

Catholics for Renewal

2024 Annual General Meeting

President's Report

Welcome everyone to the 2024 Annual General Meeting of Catholics for Renewal.

As you are aware, this is likely to be the last Annual General Meeting of our association. The Special Resolutions which are to be voted on today are to Wind Up the association of Catholics for Renewal and Cancel its incorporation.

1. Membership

In 2024/2025 the Members of Catholics for Renewal were Peter Wilkinson (President), Gail Grossman Freyne (Vice President), David Timbs (Treasurer & Secretary), John Costa (Chair, Communications Sub-committee), Peter Seal, Patricia Boylan, Michael Leahy, and David Hughan.

2. Decision to Wind Up

The decision to wind up Catholics for Renewal has been a lengthy and painful process. As you know, the website and communication platform which John Costa established in 2011, when the group began, have been very effective communication channels for our advocacy, for keeping Australian Catholics well informed on developments in the local churches and the universal Church, and for receiving feedback. Our mailing list has included several thousand readers and each year we have published several newsletters with editorials focused on specific issues. We have always been heartened by the strong readership response within the first 48 hours.

However, after 13 years supporting the website and communication platform, John Costa advised the group earlier this year that he would no longer be able to continue this intensive volunteer work much beyond the 2024 AGM. David Timbs also advised that he would not be able to continue his role as Treasurer and Secretary much beyond the 2024 AGM.

Without the website and with no one to replace John Costa for communications, we have had to accept that without this voice for Catholics for Renewal, we must seriously consider the future of our association.

Over many months the Members of the Committee discussed various options for the survival of Catholics for Renewal but were unable to find one that was viable. In a final decision the Members agreed that we should wind up the association and cancel its incorporation.

Should the Members approve the recommendations of the Committee of Management set out in the Special Resolutions which are on the Notice of Meeting for the 2024 AGM, the Executive will proceed to notify Consumer Affairs Victoria of our intention to cancel the incorporation of Catholics for Renewal, pay any remaining debts, and allocate all our residual assets to Multimode IT for the preservation of the Catholics for Renewal website and domain names for as long as possible, with 10 years as the aim. Should there be any surplus assets beyond what is allocated to Multimode IT, the Treasurer, after consultation with the Executive, will donate these

to the National Library of Australia or another archival entity for the preservation of Catholics for Renewal's hard copy documents.

3. Communications

During the past year Catholics for Renewal published 4 Newsletters, each with an Editorial focused on a specific issue: Walking with or walking away from victims of clerical child sexual abuse? (December 2023), A Response to the 'Synthesis Report' – A Synodal Church in Mission (May 2024), Are the Australian Plenary Council and Synod on Synodality achieving renewal and reform? (August 2024), and Women's involvement needed in the formation of future priests (August 2024).

One final Newsletter will be published before we wind up. In that Newsletter we will publish our last Editorial calling for what we see as the priority issues for renewal in the Catholic Church in Australia and worldwide and the advancement of the Reign of God, the Story of Catholics for Renewal as part of a worldwide 'movement' for renewal, and a special Appeal to preserve our Legacy.

4. Submissions

Over our 13 years of existence, Catholics for Renewal has made numerous submissions to both church and government authorities. They have included submissions to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2012-2017), the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations (2012-2013), the Freedom of Religion Review Panel (2018), The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) on the *Religious Discrimination Bill 2021 and Related Legislation* (2022), ALRC [on the Consultation Paper on Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-discrimination laws \(2023\)](#), the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (later published as the book *Getting Back on Mission: Reforming Our Church Together*, 2019), and the General Secretariate of Synod of Bishops on *For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission* (2022).

This year, in response to the invitation of the Synod Secretariat to respond to the question - How can we be a synodal Church in mission? – Catholics for Renewal offered 'One Australian Perspective' (2024).

5. International connections

Catholics for Renewal has had connections with several international networks over many years and cooperated closely with them to seek Catholic Church renewal and international peace: Catholic Church Reform International (CCRI), the International Catholic Reform Network (ICRN), Spirit Unbounded, and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

6. A special thanks

Since the beginnings of Catholics for Renewal in May 2011 the group has had 25 Members and 3 presidents: Peter Johnstone, Garry Nolan, and Peter Wilkinson.

As the current President, I wish to thank the outgoing Committee for the extraordinary dedication which they have given to Catholics for Renewal during the past year when so many difficult decisions had to be made about the future.

I would also like to thank all the past Members of Catholics for Renewal for the enormous dedication which they gave to ***Getting Back on Mission*** and ***Reforming Our Church Together***.

Peter Wilkinson
President
18 November 2024