

3) Indexing method
The Board agreed on the preferred system of filing by “First line index” in alphabetical order. Where a hymn is sometimes referred to be an alternative title, this is indicated in parentheses ( ) using Title Case, and appears at the head of the list. The first line entry, therefore appears in the body of the list. Where hymns may share the same first line but have different melodies, the composer or hymn name is generally given in < > to highlight the difference between them.

4) Variations in Hymn Texts and translation Versions
Even though several versions of a hymn text or tune may appear on the list, with its references in the various Australian resources, it does not indicate the Boards’ ‘preferred’ version, but simply indicates a number of ‘suitable’ versions and where these may be sourced. Where a text version is particularly problematic, the reference in the relevant resources, has been omitted from the list altogether to avoid usage of that particular version.

5) On the use of the Sacred Tetragrammaton
The Board noted the instruction given by the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments in its letter (29 June 2008) to the Bishops’ Conferences, concerning the use of the sacred tetragrammaton. Mindful of this directive, a number of titles which the Board opted to retain were given a provisional approval even though the texts use the sacred name “Yahweh”. In particular three hymns are noted - “I will be Yahweh” (Strong and Constant); “Yahweh, I know you are near”, and “May Yahweh bless you” (Blessing Song) – the major publishers have now since issued replacement texts which fit the melodies, thus alleviating the problem.

6) Appendix Listing of Latin Original Sources – since a significant number of hymns in the Australian resources are based on earlier hymn texts composed for the Latin liturgy, this appendix summarises the various translations of this corpus of classical Catholic hymnody which appear. Once again, a variety of translations may appear across the different resources, and the references simply indicate the Board’s decision regarding suitable translations.