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# Around the Well

The Newsletter of Concerned Catholics  
Tasmania

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## From the Chair of CCT

Like many, I have been pondering the upcoming Voice referendum and its basis in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. Earlier this year our parish and the Uniting Church participated in a program to learn about the Statement, and I remember the initial uncertainty of some, but their desire was to learn. The approach was "If we don't know, then we need to find out," so different to a mantra currently circulating!

Each session involved reading, praying and discussing a distinct segment of the Statement. The concern was not about voting. The consensus was that we gained a deeper understanding of the Statement and what it was inviting us to. It only takes 4 minutes to read the Statement and it is a beautiful piece of writing! (As a former English teacher, I may be biased).

Bishop Phillip Huggins, Director, Centre for Ecumenical Studies, Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, [writes](#) about his interaction with someone full of resentment about the referendum and his response was to softly say, "but *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* is such a beautiful invitation ... 'We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future'..."

Further, Bishop Huggins writes, "I have memorised that last line because of its poetic generosity." Let's each take the time to read *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* and encourage our parishes to take up the invitation to study it and respond to its call.

You will read on Page 2 of some CCT correspondence with our Archbishop regarding the approach of the archdiocese to the referendum, and about planned CCT initiatives. Please save the date of September 23rd for proposed regional gatherings.

Thank you to those who attended one of our recent regional events. The feedback was very affirming – people appreciated the chance to discuss matters in a welcoming space!

**Susan Chen**

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## A compelling vision....

"Let us ask the Lord to free the Church from those who would make her grow old, encase her in the past, hold her back or keep her at a standstill.

Although many young people are happy to see a Church that is humble yet confident in her gifts and capable of offering fair and fraternal criticism.

Others want a Church that listens more, that does more than simply condemn the world.

They do not want to see a Church that is silent and afraid to speak, but neither one that is always battling obsessively over two or three issues.

To be credible to young people, there are times when she needs to regain her humility and simply listen, recognizing that what others have to say can provide some light to help her better understand the Gospel.

A Church always on the defensive, which loses her humility and stops listening to others, which leaves no room for questions, loses her youth and turns into a museum."

Pope Francis *Christus Vivit*  
Letter to Youth

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## Seeking formation on the Voice.....

### What do we learn from reflection on the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*?

### How can Catholic Social Justice teachings guide us in our decision on the Voice?

CCT will provide opportunities for discussion and reflective discernment so that people can make their own informed decision on this historic proposal.

### Gatherings are planned for Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> September in each of the regions. Save the date - further details shortly.

The Committee offers this background to its decision to hold these.

The CCT Committee wrote to Archbishop Julian in February, asking if there were any plans to help Catholics discern their position on the upcoming referendum through a formative process. His response was that there was insufficient information "before any serious formative message might reasonably be offered by the Archdiocese for the information of the Faithful."

CCT wrote again in July, after the referendum wording was finalised, arguing that it would be "disappointing if the voice of the Church in Tasmania is not to be heard" in parishes or the media. Archbishop Julian responded that he would not be providing any statement, but that he would follow the guidelines of the recent [Bishops Statement](#) of May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Interestingly, this statement encourages "all Australians to educate themselves as well as possible concerning the proposal to establish the Voice" and "to read and discuss the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*". The Bishops also "recommend that Catholic parishes, schools and agencies arrange opportunities for people to come together to read and discuss the Uluru Statement."

CCT noted, in its response to the Archbishop's letter, that this statement does not appear to have been shared in the archdiocese through communication to parishes or to schools. CCT informed Archbishop Julian that, in light of seeming inaction by the archdiocese, CCT would organise opportunities to gather, using the Uluru Statement and the 2023-2024 ACBC Social Justice Statement "as stimuli for helping people discern their personal position".

See the website for the [February](#) and [July](#) communications with Archbishop Julian.

**Of interest: NATSICC and Caritas Australia have launched a [website](#) that empowers Catholics to make an informed decision.**

## Where two or three are gathered.....

"We don't need the permit of the pastor or the bishop to form a group, to create a small community. This is not a revolutionary thing. Faith does not belong to the pastor or the bishop. The Spirit does not belong to any one person but speaks through all people."

"Rahner, and even Ratzinger, said that the future of Christianity is in small communities. They didn't say parishes. They envision a Christian experience where people gather in small groups sharing faith."

"Creating communities is not something separate from faith life. Sometimes the best alternative is not telling the pastor or the bishop, 'You are not right'. Sometimes the question is, 'What am I doing to create a new experience of Christian life where I live?'"

"This is a change because I am empowered by the Spirit to create Christian life in any place where I live. 'Where two or three are gathered together,' says Jesus, 'I will be among you'. It's not a phrase that we just say. It's a real experience and a real call from Jesus. So let's go for small communities!"

"Small communities are the foundations of a new Christianity for this time."

Extracts from Rafael Luciani, Venezuelan theologian in response to the question: "Do you have any suggestions on how to respond if we live in an archdiocese where there's virtually no encouragement or leadership for involvement in the synodal process?"

## Recent developments in CCT

The Committee of CCT met by Zoom on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July.

The **Regional Gatherings** held on July 15<sup>th</sup> were appreciated by the more than 80 people who attended one or other of the gatherings. There was plenty of time for table sharing as people reflected on two [stimulus readings](#), one from Pope Francis and the other by Joan Chittester. Focus questions led to engaging discussion and reporting; placing morning tea in the middle of the session allowed time for lively informal interaction! A cross section of people were present, and feedback showed that they appreciated the opportunity to meet with others concerned for our Church.

**Catholic Education Tasmania** Members were informed of correspondence with the Archbishop regarding concerns expressed to us about the leadership and direction of Catholic Education in Tasmania in a [letter](#) from the Chair on 26 July. There have been no further communications.

**Refugee Issues** On 2 August, CCT wrote to [Senator Anne Urquhart](#) regarding the plight of the 80 refugees remaining in Port Moresby.

**The Voice Referendum** The Committee discussed the response from the Archbishop to our letter to him seeking information on how the archdiocese will be helping the faithful arrive at their own informed opinion on the coming *Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament*. The CCT Committee determined that, in the absence of any initiative from the archdiocese, CCT will plan some opportunities to support people in their discernment. Details on Page 2.

CCT notes that the NATSICC and Caritas Australia website on the indigenous voice lists over [20 major Catholic](#) organisations in support.

**Book Discussion Group** There is interest from a few members about the possibility of informal book discussion groups to consider faith and church reform related texts. More details as the idea develops.

**Gender Diversity** The Committee has engaged in supportive correspondence with ACCCR affiliated organisations that have highlighted the contrast between modern psychiatry, that sees LGBTQI+ orientation as a normal variant of human sexuality, and the approach taken by some Church leaders who treat it as a disorder. The Australian Psychological Society indicates that LGBTQI+ people experience more mental health challenges than others due to the discrimination, prejudice and exclusion they face.

**Next CCT Committee Meeting:** Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August.



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## Membership of CCT?

Please consider supporting the mission of CCT by becoming a member. Membership and mailing lists are confidential.

## Just a few thoughts...

"As Christians, we believe that we bear the image and likeness of God inside of us and that this is our deepest reality. We are made in God's image.

However, we tend to picture this in a naïve, romantic and pious way. We imagine that somewhere inside us there is a beautiful icon of God stamped into our souls. That may well be, but God, as scripture assures us, is more than an icon. God is fire – wild, infinite, ineffable, non-containable."

Ron Rolheiser OMI June 2006

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

Native Indian Proverb

## Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform Update July 2023

### Planned ACCCR Webinar

September 14. Synod on Synodality: Shane Mackinlay with Genevieve Jacobs moderating.

**Current Priorities for ACCCR Member Groups** as canvassed recently include:

The Synod on Synodality; Greater role for women in the Church (including ordination to the diaconate and priesthood); Support the victims of sexual abuse and better priestly formation; Supporting the Voice to Parliament and working with First Nations people; Connections with other reform organisations, including: *Spirit Unbounded*, *Women's Ordination Conference*, *Catholic Women's Council*, *German Synodal Way*, *Root and Branch*, *We are Church Ireland*, *Scottish Laity Network*, *Catholic Reform International*; Pushing for Diocesan Councils in all dioceses plus the development of an Australasian Council of the Laity; Implementing the Plenary Council recommendations; Providing Liturgies, face to face/online; Developing and promoting Small Christian Communities; Supporting LGBTIQA+ Catholics; Working with organisations to support the enslaved, refugees and other marginalised people; Promoting *Laudato Si*; Promoting lay formation; Suggesting the Bishops consider married priests.

**Instrumentum Laboris (IL)** ACCCR Member Groups are being asked to name their priority areas for ACCCR to focus on in the months leading up to the Synod in the light of their reading of the IL. NOTE: CCT have forwarded to the ACCCR Executive as some of our priorities: Full inclusion of Women within Church life; Formation at every level to create a more synodal way of being Catholic and end clericalism; Creating organisational structures to enable synodality to become the norm in the Church of the future.

**The Voice** ACCCR will declare its support clearly but not add to the already planned events.

**Spirit Unbounded events October** Some ACCCR members are directly involved in co-planning a week of significant events at the time of the Synod. Christina Reymer, Be the Change NZ, will be in Rome for these events.

**Laity Group for Australasia** While ACCCR does not have the resources to lead planning for a national/NZ lay organisation, we would support any such initiative and will continue to discuss this issue.

### Theologian James Alison to visit Australia

ACCCR plans a webinar on Oct. 2. Donations are being sought to fund this visit, which is at the invitation of CRA.

**Announcement of Voting Synod Members** On 10 July 2023, the Holy See announced the appointment of more than 450 participants to the Synod, including – for the first time – voting members from religious men and women and lay people from around the world. Of the voting members appointed, more than a quarter are non-bishops, and there are 54 women, a first.

The list of attendees is not yet complete. Further people will be appointed as non-voting members, including representatives of non-Catholic Christian communities. However, the number of voting members has been finalised.

**Oceania Participants** From Oceania, there were 10 non-bishop members appointed as voting members:

Manuel Beazley (New Zealand)  
Dr Trudy Dantis (Australia)  
John Lochowiak (Australia)  
Fr Denis Nacorda (New Zealand)  
Kelly Paget (Australia)  
Sr Mary Angela Perez RSM (Pacific)  
Fr Sijeesh Pullenkunnel (Syro-Malabar Eparchy)  
Dr Susan Sela (Pacific)  
Grace Wrakia (PNG/Solomon Islands)  
Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan (Australia)

More information about the Oceania representatives is available [here](#).