



CONCERNED CATHOLICS CANBERRA GOULBURN MEDIA RELEASE

‘Break open the word’ on Plenary Council, bishops urged

Monday, 5 August 2019

The credibility and success of the most important event in the Australian Catholic Church in many decades, the 2020 Plenary Council, depends on an open and frank airing of the grave issues crippling the Church.

Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn calls on Australia’s bishops to publish all of the 17,457 submissions made from around Australia in preparation for the plenary.

The chairman of Concerned Catholics, Emeritus Professor John Warhurst, said the lack of debate about and exposure of the submissions to the Plenary was unfortunate given the profound questions facing the Church, the steady decline in church attendances and continuing reports of clerical crimes around the world.

He said that while it was welcome that a comprehensive report on all the voices of the participants in last year’s plenary “listening and dialogue” process was released on July 28, it was vital for the transparency and credibility of the Plenary that all submissions were put up on Plenary website.

“An open and transparent airing of what people are seeking would be appropriate in the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the compelling road map for reform recommended by the Commission,” Professor Warhurst said.

“The Church through its bishops needs to lay bare what its people are saying they want and hope for their Church so we can have a vigorous and informed debate.

"The Catholic National Centre for Pastoral Research has produced its final report on the submissions, including details of the number of submissions by country of birth, gender, age of individual submitters and the totals from each diocese. Canberra - Goulburn archdiocese, for instance, produced a total of 360 submissions, 269 of those from individuals and 91 from groups.

“This report, while welcome, should only be the beginning, and should be accompanied by the public release of all submissions, except where privacy has been requested. There were 17,457 submissions involving more than 222,000 participants. These numbers alone should prompt the church leadership to ensure there is a process of open and transparent revelation of all the issues.

“A year after the Plenary preparations began we have yet to have any nationally concerted and focused attention on dealing with crunch issues for the future of the Church in Australia.

“In its submission for the Plenary Council, Concerned Catholics sets out a plan for Church reform marked by transparency, accountability, non-clericalism, inclusiveness and humility.

“We would like to see other submissions to enable preparation for a productive and informed debate at the Plenary.

“The days of a ‘secret bishops’ business’ approach to the conduct of Church affairs must end if we are to have a vibrant and effective Church,” Professor Warhurst said.

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn is a group in the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese concerned about a number of governance, cultural and structural issues arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We seek an effective voice for lay people in the administration and direction of our church.

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn Submission to the Plenary Council is available [here](#).

Contact Mark Methereil 0417 603 697