



# **AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE**

## **MANDATE**

OF THE

**BISHOPS COMMISSION**

FOR

**THE PLENARY COUNCIL**

NOVEMBER 2019

## **Preamble**

At the conclusion of the Jubilee Year 2000, Pope Saint John Paul II encouraged the Church in his Apostolic Letter ‘Novo Millennio Ineunte’ (2001) to discern what the Spirit has been saying to the Church and to put into practice resolutions and guidelines for action that fit the context and culture of each place (§3). Reflecting on what the Spirit has been saying to the People of God, he exhorted “the Pastors of the particular Churches, with the help of all sectors of God’s People”, to plan for the future in a collegial way that harmonises among the dioceses the work of pastoral revitalisation (§29).

Pope Francis has encouraged and fostered the same collegiality among bishops and synodality throughout the whole Church. In his address last October commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, he stated: “A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening ‘is more than simply hearing’. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the ‘Spirit of truth’ (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he ‘says to the Churches’ (Rev 2:7).” Speaking of Ecclesiastical Provinces and Regions, Particular Councils and Conferences of Bishops, the Holy Father went on to observe that, “We need to reflect on how better to bring about, through these bodies, intermediary instances of collegiality, perhaps by integrating and updating certain aspects of the ancient ecclesiastical organisation. The hope expressed by the [Second Vatican] Council that such bodies would help increase the spirit of episcopal collegiality has not yet been fully realised. We are still on the way, part-way there.”

The circumstances of the Church in Australia in our time, including the patterns of change that are evident within the community of the Church, the issues confronting the Church in modern multicultural and secular Australia, the increase in entrusting responsibility and leadership of the Church’s mission to laity, and even the changing face of the Episcopate, prompt the Church to review, analyse, and discern the signs of the times, to listen anew to the Spirit, and to chart its course into the future.

Accordingly, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has decided to celebrate a Plenary Council for the Church in Australia in 2020.

### **1. Membership and Meetings**

- 1.1. The Commission shall comprise five (5) members as determined by the Conference by-laws.
- 1.2. The Commission shall meet triennially at a time and place of mutual convenience.
- 1.3. The Commission shall meet using communications technology when the agenda or circumstances warrant.

### **2. Areas of Responsibility**

The Commission promotes the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in overseeing the planning and preparation for the Plenary Council 2020.

### **3. Particular Functions**

In particular, the Commission performs the following functions:

- 3.1. Clarifying and communicating the purpose of a plenary council, with reference to the provisions of the Code of Canon Law, the intentions of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in holding a plenary council, the modes of consultation and participation in preparatory stages, and the composition of the Plenary Council 2020.
- 3.2. Providing advice to Members of Conference regarding methods and processes of consultation and discernment in preparation for the Plenary Council.
- 3.3. Collaborate with the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law to research the canonical norms for a Plenary Council and provide clarity on the Statutes, Regulations and other requirements for a canonically valid Plenary Council.
- 3.4. Fostering synodality in the preparation for and celebration of the Plenary Council.

### **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.

### **5. Advisory Bodies**

The Commission establishes, in accordance with the mandates in Schedule 1, the following advisory bodies to assist it in its responsibilities:

- 5.1. Executive Committee for the Plenary Council 2020

### **6. Relations**

The Commission maintains no formal or informal relations with any bodies.

### **7. Offices**

The Commission supervises the work of the following offices of its Secretariat in accordance with the mandates detailed in Schedule 2.

- 7.1. Facilitation Team of the Plenary Council 2020

### **8. Secretariat**

The Secretariat for the Plenary Council assists the Commission in fulfilling its tasks.

**Schedule 1: Mandates for Advisory Bodies**

Name:	Executive Committee for the Plenary Council 2020
Area(s) of Responsibility:	The Committee advises the Commission in the promotion of the life and mission of the Catholic Church in Australia in the areas of the planning and preparation for the Plenary Council 2020.
Number of Members:	<p>The Council may comprise up to fifteen (15) members.</p> <p>The Commission Chairman will represent the Commission at all meetings of the Committee and will liaise as required with the Committee Chair in between meetings. Where possible, all Commission members will be present at all meetings of the Committee in order to increase collaboration and communication between the Bishops Commission and the Executive Committee.</p> <p>The Facilitator of the Plenary Council will provide support at all meetings of the Committee and will liaise as required with the Committee Chair in between meetings.</p> <p>The Committee Chair will ordinarily include the Commission Chairman and the Facilitator of the Plenary Council in discussions and consult them as part of the process of developing advice to the Commission.</p>
Appointment of Members:	Following the appointment of members to the Commission at the May Plenary Meeting, the Commission will appoint Committee members for the triennial term and will report these appointments to the Conference at the November Plenary Meeting. The Commission may re-appoint councillors for up to two subsequent terms.
Appointment of the Chairperson:	The Commission, on recommendation from the Committee, will appoint the Chair for a triennial term from the membership of the Committee.
Frequency and Place of Meetings:	The Committee will meet biannually at a place of mutual convenience. The Committee may meet at other times as required using a variety of communications technology.
Administrative Support:	The Secretariat for the Plenary Council will provide administrative support to the Committee.

**Schedule 2: Mandates for Offices**

Name:	Facilitation Team of the Plenary Council 2020
Area(s) of Responsibility:	<p>The Team is responsible for the following tasks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lead and manage the preparation, celebration and initial implementation of the Plenary Council under the direction of the Commission.</li> <li>2. Network and build strong professional relationships with key stakeholders through the Church in Australia in order to maximise engagement in the Plenary Council nationally.</li> <li>3. Commission research into the: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. methods and processes of preparatory consultation and discernment</li> <li>b. practicalities of celebrating the Plenary Council</li> <li>c. approaches to implementing the fruits of a Plenary Council in the local churches</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Relate with and provide support to the members of Conference in advising on and resourcing the preparation for the Plenary Council.</li> <li>5. Provide secretariat support to the Commission.</li> <li>6. Liaise with and provide secretariat support to the Executive Committee of the Plenary Council.</li> <li>7. Liaise with the designated representatives of dioceses and of other Church agencies, providing resources, conducting meetings, and ensuring ongoing communication about the Plenary Council.</li> </ol>
Appointment of the Facilitator:	The Commission will appoint the Facilitator on recommendation of a suitably qualified selection panel. The Commission will comply with the Conference policy on recruitment and selection and will appoint the Facilitator in accord with Conference policy.
Staff:	The Facilitator may employ staff as required from time to time to assist and be accountable to the Facilitator in meeting the Mandate with the approval of the Commission and in accordance with Conference policy.
Accountability:	The Facilitator is accountable to the Commission Chairman for fulfilling the Mandate of the Office and for fulfilling the position of Facilitator.