

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE PRESIDENT – 4 March 2024



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The first meeting of the CRA National Council for the year was held on 4 March 2024. Alan Gibson CM, Gerard Brady CFC, Monica Cavanagh RSJ, Asaeli Rass SVD, Philip Watkins SSS, Mary-Clare Holland OP, Mel Dwyer FdCC, Barbara Brown-Graham FCJ, Philippa Murphy FDNSC and I were all present in person. Christian Fini OMI and George Kolodziej SDS joined us via Zoom. Mary Ryan OP was planning to attend but was unfortunately an apology.

Council Review – 3 March 2024

You will recall from the last Communiqué, the Council embarked on a Review process at its December meeting. On the Sunday evening before this most recent Council Meeting, members met to enter into the second stage. The 2.5 hour session was facilitated by Therese Carroll RSJ, and was followed by a dinner. It was a very important and successful session which looked at both the micro and macro workings of the Council, whereby the Council instituted effective changes to its meeting process the very next day. The ‘big picture’ will be considered more deeply in Stage 3 during the strategic planning day to be held in July.

Consecrated Life - Jubilee Convocation – Rome

Philippa Murphy, Monica Vaughan, a member of one of our secular institutes, Anne Walker and I attended the Jubilee Convocation in Rome, from 1 – 4 February 2024. The meeting felt more like a retreat experience, rather than directional, and attendees were encouraged to be joyful bearers of hope in a broken world. Council discussed ways to celebrate consecrated life in our nation through the celebrations on 2 February 2025. We will form a working party to look at this celebration. There was also a discussion about celebrations for consecrated life to be held in October 2025 in Rome.

Meetings with DICLSAL – Rome

The successful meetings with DICLSAL, both with CRA on its own and the separate DICLSAL meeting with Executive Directors of CRA, LCWR and the Canadian Religious Conference were discussed with Council. These meetings focused on mutual understanding, in relation to religious life in the various countries and how CRA supports and animates religious life, and working together on a synodal journey to try to find meaningful solutions together. The deepening of these relationships are very positive steps forward.

Oceania Conference – Madang, Papua New Guinea

On 24 February 2024, Mary-Clare Holland, Anne Walker and I met with five other Conferences within Oceania: Federation of Religious Conferences of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (FOR), the Conference of Male Religious, the Conference of Female Religious), Congregational Leaders Conference Aotearoa and New Zealand (CLCANZ) and Conference of Major Superiors of the Pacific Islands (CMSPI). The purpose of the

meeting was to get to know the various Conferences in our region, and to discuss their functions, strengths, challenges and their focuses. The Conferences also discussed ways in which they could collaborate in ways to benefit religious and the region as a whole.

Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Religious (FOR) PNG and SI – Madang, Papua New Guinea

We had received an invitation from the President of FOR for CRA to provide a spiritual reflection and a session on how CRA functions and what we do. I led a retreat session in the morning for the Assembly, and the President of CLCANZ, Executive Member of CMSPI and Anne Walker presented to those gathered at the Annual General Meeting on the work of these conferences.

The time spent together was a significant synodal experience which led to greater understanding, connection, and commitment to mutual support.

Engagement by Religious with the Synod of Bishops

As you are aware, CRA has been approached by both USG/UISG and the ACBC, to consult with members or invite their responses to the consultation processes. We are pleased that Monica Cavanagh will be leading a Zoom for leaders to assist them with this invitation from USG/UISG to consider the ways in which Religious can contribute to the Synodal Journey and to provide input for CRA's submission on 15 March 2024. The meeting also allows those who have smaller congregations to have a voice as part of CRA. We hope that many of you can attend this Zoom on 15 March 2024.

Sponsorship for training a new Canon Lawyer

Conversations continued about whether religious institutes wish to support or sponsor a religious or lay person to either take up canon law or continue studies. The initial work is being undertaken to identify what a sponsorship model may look like, but I flag this at this time as it may be of interest to you.

Council members availability/eligibility for next Council election

The process to elect new Council members will commence soon. The first step is for Council members to discern whether they will be continuing on Council after the National Assembly, assuming that they are still eligible to hold that position. When we know those numbers, Anne will commence the process with you as Leaders to seek nominations. You may wish to begin considering whether you are called at this time to serve on CRA Council or whether you see other leaders whom you may wish to nominate (after speaking with them first).

Engagement Survey

The Secretariat will shortly be sending a significant Engagement Survey to you to help Council and the Secretariat to understand what our members ask of CRA. As it is 6 years since the significant change to the 'new CRA', it is important to provide members with an opportunity to provide specific feedback. The Survey responses will also assist Council in considering the new strategic plan in July 2024, so I encourage you to complete the Survey when you receive it even though it will take some of your time. Thank you for your assistance.

Council Decisions

Council made the following approvals and appointments during the Council Meeting:

- Council approved the amended CRA Safeguarding Risk Management Strategy. This was amended to separate safeguarding matters from work health and safety matters which have now been moved to the Work Health and Safety documents
- Council appointed Peter Dowling CFC as CRA's interim representative to the Catholic Social Services Victoria Board
- Council appointed the following to the CRA Initial Formation Committee:
 - Bryan Davis FMS
 - Firminus Wiryono SVD
 - Sarah Puls SGS
 - Lianella Girardi RSJ
- Council reappointed John Ferguson to the CRA Justice Committee

Council is appreciative of the commitment of generosity of these people and all in our CRA Committees who support the Ministry of CRA.

CRA Secretariat

Council acknowledged the range and quality of work that is undertaken by and through the Secretariat, which was evidenced in the various reports provided to Council.

Yvonne Diab was welcomed as the new Director of Communications and Engagement and Council wishes her well in that role. The effective, smooth and compliant functioning the Secretariat is important and to support this, the Secretariat has undertaken a significant project in creating Work Health and Safety (WHS) Management Systems. Council thanks Emma Baker, Policy and Projects Officer, for the work that she has undertaken and also acknowledges Council member, Mary Ryan, for input during this project. At the moment, the documents comprising the WHS management system sit with the Executive for final approval. To assist Council in meeting its compliance obligations, Anne Walker held a training session for Council on its WHS obligations and the new CRA WHS Management System.

May your Lenten journey be deeply nourishing as we move towards the celebrations of Easter,



Peter Jones OSA
President