



CONCERNED CATHOLICS CANBERRA GOULBURN MEDIA RELEASE

Secret Church Business Must End

13 January 2020

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn has issued a public call for greater transparency in the internal affairs of the Catholic Church. The church, a notable bastion of secrecy, must lift its game and meet accepted civic standards in the selection of delegates for its plenary summit meeting later this year.

The chair of Concerned Catholics, Emeritus Professor John Warhurst says: "At such a tumultuous time when so many important developments are taking place for the future of the church, too many decisions are being taken behind closed doors."

The church leadership has pledged that it is no longer "business as usual". The massive consultation exercise now underway in the lead up to Plenary Council 2020, is a big test of this pledge as diocesan delegates are being chosen to represent dioceses at the first plenary meeting in Adelaide in October this year. These delegates are being chosen under the old rules giving ultimate authority to the bishop in each diocese.

Professor Warhurst called upon bishops to respect the democratic spirit alive within the Catholic community and to recognise the persistent calls for genuine church renewal.

At a difficult time of the year for any meaningful communication and consultation, expressions of interest from parishioners have been called for by 25 January 2020.

In the Archdiocese of Canberra Goulburn, Archbishop Christopher Prowse, will be advised by a small lay committee which will choose between candidates who have nominated themselves in response to a call through parishes. A decision will be announced early in February with four names of locals to be forwarded to the national level.

Professor Warhurst, who has himself expressed his interest, has called for maximum transparency in all aspects of the process.

"The legitimacy of the delegate selection outcomes, and ultimately of the whole Plenary Council itself within the wider Catholic community, will depend on there being

a totally transparent process. The church must not fall at this first hurdle. The delegate choices must advance the role of all lay people, but especially of lay women in decision-making within the church. Gender balance must be of the highest priority."

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn, created in April 2017 as a ginger group within the church, stands for accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and lay leadership in the spirit of Pope Francis. To advance these goals CCG will be hosting a meeting of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, the national network of 15 groups across Australia committed to renewal of the Catholic Church, in Canberra on Friday 3 April 2020. The place of lay Catholics in the Plenary Council 2020 will be the major agenda item.

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.

Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn Submission to the Plenary Council is available [here](#).

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