



Recommendations on Archdiocesan Governance

PREAMBLE

In 2019 the ACBC commissioned a review of governance for the Catholic Church in Australia.

The Governance Review Project Team (GRPT) produced *The Light from the Southern Cross: Co-Responsible Governance in the Catholic Church in Australia*, with 86 recommendations (21 August 2020).

The ACBC responded by publishing, *Response of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference to The Light from the Southern Cross*.

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn formed an Archdiocesan Governance Committee: Helen Delahunty (AFA), Anthony Percy (VG), Paul Nicoll, Andrew Phelan and Jeff Smart.

This Committee was established with three objectives:

- Articulate Archdiocesan Governance Structures and communicate them to the community.
- Respond to *The Light from the Southern Cross* recommendations.
- Transparency in Archdiocesan Reporting, including Financial Reporting.

This paper responds to objective 2 – response to *Light from the Southern Cross* recommendations.

The 86 recommendations can be divided into three categories:

Universal Church Recommendations, Local Church Recommendations, Parochial Recommendations.

The Archdiocesan Governance Committee restricted itself to Local and Parochial Recommendations.

The relevant recommendations are listed, followed by the ACBC response, followed by the Archdiocesan response.

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1. QUINQUENNIAL REPORT AND AD LIMINA APOSTOLORUM

Recommendation 7

That the ecclesial governance principles of collegiality, synodality, subsidiarity, stewardship, dialogue, discernment, participation and good leadership be reflected in the governance structures and decision-making processes of dioceses, parishes and church agencies.

- 7.1 *publication of the questions to which the ad limina [quinquennial] reports respond;*
- 7.2 *prior consultation within the diocese, including with the diocesan pastoral council, about the content of the ad limina report;*
- 7.3 *publication of non-confidential elements of the quinquennial reports to the local community;*
- 7.4 *bishops routinely maintain communication with their respective dioceses in Australia while on ad limina visits to share appropriate insights into their meetings and to enable members of the local church to better understand their significance; and*
- 7.5 *communication of non-confidential accounts of the conduct and outcomes of the ad limina visit by bishops upon their return.*

ACBC Response

The Quinquennial report is an instrument of private communication between each Bishop and the Holy See. These reports have never been published. Much of the information in these reports could, however, be included in a diocesan report (see Recommendation 43).

Consultation is absolutely necessary for a diocesan bishop to be able to complete the quinquennial report on the diocese, so engaging with senior diocesan personnel and advisors to gather the required data has for decades been the normal practice. Parishes will continue to provide much of the information on which the quinquennial report is based. Publication of this information in a meaningful, consolidated and disaggregated form can only reinforce collegial understanding and trust.

Maintaining communication with the home diocese during an Ad Limina visit is a worthy idea and most Bishops endeavoured to do this during their Ad

Limina visit in 2019. The expectations of the People of God in the home dioceses need to be realistic, however, as the Ad Limina visit is scheduled across five or six very long and busy days. For Bishops who do not have the benefit of a diocesan media and communication office at home, a more general type of reporting might be more manageable after the visit is over.

The primary purpose of the visit Ad Limina Apostolorum is, as indicated by the title, for the Bishops to make a pilgrimage to the tombs of the Apostles and to meet with the Pope. Meetings held during an Ad Limina visit rarely generate immediate outcomes. Follow-up, particularly on important matters, occurs during the months and even years after the conclusion of the Ad Limina visit. The ACBC might issue a report on each Ad Limina visit, much as already occurs after the plenary meetings of the bishops.

Archdiocesan Response

A deeper engagement by Archdiocesan Communications would enhance the experience of the Ad Limina for the Local Church.

2. CO-RESPONSIBILITY

Recommendation 15

That the principle of inclusion of all the People of God underpin practice in diocesan appointments and to that end:

- 15.1 *the appointment of lay women and men to senior decision-making bodies and agencies be accelerated;*
- 15.2 *the principle of inclusivity be built into the terms of reference of each diocesan body and agency, and dioceses conduct audits of their advisory bodies to ensure inclusiveness in ecclesial bodies; and*
- 15.3 *leadership teams be inclusive of the laity (women and men), exercising co-responsibility with bishops, priests and religious.*

ACBC Response

Agreed. Inclusivity and co-responsibility derive from our common Baptism and, expressive of the communio of the whole Church, ought to be characteristics of all aspects of the Church's life and

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mission, not just in its leadership and governance. The principle that the Church is an inclusive community in which no portion of God's people is excluded is endorsed, ever mindful that all of the baptised are called to ongoing conversion of life. The praxis of inclusivity and co-responsibility in diocesan appointments is a responsibility of each local Church as it discerns what is needed for its life and mission.

The ACBC will commission further research as to how co-responsibility might be fostered and promoted within all areas of the Church, complementing any existing data that may already be available, so that inclusivity and co-responsibility in leadership and governance is consistent with what is experienced elsewhere in the Church community.

Archdiocesan Response

The Archdiocese has clearly outlined her governance structures, displaying composition, including the reality that women hold many significant positions of authority.

3. DIOCESAN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Recommendation 16

That the governance structure of each diocese, including the powers, responsibilities and composition of its constituent elements, be broadly communicated.

ACBC Response

The Episcopal Panel for Canon Law and ACBC Media and Communications Department will be asked to develop a template for setting forth the governance structure of a diocese that could be adapted for use by each local Church.

Archdiocesan Response

Completed.

4. JUDICIAL ROLES FOR LAITY

Recommendation 17

That suitably qualified lay people, especially women, be encouraged to exercise functions as

judges in ecclesiastical marriage and penal cases and education opportunities be provided to expand the range of persons able to do so.

ACBC Response

Agreed in principle. Lay people have long undertaken training for roles in marriage tribunals. Currently there is opportunity for lay people to study canon law in Australia, as well as overseas. A number of lay people have undertaken or are currently undertaking study in canon law, just as they might for any other profession-related academic award. Appointment as judges is made in accordance with Church law and appropriate qualifications and expertise.

Archdiocesan Response

Agreed in practice. A woman leads the Archdiocesan Tribunal, while a layman is chancellor of the Archdiocese with a Licentiate in Canon Law.

5. APPOINTMENT OF PRIESTS

Recommendation 19

That lay persons with appropriate expertise be involved in decisions regarding the placement of priests in parishes.

ACBC Response

Agreed in principle. Current appointment arrangements vary markedly among dioceses. The inclusion of prudent lay persons in the process of assigning priests to parishes is supported by the Code of Canon Law and the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops. Lay persons often also contribute, directly or indirectly, to the preparation of a parish profile that informs the appointment process. In the instance of religious clergy, the major superior nominates to the bishop the intended appointee. In many cases informal consultation occurs as lay people may offer their opinions on these matters unsolicited.

In reality, a bishop often has limited options as to who to assign to a parish, due to very few priests being available for appointment or to not wishing to disturb the wellbeing of another parish or to not wanting unnecessarily to interrupt the term of a priest's existing appointment.

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Archdiocesan Response

This recommendation is complementary to recommendation 46, p.9.

6. CROSS-CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

Recommendation 20

That all volunteers, lay, clergy and religious undergo cross cultural awareness training.

ACBC Response

Agreed in principle. While this seems a worthy aspiration, the application of this recommendation needs to be tailored for each place, as local circumstances and needs vary markedly. Programs in cross-cultural awareness are already utilised in some places; in other places, the Church community is strongly inter-cultural and cross-cultural awareness is already quite healthy. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council has this year launched a Cross Cultural Course that can be accessed everywhere. Further work in this area remains an ongoing need in the Catholic community, for the good both of the Catholic community and Australian society.

Archdiocesan Response

The Archdiocese will rely on national programs.

7. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

Recommendation 21

That Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be included in decision-making processes.

ACBC Response

Agreed. This is the long-established practice in dioceses with significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership and elsewhere through such works as Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, particularly in areas of Church life affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The ACBC is advised by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council. The contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Catholics to the life, mission, spirituality, worship and governance of the Church is greatly appreciated but constitutes unfinished business; dioceses and parishes need to continue fostering and promoting the full participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics in the Church.

Archdiocesan Response

An important issue that the process of Synodality will help us to address.

8. SAFEGUARDING

Recommendation 24

That dioceses and religious institutes examine the status of their safeguarding programmes and either:

- 24.1 negotiate arrangements with CPSL for the provision of audit facilities for those programmes, or*
- 24.2 announce publicly why they have not done so and what alternative monitoring systems they have in place.*

ACBC Response

CPSL was replaced by ACSL (2021). Because some civil jurisdictions are now also requiring safeguarding audits of institutions, this will likely lead to some modification of the type of audit undertaken.

Archdiocesan Response

Safeguarding programs and audits are continually developing. The Archdiocese is clear in its determination to be audited by bodies other than the Catholic Church. Likewise, training and formation programs developed by State Bodies (e.g., NSW Office of Children's Guardian) are gathering momentum – usually cost free and of fine quality.

Recommendation 25

That each diocesan bishop adopt the National Response Protocol once finalised, including procedures for dealing with complaints against bishops and other religious leaders, making it particular law for their diocese.

ACBC Response

The ACBC has already established the procedures

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for the Church in Australia which are required under the Motu Proprio of Pope Francis, *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, and has recently adopted the interim NRP ad experimentum until such time as the Holy See confirms its status. While the Protocol contains universal Church law, it has been prepared as a protocol which, by definition, has broader scope than a legislative act.

Archdiocesan Response

The NRP has been adopted by the Archdiocese.

9. PRIESTLY CANDIDATES

Recommendation 30

That the bishop consult the panel before making a decision about whether to accept a candidate for admission to a seminary, whether to accept a candidate for ordination or whether to permit entry to an international priest.

ACBC Response

Seminary admission, admission to holy orders and welcoming international priests are three quite distinct processes, each requiring particular competencies. The bishops may review the relevant existing bodies and procedures, and in due course update what is in place or establish new bodies and procedures in light of the new *Ratio Fundamentalis* and the document *Interculturation of Clergy in Australia* (2020).

Archdiocesan Response

The Archdiocese has a clear policy on admission of overseas priests. The application process for seminary admission is clear, including psychological tests. The seminary itself has and maintains experts, both men and women, in deciding the suitability and readiness for formation of the candidate. These are important considerations in deciding on the efficacy of a selection panel.

Recommendation 32

That the formation and training of candidates for the priesthood and during their ministry have as a primary objective the development in individuals of an internal disposition that values a collaborative lay ecclesial ministry.

ACBC Response

Both ordained and lay ministers need to develop

not only a collaborative ecclesial disposition but also a co-responsible disposition, grounded in personal discipleship of Jesus Christ and shaped by a sound theology of ministry and the Church.

Archdiocesan Response

The process of Synodality would aid such a noble objective.

Recommendation 33

That in designing formation programmes and curricula, opportunities be provided for:

- 33.1 increased levels of studies in tertiary institutions outside the seminary;*
- 33.2 extended placements in parishes and ministries; and*
- 33.3 spending time in communal living outside the seminary.*

ACBC Response

Most seminarians enter seminary formation having already studied at a university. With the exception of Australia's only rural seminary, all seminarians undertake their studies at universities or theological institutions that are separate from the seminary: University of Notre Dame Australia, Australian Catholic University, the Catholic Institute of Sydney, Catholic Theological College Melbourne or Yarra Theological Union in Box Hill. Seminarians have extended placements in parishes and ministries. In addition, seminarians enter seminary formation having already lived communally (family & friends) while studying at university. On entry to seminary, candidates have another experience of communal life.

Archdiocesan Response

Seminary formation takes approximately seven years, but there is no reason why three to four years of this time could not be spent by the seminarian living outside the seminary in suitable accommodation, maintaining intimate and regular contact with seminary formators and formation programmes.

10. OPPORTUNITIES FOR FORMATION

Recommendation 34

That all Church leaders take steps, wherever the opportunity presents itself, to educate about the dangers of clericalism and to make changes to

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practices that foster an unhealthy culture. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, seminary curricula and ongoing professional development for clergy and lay people.

ACBC Response

The Bishops affirm their commitment to creating an ecclesial culture in which there is no place for clergy who hold an attitude of entitlement to privilege or superior treatment or the inappropriate exercise of power. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that where a mindset as ingrained as clericalism exists, significant change will likely be the fruit of conversion more than of programs and will be generational rather than instantaneous in its effects. It is also noted that there can be healthy forms of clerical culture and unhealthy forms of quasi-clericalism among lay leaders. These, too, must be guarded against.

Archdiocesan Response

The Archdiocesan Synod (1989) mandated Parish Pastoral Councils. This is an important instrument in developing an ecclesial, rather than clerical culture. In addition, the formation and development of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and a culture of Synodality should aid this recommendation.

Recommendation 37

That professional development opportunities be provided in seminaries and theological schools, with the widespread involvement of the laity, for all in leadership, governance and management positions to ensure they understand basic fiduciary and governance principles relevant to their positions.

ACBC Response

The professional development opportunities currently available through seminaries and theological colleges could be enhanced and made more widely available for all in leadership, governance and management positions.

Archdiocesan Response

The majority of educators in theological schools are laymen and women with the appropriate qualifications. Exposure to formation and training programs in governance is clearly desirable, both for the laity and clergy.

Recommendation 35

That leadership formation for all church leaders and prospective leaders be widely available at diocesan and province level in order to support best practice in governance.

Recommendation 72

That the diocesan bishop in consultation with the diocesan pastoral council establish formation programmes, pathways and ministry opportunities specifically for those who work in parishes and local communities. This includes pastoral associates, youth ministers, catechists and other lay ecclesial ministers both professionals and volunteers.

ACBC Response

The model for all Christian leaders is Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. Christian leadership will always be qualitatively different from leadership in politics, commerce, government, industry and other secular realms. However, Christian leadership can draw valuable lessons from good leadership practices in various fields.

An outcome of the 2016 statutory external review of the Bishops Conference was a project to develop national principles for formation for Church leadership and governance, which began prior to the review of governance but did not continue while the review was being undertaken. The project has now resumed. While leadership formation has been made available in a range of modes and in a number of institutions, more will need to be done to foster participation in already available and purpose-designed leadership formation opportunities.

Archdiocesan Response

The lay leaders in our Archdiocese hold the positions for two reasons: their qualifications and their integrity. Professional development is encouraged. The Archdiocese does provide training and formation for catechists. Since 2017, the Archdiocese has employed 25 youth ministers, working in parishes and schools, under the educational and formative leadership of the Archdiocesan Youth Co-Ordinator and Catholic Education.

Recommendation 79

That a programme of induction and ongoing

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formation about the roles and responsibilities of each member and especially new members of parish pastoral councils be implemented.

ACBC Response

Programs of induction and formation for parish councils are the responsibility of the parish. In some dioceses, it is possible for the diocese to contribute to this process. Resources deriving from canon law, diocesan guidelines, principles of good governance and meeting procedures can be developed where they do not already exist. The Handbook for Building Stronger Parishes and the Building Stronger Parishes project are readily available resources that draw upon research into Australian parishes, including in the areas of leadership and planning.

Archdiocesan Response

A very worthy objective. Discussion could be initiated at the Council of Priests and then at a future Archdiocesan Pastoral Council as a clear strategic priority.

11. LAY ADVISORS TO COUNCIL OF PRIESTS AND COLLEGE OF CONSULTORS

Recommendation 46

That lay advisors, female and male attend council of priests and college of consultors meeting with the right to participate fully in all discussions and not as mere auditors.

ACBC Response

No lay person can be a member of the presbyteral council or college of consultors in canon law. Nonetheless, every diocese has different procedures for ensuring lay advice is provided on matters dealt with by the council of priests and the college of consultors. In most, this involves particular lay persons making presentations, answering questions and contributing to discussions on particular subjects; in others, one or more lay persons are regular participants in such meetings. It might also involve other structures of discernment and governance as established by the local Church to meet its particular needs. While the intention of the recommendation is clear, and forms of lay participation even on these clerical councils are increasingly commonplace, particular application

will need to be considered in each diocese and in light of both canon law and the statutes of the council of priests and the college of consultors in each diocese.

Archdiocesan Response

Continued involvement of lay persons, experts in their fields, is essential. The establishment of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council would balance and enhance the consultative voice, aiding the Archbishop. Rome could be asked to amend membership of the college of consultors and it might well be desirable to do so. The Council of Priests, however, is by nature a gathering of priests.

12. CONSULTATION IN PASTORAL PLANNING

Recommendation 47

That pastoral planning and provision of ministry are to involve as much effective consultation as is possible between the bishop and the relevant parish communities on major issues affecting the pastoral life of the parish.

ACBC Response

Such issues might well receive consideration during the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. A diocesan pastoral council might be expected to exercise a role in the recommended consultation.

Archdiocesan Response

The Code of Canon Law defines the nature and purpose of an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council (APC): Its function, under the authority of the Bishop, is to study and weigh those matters which concern the pastoral works in the diocese, and to propose practical conclusions concerning them (Can. 511). A skills based, strategic APC would be of great benefit to the Archdiocese and Archbishop, and further aid in deepening a culture of Synodality in our community.

13. APPEAL PROCESSES

Recommendation 49

That appeal processes from the parish to the diocesan level be accountable and transparent.

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ACBC Response

Appeal processes within the Church need transparency and accountability. It is observed, however, that appeal processes everywhere normally include a prudent assessment of the need for confidentiality and respect for the persons concerned and groups involved. Local gossip and social media can prove particularly coercive and even destructive if processes become public prior to resolution. In areas relevant to safeguarding and professional standards, processes are addressed through existing protocols. This recommendation will be referred to the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law for further advice.

Archdiocesan Response

Agreed.

14. DIOCESAN SYNOD

Recommendation 56

That within five years following the closing session of the Fifth Plenary Council each diocese conduct a diocesan synod and every ten years thereafter.

ACBC Response

So long as it is consistent with the decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia and any universal law, the recommendation that a diocesan synod be held within five years of the conclusion of the Plenary Council is endorsed, so that each local Church can determine for itself the appropriate means to apply the decisions of the Plenary Council in the local context.

Archdiocesan response

The Archdiocese has had two Synods in recent times (1989, 2004), with long consultation processes. With the emphasis placed on Synodality by Pope Francis, we can expect regular Synodal gatherings, smaller in size most likely and with shorter, simpler consultation processes, with an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests being de facto 'instruments' of the synod process.

15. DIOCESAN FINANCE COUNCIL

Recommendation 58

That the bishop participates ex-officio in the diocesan finance council and the chair of the

diocesan finance council be an independent lay person.

ACBC Response

The reasons for the Bishop to participate ex officio in the diocesan finance council are clear, with the chair being an independent lay person, yet without prejudice to the provision in the Code of Canon Law that the Bishop or his delegate should "preside" over the finance council.

Archdiocesan Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 60

That each diocese provide publicly full annual financial reporting including an income statement, a summary statement of financial activities including investment strategy and a summary of financial position.

ACBC Response

The ACBC has developed a template for diocesan reporting (Recommendation 43), a section on financial reporting that includes an income statement, a summary statement of financial activities including investment strategy and a summary of financial position.

Archdiocesan Response

The imperative for financial reporting is clear, but should be situated within the desire for wider reporting, including pastoral works.

16. DIOCESAN AGENCIES AND ADVISORY BODIES

Recommendation 65

That governance reform be accompanied by suitable education programmes within dioceses. Advisory bodies, such as pastoral councils, be fully costed and financially supported.

ACBC Response

Wherever reforms of diocesan governance are implemented, dioceses should ensure that the people affected are educated about the changes. Diocesan advisory bodies should be costed and funded within the financial capacity and budgetary provisions of each diocese.

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Archdiocesan Response

Agreed with emphasis placed upon 'financial capacity.' There is definitely a need for education and formation on financial literacy. The same can be said of governance and canonical matters in the Archdiocese. The appointment a new chancellor affords us this opportunity.

17. THE APPOINTMENT AND RE-APPOINTMENT OF CLERGY

Recommendation 83

That bishops are to consult with the college of consultors or a clergy appointments panel when making changes with regard to clergy. These meetings are to include lay women and men.

ACBC Response

Agreed in principle. The requirement that the Bishop consult his college of consultors or clergy appointments panel when making changes with regard to clergy is one of canon law. The practice of receiving the contribution of lay women and men concerning clergy appointments is affirmed. Processes of consultation may, however, occur outside of formal meetings, and other approaches, such as discernment or listening sessions, may be preferred. It is observed that often there is little choice in the appointment and reappointment of clergy due to the limited availability of priests for appointment at any given time.

Archdiocesan Response

Consultation is desirable, but the issue of 'who' will be consulted is clearly important. The selection of skilled, faithful lay advisors will be important.

18. PARISH FINANCE COUNCILS

Recommendation 78 & 80

That the parish priest participates ex-officio in the parish financial council and that the chair of the parish financial council be an independent lay person, meeting at least four times a year.

ACBC Response

Agreed.

Archdiocesan Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 81

That each parish annually provides full financial reporting which includes an income statement, a summary statement of financial activities including investment strategy and a summary of financial position. These annual financial reports are to be completed within four months of the end of the financial year.

ACBC Response

Agreed in principle, but the specified approaches to fulfilling these intentions may be too prescriptive.

Archdiocesan Response

Agreed.