

President's Second Annual Report

Good afternoon, everyone and welcome to this meeting. I am Kim Chen, Chairman of Concerned Catholics Tasmania.

I am advised that we have a quorum present and I now officially open the second annual general meeting for Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc. (CCT)

Can I start by thanking Judy McIver for her Acknowledgment of Country and of the traditional owners of this part of Tasmania. I, too, pay my respects to their Elders, past and present. Thank you, Vin Hindmarsh, for your reflection. And thank you to everyone who has joined with us here today.

CCT's Vision is for our Church to be inclusive. We welcome all in the spirit of the Gospels. We strive for a Church in which the talents, gifts and wisdom of all Catholics, whether lay, religious or ordained, are recognised. That recognition, we hope, will enable them to harness their talents and energy in building up the Church in Tasmania and get it back on mission.

CCT seeks to model how we believe our Church should be. We continue to embrace co-responsibility for our Church and we take personal responsibility for deepening our spirituality and prayer life. CCT is keen to help Catholics in Tasmania do the same.

So, what does our record of achievement for the last year look like?

In May, Phil Billington joined us in Launceston to help prepare us for our synodal journey. Much time and effort over the last twelve months has been spent on walking the synodal pathway laid out by Pope Francis.

Energy, time and effort have been spent introducing us to the *Laudato Si* track created by our Pope. Thanks to Fr Krish Mathavan MSC, Tony Smith and Trish Hindmarsh, who guided the *Laudato Si* caravan after they initiated its journey in Bellerive, moved to Launceston and ultimately to the final workshop in Burnie. We are grateful for their endeavours and their preparedness to devote most of their August weekends to that project.

Aligned with that environmental undertaking was another. You may remember that CCT issued a press release contesting the edict issued by Dr Gerard Gaskin, the Executive Director of Catholic Education Tasmania, that Catholic school students were not to wear their uniforms if they participated in *School Strike 4 Climate*. It was comforting to us that an article appeared in the *Catholic Weekly* criticising Dr Gaskin for missing a golden evangelising opportunity.

CCT also took a stand on vaccination when the Archbishop asked the Tasmanian Government to grant an exemption so that priests who were not vaccinated could continue to be allowed to visit aged care facilities. Our public statement again received mostly sympathetic support and in particular from those in the Huon Valley Parish, which was the centre of the controversy.

CCT continues to monitor the Plenary Council, the Synod on Synodality and pastoral concerns for LGBTQI+ students, staff, and their families in our Catholic schools.

On the national front, Trish and Vin Hindmarsh continue to represent CCT with the Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR). Our members now have the benefit of access and connection to encounters within our broader Australian Church and our international Church. Keep an eye out for further sessions.

CCT continues to look for opportunities for Catholics in Tasmania to engage in conversations at local, national, and international levels about our spirituality and how best that might be lived out.

At a Diocesan level, during the last year, CCT has made strenuous efforts to engage in meaningful dialogue with our Archbishop. With about two years remaining before he must tender his resignation, the time for meaningful dialogue may have passed. I say that because it will take some time for the Plenary Council and Synod on Synodality to formulate measures for change. We know from our correspondence and conversations with our Archbishop that he is not prepared to enter into any meaningful dialogue about renewal until those processes have concluded. We should now reflect on the desirable attributes and abilities of our next archbishop.

Our mission includes ensuring Catholic lay people in the Archdiocese have an effective means of providing support to one another as we work collaboratively to carry out the mission of our Church. To that end, time should be given to considering how an effective Diocesan Pastoral Council might be constituted to assist and support our next archbishop. Its composition and role need to be researched and considered. In that process synodality should be seen as positive way forward rather than a threat.

Another topic for reflection and discernment is the CCT committee. Most of the committee members' terms expire next year. There is already a vacancy on the committee caused by Chris Reynier's return to the UK. We encourage you to consider offering your services. We would benefit from the views and contributions of someone a bit younger than the current committee members. Please share with us your thoughts on this subject.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who are helping us on the CCT journey.

First, I thank you, our members and supporters. Your attendance and membership are an inspiration to the committee. You energise and enliven us. Some members email us about their issues of concern and we do our best to address them. So, please continue to do that. It is part of being synodal!

Thank you to all our committee members for your hard work this year.

To Vin and Trish, thanks for keeping up our links with ACCCR and keeping CCT in the loop of national events. I know it is a lot of work and a big commitment of time and energy.

To Carmel Taylor, thank you for your efforts. Your presence is a constant reminder to us of the damage wrought in the Meander Valley Parish and how Catholic communities are so easily damaged.

To Kathy Cuthbertson, thank you for your tireless work attending to the conception and maintenance of our website. You really do open the CCT window to the world and give access to others to share our journey.

To Donna, thank you for your clear and independent thinking. Your organisational skills are put to good use in your role as treasurer and the planning for today's event.

To Sue Hyslop, thank you for your energy as Secretary and all that entails, including building our mailing list to disseminating Newsletters and information.

To Judy and Carey, thank you for your wise words and facilitation skills. Our project officers down South!

To Chris Smith, our vice president and editor of our Newsletter, thanks for all your efforts and wise words. Your kindness and moderation in helping Trish and I temper our responses to those in the hierarchy is very much valued.

Finally, to Sue Chen, thanks for your organisational skills, moderating influence and support.

I repeat: your presence here today and support during the year is very encouraging and enlivening for us. We do ask that you pray and think about how CCT might best achieve its aims and please communicate that to us.

May the joy and peace of Christ be with you and remain with you always.