



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

MANDATE

OF THE

EPISCOPAL PANEL

FOR

DOCTRINE AND MORALS

NOVEMBER 2019

Preamble

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. (2 Timothy 3: 1-2.)

In order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, the Apostles left bishops as their successors “handing over” to them “the authority to teach in their own place.” What was handed on by the Apostles includes everything which contributes toward the holiness of life and increase in faith of the people of God; and so the Church, in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations all that she herself is, all that she believes.

This tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. ... As the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her. (DV 7-8)

1. Membership and Meetings

- 1.1. The Panel shall comprise four (4) members as determined by the Conference by-laws.
- 1.2. The Panel shall meet only as required to deal with issues that arise at a time and place that the members determine.
- 1.3. The Panel shall meet using communications technology when the agenda or circumstances warrant.

2. Areas of Responsibility

The Panel promotes the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in the following areas:

- 2.1. Explanation, promotion and defence of the teachings of the Catholic Church
- 2.2. Serving the members of Conference by supporting them in their teaching work and helping to deepen understanding of the Catholic faith and morals among the faithful

3. Particular Functions

In particular, the Panel performs the following functions:

- 3.1. Studies particular doctrinal or moral questions and offers to Conference and its members evaluations of theological trends and individual theological positions.
- 3.2. The Commission develops national policies in the specific areas of its responsibilities as approved or requested by the Conference.

- 3.3. Encourages the work of theologians, scripture scholars, philosophers and other scholars, and makes the work of these scholars available to the members of Conference where appropriate.
- 3.4. Encourages research into identified pastoral needs and recommends doctrinal solutions to pastoral problems, which have an important bearing on the mission of the Church and the reception of its teachings.
- 3.5. Reviews draft documents of other commissions and agencies of Conference, examining them from doctrinal and moral points of view.
- 3.6. In accordance with Conference policy, undertakes public and private advocacy in support of the Church's teachings on doctrine and morals.
- 3.7. Undertakes such specific projects as the Conference may from time to time approve or request.

4. Advisory Role

The Panel serves as a council of advice to 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.

The Panel also assists Conference to implement processes already agreed whereby the bishops in college exercise fraternal responsibility for a fellow bishop who is seeking advice in a situation of difficulty.

5. Advisory Bodies

The Commission does not have any advisory bodies.

6. Relations

6.1. The Panel maintains relations with the:

6.1.1. Australian Catholic Biblical Association

6.1.2. Australian Catholic Theological Association (including its moral theology specialisation).

6.2. The Panel may approve relations with other organisations when beneficial.

7. Offices

The Panel does not supervise the work of any office.

8. Secretariat

The General Secretariat assists the Panel in fulfilling its tasks.