

Toward a transparent, inclusive and humble church

John Warhurst AO, Chair, Concerned Catholics Canberra - Goulburn

Plenary INSIGHT

A Daily Blog



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SENSE OF URGENCY RISING

Wednesday has come and almost gone. We are now half-way through the time available to us to come to our first conclusions on the questions we have been allocated. How can that be? It feels as though we have just started, but shortly after I conclude this blog I re-enter my 'large' small group to continue discerning Questions 14 and 16.

These last two 'working' hours of each day from 4.30 to 6.30 are crucial. Over five days we total only 10 hours together like this for free-flowing discussion about our questions. The morning plenary sessions are a different big-picture beast, while the early afternoon gathering is both more spiritual and more structured by design.

Our official group feedback this morning is now on the public record and shows where we are. The one 'concrete' step we have taken was to float the idea with the Steering Committee of inviting expert input on the idea of mission into our discussion. This initiative flowed indirectly from the two-pronged task which our group has been set, because 'mission' is seen as one common thread. This led to an excellent 5-minute address to the plenary session today by Professor Richard Lennan from Boston College.

Some in our group came to our deliberations because of an interest and background in social service, health and aged care agencies, while others brought an interest and expertise in governance, both practical and theoretical.

Our spokesperson today, Danny Casey from northern Sydney, described our agreed position: 'Pressured, responsible and time-challenged dealing with two questions, vulnerable, hopeful. Becoming increasingly confident of the good that will come.'

Much of that resonates with me, but I feel an increasing sense of urgency to move forward at a more deliberate pace.

This morning I shared my perspective with the official Vox Pop being conducted by the national Plenary Council communications team. My conversation with Neil Helmore from Townsville, will be posted on the official Facebook page. Having that conversation helped me clarify my views.

I am physically isolated in lockdown in Canberra, but not alone. I am connected not only with the wider world but with some of my fellow small group members on Channel 9 of Teams. Consider the following private snapshots of life in my group.

One lay woman said to me this morning:

'I think we need to get stuck into the questions now without losing sight of the bigger themes. I think adopting *Light from the Southern Cross* is a large part of the answer, but some in the group won't even really have read it all I suppose. I am clearly in the frustration phase of this process. If we were in person, I think it would be much easier to galvanise as we would have had side conversations with half of the group by now, and got a read on things.'

A second lay woman admitted to me last night:

'I may be revising my sense of optimism and progress that I expressed this morning. I feel like we've actually taken a step backwards.'

A lay man, whom I met for the first time on Monday, shared my concern:

'John, like you I have a sense of urgency to get on with 'concrete' proposals; two days gone and we still seem to be finding a starting point. The two questions have definitely made the process difficult and seemingly unproductive so far. We are doing this in large part because of the Royal Commission with governance the glaring problem. I'd like to get on with it.'

We four are only a small part of our small group, much less of the whole Council, but I doubt that we are alone in our views.

JOHN WARHURST AO

Plenary Council Member

Chair Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn

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