



# concerned Catholics

of the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese

## A response to the Royal Commission

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **Marilyn Hatton - a leader for women**

Marilyn Hatton, a longtime campaigner for women's rights in the Catholic Church and in Australian society, is this week to be honoured with the Edna Ryan Award for Community Activism.

Speaking ahead of the EDNA Awards ceremony tomorrow night at Trades Hall in Sydney, Ms Hatton, who describes herself as "an accidental feminist", says she has been driven by her Catholic faith to advocate for a full place for women in the Church.

"There can be no justice in a Church that does not recognise all its members as equals. Ours is a theology of equality.

"Pope Francis may say that the door is closed on women's ordination, but I think a growing number of Catholics believe that the Church cannot grow without its full humanity – women and men – represented in its leadership," she says.

Ms Hatton has been nominated by Ann Mari Jordens of the Australian Women's Archive Project for the Edna Ryan Award for Community Activism. to be presented at the awards ceremony on Friday night 16 November at Sydney Trades Hall.

Ms Hatton has advocated for gender equity in the Church and in the wider community since the 1970s when she played an active role in the Whitlam government's initiatives for equal participation.

She became the ACT's first Women's Health Advisor.

A former nurse, she has also held senior positions in the Commonwealth Health Department.

Spurred by the exclusion of women from decision-making and priesthood in the Church, she has been an energetic leader of the Catholic feminist movement in Australia and overseas.

Her concern about the Church's failure to listen to appeals for an equitable role for women led her to join with other women and men to mount numerous challenges to the Church hierarchy and its orthodoxy.

She was a co-coordinator of the Ordination of Catholic Women and has worked with Women and the Australian Church and Catholics for Renewal supported by Catholics Speak Out and Concerned Catholics. She has represented Australia on the Women's Ordination Worldwide Network and at the International Catholic Reform Network ICRN, Chicago meeting, working with supporters around the world.

Ms Hatton has been a pioneering figure in Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn which advocates for deep reforms in the Church including a greater role for the laity and particularly for women.

Ms Hatton says “Feminism pursued me in a way. In my work as a public servant in the areas of health care and the status of women, I became aware of how patriarchy impacts destructively on the full equality of women in the public and private spheres of life in a myriad of ways, which are supported by language, customs, social norms and laws, and importantly for me through practices of faith.”

She believes Catholicism functions on misguided interpretations of theology and biology that impact on women’s reproductive and sexual health, as well as governance structures which exclude women from participating in decision-making and ministry.

“Pope Francis is the best Pope in a hundred years and while openly critical of clericalism, he is much affected by it. He states that ‘the door is closed on women’s ordination’.

“So Catholic women, who comprise more than half of the Church’s practicing faithful, are knocking on that door. We have joined forces nationally and internationally.

“We can wait no longer. We will continue to push that door to get women into decision-making at all levels as a first step for full equality for women in the Catholic Church. The Church with all its influence has a duty of care to lead on improving the status of women universally; otherwise it gives tacit support to those cultures where women and the vulnerable are treated as inferior and struggle for their human rights and dignity to be recognized,” Ms Hatton said.

The EDNAs commemorate the life and work of Edna Ryan (1904–97) who worked towards making a better world – especially for women. Tickets are available at <https://www.ednaryan.net.au/>

For more information contact [ednasawards@gmail.com](mailto:ednasawards@gmail.com)/[eventbrite.com.au](https://www.eventbrite.com.au/) / 0457 346 781

*Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn is a group in the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese concerned about a number of governance, cultural and structural issues arising from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. We seek an effective voice for lay people in the administration and direction of our church.*

---

MEDIA CONTACT: Mark Metherell 0417 603 697