

Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn

REPORT

March 2017 - September 2018

Lobbying and Engagement

Origins and Vision

Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn (CC) began in March 2017, inspired by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RC), with the aim of responding positively to the conclusions of the RC about the cultural, structural and governance weaknesses revealed by the church's response to child sexual abuse. CC stands for increased transparency, responsiveness, lay leadership and responsibility and gender balance within the church. CC believes that the Australian Church is at a crisis point and must be reformed. It has set out both to lobby the church hierarchy and to engage with it.

Public Forums and Lobbying

Our first function was held in April 2017 with presentations from Francis Sullivan, Kristina Keneally and Marilyn Hatton.

Six further public functions, including tonight's forum, have been held since then.

- A social gathering at King O'Malley's for CC supporters (June 2017)
- A second public forum with Fr Peter Day, Sister Ruth Durick and Dr John Falzon as the key speakers (August 2017)
- A Book launch by Donella Johnston of Kevin Peoples' book "Trapped in a Closed World" (November 2017)
- A third public forum with a presentation by Francis Sullivan in the presence of members of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Renewal (March 2018)
- Paul Collins and Paul Bongiorno discussing Collins' book Papal Power (July 2018)

We have always attempted to advertise these public functions widely and to issue media releases which have engendered considerable public attention through the Canberra Times, Canberra Weekly and the ABC. Some reporting has also followed in the Catholic Voice.

We maintain a CC website, Facebook page and Twitter account and documentation of all that we have done can be found there. We communicate regularly with our many supporters.

CC hosted a meeting of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Renewal in Canberra on 23 March 2018. Ten members of the CC committee attended.

Engagement

John Warhurst became a member of the Archbishop's Working Party on preparations for the 2020 Plenary Council, which met on five occasions, including telephone conferences with members of the 2020 Facilitation Team, Ms Lana Turvey-Collins and Fr Noel Connolly.

CC made an extensive submission to the team planning the 2020 Plenary Council, emphasising our main concerns and stressing the urgency of church renewal.

The CC committee met with Ms Lana Turvey-Collins over lunch in Canberra to learn of her plans prior to their approval by the bishops' conference (December 2017).

CC members have met with Archbishop Christopher Prowse, Fr Tony Percy (Vicar-General) and Fr Stephen Hackett (General Secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference).

CC committee members and supporters have corresponded with a range of church officials, including our local archbishop, the ACBC President, Mark Coleridge, the Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher, and other bishops and parish priests.

CC committee members have advertised our functions widely within parishes, meeting many parish priests in the process, and recently have begun to reach out to parish pastoral councils.

Observations

CC can't yet point to many specific impacts, but we have actively joined the conversation within the church about where we go from here. Church renewal is complex because the church is so big, so diverse and often so impenetrable. There are many ways to approach the task – local parish, diocese, ACBC, national and international. Each has its advocates and its difficulties. CC has done some of each.

There is also the vexed question of whether it is best to be inside or outside the tent. Can more be achieved by being a public lobby group or by continuing to work through official channels? For the time being CC has chosen again to do some of both

Communication within the Church remains tightly controlled. We are grateful that the Archbishop has opened some channels of communication to us as have many parish priests. But the archdiocesan newspaper, Catholic Voice, despite giving us some publicity, remains censored and does not print letters to the editor.

Over the next 18 months the Church will be navigating between its response to the Royal Commission and the first session of the 2020 Plenary Council in Adelaide. The federal government has established a national redress scheme and efforts are underway to establish national safeguarding standards in the Church. Concerned Catholics believes that the spirit is calling us to pressure our church leadership to do the right thing.

Current Activities

This Thursday (September 13) we (Marilyn Hatton and John Warhurst) will be making a presentation to the national convention of the National Council of Priests in Canberra at which we will be stressing our common cause.

On Tuesday September 18 we (Marilyn Hatton and John Warhurst) will be members of a small delegation from the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform meeting Archbishop Mark Coleridge, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, in Melbourne.

CC statements, media releases and submissions are available on the [website](#)

Future Activities

Our next forum is planned for 29 November. The discussion will focus on the 2020 Plenary Council.

John Warhurst AO
Inaugural Chair
Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn
11 September 2018