

Executive Officer AGM address 2018

I want to start saying thank you to some important people:

- Pat Bugden – as interim Executive Officer set up excellent structures and goodwill for the AMPJP and he has been very happy to take my phone calls when I need some information or advice;
- Paul Oakley – as Chair of the Council has been a great support and I appreciate his phone calls to see how I am in the role and consult with me on issues that arise;
- Sue Fabian – has been an excellent Treasurer and always cheerful and cooperative when payments are needed or issues need discussing; and
- All the Councillors and Member Representatives who have contributed to meetings and working groups on Governance Document and preparing the AGM/Forum. I am always struck by the goodwill between you and the joy you have in meeting in person – it is like being at a cousin's reunion.

What does the Executive Officer do:

- Ensure legal and regulatory compliance
- Process and pay accounts
- Prepare for the AMPJP AGM and annual canonical stewards' forum in August and another face-to-face meeting in February.
- Write the agenda and minutes for 4-5 Council teleconference meetings
- Be a point of communication and cooperation. Throughout the year, the AMPJP has worked with: The Truth Justice and Healing Council and its Supervisory Group; Catholic Religious Australia; Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; Plenary Council 2020; The Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand; *BBI* - The Australian Institute of Theological Education; Yarra Theological Union; Australian Catholic University; Catholic Health Australia; and Catholic Social Services Australia. Increasingly groups are approaching the AMPJP as they do ACBC and CRA as means of contacting those involved in Church governance.
- My E-newsletter is emailed on the first of each month. It contains an account of my activities over the past month plus events and resources of interest to those involved in PJP governance. People can subscribe to it by using the link at the bottom of the [AMPJP website](#).

- Consulting on and drafting the AMPJP Strategic Plan and our Governance document occupied much of the early part of 2018
- In late 2017 I noticed the AICD and ASX target of 30% of corporate board members being women and I wondered how our PJPs compared. I was delighted my survey found women as trustees/Directors are:
 - 60% of Ministerial PJP Trustees are women; and
 - 52% of the members of the Boards of Ministerial PJPs are women.

Why did I want this job?

I have been asked several times over the year why I want to work on my own, for three days a week in an unknown organisation that seems to exist in a cul-de-sac within the church. Actually, the first person to quiz me was Pat Bugden when he phoned to offer me the job – at the time it sounded like he was trying to convince me it was beneath me.

In truth, I have fairly high level of skills from my 20 years in executive management within aged care and mental health. I am a Bachelor of Social Work, Master of Management and Master of Theology. I have also provided casual teaching in a TAFE welfare course and in parish adult faith education courses and workshops. I have held Board positions in aged care, social work and various church bodies.

When I saw this position, I was mad keen on it for two reasons:

1. Lifestyle

For the past 20 years I have worked 50+ hours a week and I realized there is no financial reason why I can't work less hours and enjoy life more. Part-time work allows me to pursue other interests and socialize with family and friends.

2. I want a Church I can believe in

When I look at our Church and our society I have the same assessment as Pope Francis who said: *"We are not living an era of change but a change of era."*¹

For me the issue is how will the Church engage with this change and what is the outcome we will see.

I think our Church doesn't have a great track record of positively engaging with change. For instance, when faced with the reformation we bunkered down in fortress Catholic, expelled dissidents, demonised those with a contrary view, and insisted on absolute obedience from our own.

Frankly, I see most of our current Bishops and clergy as being either too weary, too afraid or too conservative to positively respond to change.

If meaningful and positive change is going to happen, it will need everyone contributing – and I want to contribute.

"Nobody gets the Church they want" says, Australian theologian, Richard Lennan. To be truly the Catholic Church we need to be home to a broad range of people and ways of being church.

¹ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151110_firenze-convegno-chiesa-italiana.html

This association and its member Ministerial PJPs are well placed to make a significant contribution to the maturation of the Australian Church. Our governance structures are inclusive, accountable and constantly replenished. Our ministries can evangelise and provide care to a broader range of people than will ever visit a parish. We can provide employment environments that show a Church that welcomes as partners people from all backgrounds and works in a way that is focused on people, especially the poor. Our mission and pastoral care staff use their opportunities to engage with people during significant periods of their lives helping them experience a compassionate God.

Pope Francis has regularly called Church organisations be true to their call:

The Gospel has its own original strength to make proposals. It is up to us to present it in its entirety, to render it accessible without clouding its beauty or weakening its attractiveness, in order to reach the people facing the difficulties of everyday life, who are searching for the meaning of their life or who have fallen away from the Church...The testimony of Christians ... can truly light the way and support their aspiration to happiness. In this way, the Church ... will clearly be more clearly itself, the body of Christ and the people of God, and not only a beautiful organization, another NGO [non-governmental organization].”²

² http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/december/documents/papa-francesco_20141201_ad-limina-svizzera.html

An example of how our Association has modelled a new and authentic way of being Church can be found in the process of developing our governance document. It was developed collaboratively with true consultation. As with the genuine synods of Pope Francis there was a messiness – people were encouraged to express different views, diversity and conflict were embraced as learning opportunities and the resulting document is broad and allows for unique applications in response to local circumstances.

I am very conscious that this is your association. You get to decide what we do and you decide what we say. I see my role as actioning your directions.

I have signed up for three years and all going well I plan on seeking another three-year term.

The AMPJP is not the only outlet for my enthusiasm for a better Church. I will continue to make my contribution to church reform within my home parish and diocesan community. Moreover, I see myself as privileged to have a role in the AMPJP where, with you, we can help form a Church in which we can believe.