

Overview of the Development of Concerned Catholics Tasmania

Dec 2019-June 2020

A group of around 60 Tasmanian Catholics met in Launceston on the 7th December 2019 to hear the Chair of Concerned Catholics Canberra/Goulburn (CCCG), Emeritus Professor John Warhurst, speak about the Vision, Mission and Aims of CCCG. The organisation takes its mandate from the Church's call in Church Canon Law for the 'Christian faithful' to exercise the 'right' and 'duty' they have to make known to their pastors their views on matters that impinge on the 'good of the Church'. In the words of Canon Law:

"The Christian faithful have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful." (Canon 212.3)

As a result of this meeting the resolution was taken to explore the possibility of initiating 'Concerned Catholics Tasmania' (CCT), with a similar Vision, Mission and Aim, but with a distinctly Tasmanian 'flavour'. From around sixty people who attended, a number offered to be part of a Steering Committee to lead the way in founding Concerned Catholics Tasmania.

The Steering Committee, chaired by Kim Chen, has met on several occasions, refining the purpose and potential structure of CCT. As a group we are committed to, like Concerned Catholics Canberra/Goulburn, collaborating with our Archbishop, our priests and the 'faithful' in working towards important renewal and reforms for the 'good of the Church'. We are empowered by the spirit of 'synodality' that Pope Francis and the 2020 Plenary Council are promoting. We are committed to finding a voice for the laity, sharing our commitment to our Baptismal call and to our Church, in this time and in our state of Tasmania.

The development of a *Vision and Mission Statement for Concerned Catholics Tasmania* was informed by the work of CCCG, our reading of relevant Church documents, shared reflections and our knowledge of our Tasmanian community and context.

At our meeting on 30th May, we were joined from isolation on the South Coast of NSW by Francis Sullivan, formerly the CEO of the Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Commission during the Royal Commission, and a member of CCCG. Francis gave us nearly two hours of his time to explain his own journey towards an authentic, Australian Catholic spirituality – recognising we are the Church, spiritual beings on a human journey, and that this should be a liberating, life-giving experience.

Francis also gave us very good practical steps as to how we might move forward, and suggested many resources that may be helpful, including speakers who would be very willing to come to Tasmania and meet with us when that is possible. He generously agreed to be the guest at our launch later in the year.

Other current areas of attention for CCT included:

- Dialogue with Archbishop Porteous (via Zoom);

- consideration of the six Discernment Papers developed from the Plenary Council consultations;
- discussion around *The Light From The Southern Cross* report on governance and commentaries;
- affiliation with the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) – an umbrella of many like-minded groups working all around Australia.

Concerned Catholics Tasmania was officially incorporated on 26th May 2020 with an initial official membership of 18. There are nearly 150 members on the mailing list who, along with others, are now being invited to apply for membership.

July-October 2020

Membership of ACCCR: CCT has been accepted for full membership of Australasian Coalition of Catholics for Church Reform (ACCCR) and receives all their correspondence. CCT is one of 20 member organisations.

During August and September, CCT accepted an invitation to attend by Zoom the two Consultation meetings arranged by ACCCR, with Kim and Trish officially participating, and Trish invited to present short papers on the Plenary Council preparation.

Meetings with Archbishop Porteous:

In response to our request as CCT to meet with Archbishop Porteous, Chris Smith, Kim Chen and Trish Hindmarsh met twice by Zoom with the Archbishop and put forward a request for (a) a statewide assembly of the faithful, (accompanied by a draft written proposal from CCT), and (b) work towards an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council. The Archbishop agreed to consider our proposals, and discuss them at the next meeting.

At the second online meeting, the Archbishop put forward his own verbal proposal for an assembly he would initiate, including an address from Prof. Tracey Rowland (Notre Dame Univ. Syd) on the nature of the Church. We stated that CCT would not see a didactic style assembly to be helpful, but that we are committed to an assembly that would continue the dialogue and discernment processes of the Plenary Council preparation.

We had a third meeting, this time with the Archbishop's private secretary, Alex Sidhu, and explained to him our dissatisfaction with the model that had been proposed by the Archbishop and our commitment to continue as we had outlined towards the launch of CCT on Oct 10, 2020. Our meetings were suspended after that and the Archbishop declined our invitation to the launch of CCT in October. We remain committed to opportunities for open dialogue and cooperation with Archbishop Porteous.

Launch of CCT:

Plans for the launch at Tailrace in Launceston on June 10 went ahead during August and September.