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Catholics For Renewal Inc.

www.catholicsforrenewal.org.au



Newsletter, September 2018

EDITORIAL,

Response of Australian bishops and religious leaders is more dithering

Edited extract

(full editorial [HERE](#))

On 31 August 2018, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) released their official Response to 80 recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child

Sexual Abuse ([Here](#)). It came 259 days after the Royal Commission's Final Report, and 123 days after the Truth, Justice and Healing Council (TJHC) advised them on what to do ([Here](#)).



Image: Dither - hesitate, falter, vacillate

Catholics for Renewal acknowledges the positive reforms that have been introduced to make children safer in Australia. But it has concerns about the Response which contains more promises than actions. It claims that 98 per cent of the Royal Commission's recommendations have been "accepted or accepted in principle or supported"; that is less than honest, for it is based on the point blank rejection of only one recommendation regarding the 'confessional seal' (Rec. 7.4), one which merited at least a more thoughtful and nuanced response given that canon law (c.980) allows

for absolution to be granted, refused or deferred. The Response, in fact, refers many recommendations 'for further consideration', including twelve (15% of the 80) marked as 'Noted: ACBC has informed the Holy See'.

The Response adopts a far too timid approach to resolving the culture of secrecy and clericalism enshrined in structures, attitudes and canon law; over forty of the 'accepted, accepted in principle, or supported' decisions must await the future development of standards by Catholic Professional Standards Limited (CPSL), which could take years; and the TJHC advice that the critical review of governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes (Rec. 16.7) "should be completed by mid-2019" is effectively ignored; the only action there is to have the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) advise on the kind of review to be conducted and an 'achievable timeline'. Many Catholics, who were hoping for a robust and action-oriented response, will feel astonished.

Also conspicuous in the way the Response was prepared, was the lack of trust placed in the *sensus fidei fidelium* – the sense of faith of the Australian faithful – a fundamental Church teaching. Australia's bishops have shown little desire for a truly synodal or 'listening' church, and scant respect for the advice of Pope Francis that:

It is impossible to think of a conversion of our activity as a Church that does not include the active participation of all members of God's people. Without the active participation of all the Church's members, everything being done to uproot the culture of abuse in our communities will not be successful in generating the necessary dynamics for sound and realistic change.

Without genuine synodality, there will be a latent suspicion that real action and cultural change are going to fall far short of what needs to happen if our ailing and youth-poor Church in Australia is to be re-energized and be a credible sign of the Kingdom of God.

As Australian Catholics prepare for the still distant Plenary Council in 2020/2021, now is the time to demand real accountability, transparency and inclusion from the bishops. Catholics for Renewal would suggest that Catholics in every diocese respectfully demand of their local diocesan bishop that he immediately establish a gender-balanced diocesan pastoral council, mandate gender-balanced parish pastoral councils, develop of a 5-year diocesan pastoral plan via a diocesan synod – the "instrument par

excellence for assisting the bishop to order his diocese” (Directory for Bishops, n. 67 [\(Here\)](#), and publish a comprehensive diocesan report for the year 2018 and all future years.

(Full Editorial [Here](#)).



Priest shortage, imported clergy and the ‘men of proven character’ solution.

(Full Paper [Here](#))

Edited Extract from David Timbs, September 2018

While many bishops are urging their people to pray for ‘vocations’ to the priesthood to turn the tide on the world wide shortage and resultant sacramental and pastoral famine, the same bishops have taken out a long term insurance policy against what they hope and pray would turn out to be a short term crisis. They have been importing large numbers of foreign priests to fill the vacuum caused by the dramatic decline in the number of local priests. In order to make up for the shortfall, Australian bishops have adopted a policy of recruiting priests from dioceses and religious institutes mainly in West Africa (+80), India (+185), the Philippines (+93) and Vietnam (+88). Furthermore, it would be reasonable to assume that most of these priests have been brought to Australia on 3-5 year, possibly renewable, 457 ‘skilled worker’ visas.

David's paper considers the scale and long term consequences of imported clergy, concluding that *“We have no shortage of vocations. What we have is a shortage of vision”*.

(Full Paper [Here](#))

Image: Long term pattern.

*The following recent Catholics For
Renewal website News & Opinion items
provide a snapshot of current Church*



issues and may be accessed [HERE](#)

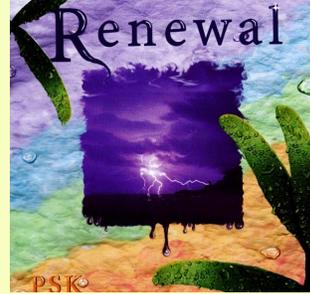
* Note that publication of links to these items does not necessarily indicate editorial support.

- * NZ: What victims want most: justice
- * Open letter to Pope Francis on “The Pope as a Game Changer”
- * Can we start again please? Towards reform of the Catholic Church?
- * Prosecutors to appeal 'inadequate' sentence
- * Paris archbishop sets new pastoral priorities to include lay people
- * Archbishop Coleridge: U.S. needs to become “humbler church” in response to abuse crisis
- * 600 people gather in Sydney to hear from Pope’s expert on child safety
- * Hans Zollner* at Campbelltown - Pontifical Secret
- * What it will take to prove the Church gets it
- * The Catholic Church has learned, is changing and will keep changing
- * Health and Integrity conference calls for a ‘reformation’ of Australia’s churches following Royal Commission
- * Where from and where to: The Truth Justice and Healing Council, the Royal Commission and the Catholic Church in Australia
- * Archbishop Comensoli meets mother of abuse victim
- * Pope Francis must lead on the sexual abuse crisis
- * Trent’s Long Shadow: The Abuse Crisis and Seminaries, Dioceses, and the Laity
- * Immense work ahead to fix abuse damage: CRA
- * Statement from ACBC President Archbishop Mark Coleridge
- * Letter to the Faithful from Archbishop Peter A Comensoli
- * Critics say Pope Francis needs to walk the walk after too many words
- * Pope Francis issues new letter on sex abuse: ‘We showed no care for the little ones’

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(thanks to those who have responded)

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