

## Catholics for Renewal Annual General Meeting, 22 November 2023

### President's Report

1. **2022 AGM.** Office Bearers elected at the 2022 AGM were:

President – Peter Wilkinson  
Vice-President – Gail Grossman Freyne  
Secretary – Rose-Marie Prosser  
Treasurer – David Timbs

Committee Members elected at the 2022 AGM were: Peter Johnstone, David Hagan, Bruce Duncan, Peter Seal, Patricia Boylan, John Costa, Mick Leahy, Rhonda O'Connor. Jacinta Bright was invited to join the Committee during the year.

2. **Committee Meetings.** Six meetings were convened during the year, with all but one conducted via Zoom.
3. **Communications Strategy:** It was agreed that we continue publishing our regular newsletters with editorials and other items and John Costa agreed to continue to publish the timely news updates on church and other relevant issues as the substantive resource for our regular website readers.

It was agreed that we publish an early statement on the Referendum for the Voice giving our full support.

It was also agreed that we make a statement on the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary Council and examine the Decrees to identify those that we feel need urgent implementation. The editorials published during the year were:

- The 5th Plenary Council of Australia – a turning Point? (November 2022)
- Witnessing Gender Equality on the Church – When? (December 2022)
- A Voice to Parliament – Divider or Unifier? (February 2023)
- The legacy Of Pope Francis: 10 years on (April 2023)
- Diocesan Synods: Getting the Preparations Underway (June 2023)
- *Instrumentum Laboris*: hopes and fears (July 2023)
- Diocesan Pastoral Councils – the most appropriate permanent structure for implementing synodality (September 2023)
- Women deacons: the time has come (October 2023)
- Walking with or walking away from victims of clerical child sexual abuse? (scheduled for December 2023)

John Costa advises that more than half of those on the mailing list read our regular editorials and that many return to read them multiple times.

We have committed to continue identifying the Decrees of the Plenary Council which we believe require urgent implementation and to focus our editorials on these.

4. **Website.** During the year we were shocked by an abrupt message from Vistaprint that our Webs.com website was to be closed down within 6 weeks. Several options were examined, and it was decided that we should look to a local rather than an overseas provider. We engaged Multimode, the company supporting Garratt Publishing, and requested that they: a) first archive all the material currently on our website so that it would be secure; and b) assist us with

developing an alternative website suitable to our needs. Multimode has done both tasks well and provided us with the Wordpress platform which is widely used throughout Australia. The initial technical problems have now been successfully resolved.

5. **ACCCR.** During the year a review of the structure and processes of ACCCR was conducted and a report tabled. The Committee discussed the Report in detail and took considerable time to make its decision, which was to not accept the recommendations of the Report. As a result, Catholics for Renewal decided to withdraw its membership of ACCCR but to continue to maintain a fruitful communication and collaboration.
6. **Submissions.** During the year Catholics for Renewal made a substantive Submission to the Commonwealth Government on the Exposure Draft of the *Communications Legislations Amendment (Combating Misinformation and Disinformation) Bill 2023*. We argued that the Catholic church's official doctrine that 'the inclination [to homosexuality] must be seen as an objective disorder' (*Homosexualitatis Problema*, CDF 1986), and that morally 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 2357)
  - (a) will fall foul of the proposed legislation; and
  - (b) that no exemption should be granted to teach it on the relevant media platforms; and
  - (c) that, if it is to be taught on those platforms, the Bill ought to be amended to require the church (and other religious bodies teaching it on such platforms) to accompany the teaching with an acknowledgment that modern psychiatry has ceased to regard homosexuality as a disorder, and instead regards it as falling on the normal spectrum of sexuality.
7. **ICAN.** The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) invited Catholics for Renewal to endorse ***The Black Mist and the Ban*** statement calling on the Australian Government to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPWN) and adhere to its provisions for supporting impacted communities and remediating impacted environments. We endorsed the statement along with 130 other Australian community organisations.

More recently ICAN has invited Catholics for Renewal to consider becoming an ICAN Partner. We will consider this invitation in the coming year.
8. **Maria George Memorial Lecture.** During the year David Hughan proposed the creation of the Maria George Memorial Lecture which was unanimously supported. David has now committed to developing the proposal which will be discussed during the coming year.
9. **Spirit Unbounded.** During the year Gail proposed that Catholics for Renewal sign up as a 'Companion' to *Spirit Unbounded* – the international outreach network of the UK-based reform coalition *Root and Branch*. The proposal was approved and our application for Companion status was accepted.
10. **Future of Catholics for Renewal.** A discussion of the future of Catholics for Renewal was initiated late in the year and will continue in the coming year.
11. **Resignations.** During the year the following members offered their resignations which were accepted: Rhonda O'Connor, Jacinta Bright, Rose-Marie Prosser, Peter Johnstone.

Peter Wilkinson  
President  
22 November 2023