

Welcome Bishop Mark Edwards

We would like to acknowledge the wonderful news that we finally have a bishop. We have written to Bishop Mark thanking him for accepting the request to move from Melbourne to Wagga. He has acknowledged our email and we look forward to working with him in the coming years and providing whatever support we can to him in his onerous duties and responsibilities.

Of particular joy to CCWWD is his reputation as a listener and pastoral carer of 'his flock'. We also note that he is one of the five bishops who make up the Bishops' Commission for the Plenary Council.

Welcome again, Bishop Mark, and may your time in our Diocese be long, fruitful and rewarding.

There have been significant developments in the three main issues raised in our last newsletter.

Please find attached our latest Newsletter, together with a recent media release from ACCCR.

Peace be with you
CCWWD Committee



Concerned Catholics Wagga Wagga Diocese

We are a group of Catholics in the Wagga Wagga Diocese
who desire a Gospel-Centred Australian Church
which is accountable, inclusive and transparent.
“Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12)

NEWSLETTER # 5

24 June 2020

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Peace be with you.

There have been significant developments in the three main issues raised in our last newsletter. These are explained below.

There has also been an ACCCR zoom meeting which 6 of the planning committee participated in. A press release from that an attachment with this newsletter and is on our website <https://concernedcatholicswagga.com/articles-and-talks>

Welcome Bishop Mark Edwards

However before we get down to business, we would like to acknowledge the wonderful news that we finally have a bishop. We have written to Bishop Mark thanking him for accepting the request to move from Melbourne to Wagga. He has acknowledged our email and we look forward to working with him in the coming years and providing whatever support we can to him in his onerous duties and responsibilities.

Of particular joy to CCWWD is his reputation as a listener and pastoral carer of ‘his flock’. We also note that he is one of the five bishops who make up the Bishops’ Commission for the Plenary Council.

Welcome again, Bishop Mark, and may your time in our Diocese be long, fruitful and rewarding.

Revised Plenary Council dates

The first assembly will be held in Adelaide from 3rd to 10th October 2021 and the second assembly will be held in Sydney July 4-9 2022.

The Church Governance Review Report

The last newsletter expressed a lot of frustration about the fact that Church Governance Review report was not going to be released to the public until November this year, after the bishops had studied it, 'amended it as necessary' and would accompany the release with their response to it.

Somehow the report, entitled "The Light From The Southern Cross: Promoting Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia", has been leaked and can be read and downloaded at <https://international.la-croix.com/uploads/files/03-FINAL-Southern-Cross-Report-010520-SinglePage.pdf>

An excellent summary can be found at <https://international.la-croix.com/news/may-the-global-church-discover-light-from-the-southern-cross/12490>

An excellent opinion piece by Francis Sullivan, former CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, on the document can be found at https://johnmenadue.com/francis-sullivan-the-light-from-the-southern-cross-a-report-on-catholic-church-governance/?mc_cid=57f11a86ac&mc_eid=24842196a9

Archbishop Mark Coleridge has issued this statement explaining the ACBC position and decision not to release the document immediately: <https://catholic.org.au/acbc-media/media-centre/media-releases-new/2283-statement-regarding-the-light-from-the-southern-cross/file>

All the above are well worth reading and are also available on our web site.
<https://concernedcatholicswagga.com/articles-and-talks>

The ACCCR media release (an attachment with this newsletter and available on our website) also has some commentary on it which echoes the response of CCWWD.

Release of the papers prepared by the Discernment and Writing Groups

The six reports prepared by the six writing groups (one for each of the six discernment themes) have also been released.

On the whole they are very disappointing and much of the input from the 220,000 responses from the initial listening phase, although recognised, does not appear to get any further progression. Most of the recommendations are very wordy and/or can be implemented now (ie do not need Plenary Council approval) or simply ask (pose) more questions. It is hard to see how an agenda for the Plenary Council can be developed from them.

The six documents are available on our website <https://concernedcatholicswagga.com/articles-and-talks>

Next Steps

The planning committee of CCWWD met on Tuesday afternoon (23 June) and decided to spend the next four weeks until their next meeting considering priorities and possible responses arising from the Governance Report and the writing group reports. This consideration will be guided by CCWWD's mantra (the desire for an Australian Church which is gospel based, accountable, inclusive and transparent), CCWWD's submission to the writing groups and priorities identified in the responses from the Wagga Wagga diocese submitted during the Listening Phase of the Plenary Council process.

Till next time...

What are your thoughts on the Governance Report and the Writing Groups' 6 documents. Your feedback is important to us and will help shape our responses as an organisation. We'd love to hear from you.

Our email address is concernedcatholics.wwd@gmail.com and our website is www.concernedcatholicswagga.com

Peace, patience and persistence to you all. Keep the faith, and keep faithful to the Gospel message of Jesus. Stay Safe. Stay Well. CCWWD Committee.

MEDIA RELEASE

23 June 2020

CATHOLIC LAY GROUPS HARNESS ENERGY FOR NATIONAL REFORM

Catholics from reform groups across Australia and New Zealand met via Zoom late last week to support the growing movement for reform of the Catholic Church.

Participants representing 17 reform groups and other invitees joined the forum of the Australian Coalition for Catholic Church Reform to discuss the way ahead for Church decision making, especially in the lead up to the Plenary Council now scheduled for October 2021.

The 80 participants represent many thousands of Catholics who share deep concern about the state of the Church in Australia.

At the forefront of those concerns are issues of good governance and the culture of clericalism in the church, particularly the need for inclusion and gender equality.

Speaking shortly after the forum, ACCCR Convener, Peter Johnstone, said that the coalition is increasingly harnessing the energy for renewal Australia-wide.

‘Catholics want a Church that lives and models the teachings of Jesus.

‘We believe that this is the most representative meeting of Catholic reform groups ever held in Australia.

‘We were pleased to also have New Zealand Catholics share their views.

‘Catholics are insisting that the now deferred Plenary Council, when it does meet, addresses the real issues of a debilitated Church and failed Church leadership.

‘We are determined to press for reform and to challenge the Church leadership to hear and respond to the spiritual and community needs of the faithful,’ Mr Johnstone said.

Presentations at the meeting included several overviews of the Plenary Council process to date, reviews of the six official discernment papers meant to shape the Plenary Council agenda, and the Implementation Advisory Group’s recent governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross*.

John Warhurst, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University and Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, was co-Chair of the Coalition’s forum.

‘We trust in the sense of faith of the faithful that has emerged from the submissions, but we are deeply concerned that the papers which have been written for the Plenary Council fail to marshal reform ideas into a relevant framework for a meaningful Council agenda,’ Professor Warhurst said.

‘The most prominent theme emerging from the 17,500 submissions is greater Inclusion for all, especially women and minority groups. But the issue appears to have been sidelined in the discernment papers,’ he said.

Concerning the recently leaked governance document, it was noted that far from being an ‘interim report’ as subsequently described in an official response to the leak, this Governance Report was the final contribution of eminent national and international experts who delivered 86 recommendations, many of which could be enacted in parishes and dioceses across the country immediately.

Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform

Andrea Dean, President of Women and the Australian Church and also co-Chair of the forum, said the Governance Report is a progressive, wide-ranging report with implications which reach well beyond the remit of the Plenary Council.

‘That is one forum for consideration, but its recommendations are universal,’ Ms Dean said.

‘The reform movement can respond to the report by seeking to influence how bishops conduct their consultation, seeking to have the recommendations implemented in parishes and dioceses immediately and engaging in discussion about issues not included in the report,’ she said.

Peter Johnstone said that the attempt to keep the governance report secret is clear evidence of the Church’s lack of transparency and reinforces the Royal Commission’s condemnation of the Church’s governance and culture.

‘As the culture wars rage, it is imperative that all parties are driven by a commitment to Christ’s mission.

‘The ACCCR will draw on these discussions for the next meeting in July which will come up with local and national action plans.

‘The Catholic reform movement is harnessing the momentum for renewal by gathering the wisdom of the faithful in setting a path that truly reflects the gospel,’ Mr Johnstone said.

ACCCR Zoom Forum

Thursday 18 June 2020

The following groups were represented at the forum:

- Australian Reforming Catholics
- Cardijn Community
- Catholics For Renewal
- Catholics Speak Out
- Communities of the Way
- Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn
- Concerned Catholics Tasmania
- Concerned Catholics Wagga Wagga
- Concerned Catholics Wollongong
- Cyber Christian Community
- For the Innocents
- Inclusive Catholics
- Rainbow Catholics Australia
- Toowoomba Catholics for Church Reform
- VOCAL (Voices of Catholic Australian Laity)
- WATAC (Women and the Australian Church) (Canberra)
- WWITCH (Women’s Wisdom in the Church) (Melbourne)

Other unaffiliated groups and individuals from Australia and New Zealand

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