



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

MANDATE

OF THE

BISHOPS COMMISSION

FOR

**RELATIONS WITH ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES**

NOVEMBER 2019

Preamble

In 1986, Pope Saint John Paul II addressed the following words to the Church in Australia:

“The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks all languages. It esteems and embraces all cultures. It supports them in everything human and, when necessary, it purifies them. Always and everywhere the Gospel uplifts and enriches cultures and the revealed message of a loving and merciful God.” (n. 12)

“The Church in Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until you have made your contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.” (n. 13)

Pope John Paul II, Alice Springs, 29 November 1986.

1. Membership and Meetings

- 1.1. The Commission shall comprise three (3) members as determined by the Conference by-laws.
- 1.2. The Commission shall meet biannually at a time and place that the members determine.
- 1.3. The Commission shall meet using communications technology when the agenda or circumstances warrant.

2. Areas of Responsibility

The Commission sets priorities in consultation with the Conference, plans and develops strategies at the national level to promote the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in the following specific areas of responsibility.

- 2.1. Acknowledging and promoting the dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their respective original custodianship of Australia and the Torres Strait Islands
- 2.2. Making known to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the saving love of Jesus Christ for them and drawing them as brothers and sisters into the Kingdom of God’s love and peace
- 2.3. Promoting the full inclusion and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every aspect of the life of the Church
- 2.4. Assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve their rightful and proper place in the mainstream of Australian society while preserving precious elements of their own culture
- 2.5. Addressing the challenges that face Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

3. Particular Functions

In particular, the Commission performs the following functions:

- 3.1. The Commission promotes, facilitates and is attentive to the activity of the Church and its agencies in the following areas:
 - 3.1.1. Reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal people within the Catholic Church and within the wider community
 - 3.1.2. The full inclusion of Catholic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the life and ecclesial ministries of the Catholic Church
 - 3.1.3. Increasing the awareness among Catholics in general of the unique situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples because of past and present experiences, and encouraging them to break down barriers to their full inclusion in Church life
 - 3.1.4. Furthering the aims and works of dioceses and Catholic organisations in the Church's ministry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - 3.1.5. Promoting the inculturation of the faith to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and its full expression within the Church's liturgy and life in acknowledgement that the Church "... can enter into communion with various cultural modes, to her own enrichment and theirs too" *Gaudium et spes* n. 58
- 3.2. The Commission develops national policies in the specific areas of its responsibilities as approved or requested by the Conference.
- 3.3. The Commission, in accordance with Conference policy, undertakes public and private advocacy in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 3.4. The Commission undertakes such specific projects as the Conference may from time to time approve or request.

4. Advisory Role

The Commission advises the Conference and its members on issues that arise in the areas of its responsibility and, where appropriate, makes recommendations for action that the Conference might undertake at a national level.

5. Advisory Bodies

The Commission does not have any advisory bodies.

6. Relations

The Commission maintains relations with the:

6.1. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

7. Offices

The Commission does not supervise the work of any office.

8. Secretariat

The General Secretariat assists the Commission in fulfilling its tasks.