



AMPJP Response to the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia

There are some Decrees of the Plenary Council that name AMPJP as a responsible party (#2.7.f, 7.2 and 9.1 b-d).

Most other Decrees do not specify the AMPJP however the AMPJP has chosen to that take action as they are relevant and AMPJP action is a demonstration of our solidarity with the rest of the Church.

There a several Decrees where it is AMPJP inappropriate for the AMPJP to act (2.1, 4.4, 5.4, 7.3, 9.1.a).

The AMPJP is conscious that the Plenary Council is more than its Decrees. The Plenary Council was an expression of synodality and discernment which needs continual practice. The Plenary Council also started a process of identifying contextual issues and collaborative ways of responding to these. The AMPJP is keen to play its part in addressing these aspects of the Plenary Council within AMPJP-MPJPs and to assist other parts of the Church to make their own or joint responses.

The AMPJP appreciates that the Decrees are not yet formally established. The November 2022 meeting of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference needs to authorise sending the Decrees to the Apostolic See. Once the Apostolic See has given its approval, the Decrees then need to be promulgated and six months later they take effect.

Nevertheless, the AMPJP will begin responding to those Decrees that are within our control and would not normally require the assent of the Apostolic See. Below is a list of the Decrees and the proposed response of the AMPJP.

Decrees passed by Plenary Council		AMPJP response <i>(approved 13 Sept 2022)</i>
1. Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts		
1.1	<p>That each Catholic school, parish, diocese, eparchy or organisation will respond to the recommendations contained in the NATSICC position paper, <i>“Embracing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Life of the Catholic Church”</i> in the following ways:</p> <p>Other responses that are implied in the NATSICC position paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the building of relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and ministries with mainstream Catholic groups AMPJP leaders to spend time with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of their training 	<p>AMPJP to send representative(s) to the NATSICC Assembly and other relevant NATSICC events</p> <p>AMPJP Formation Committee to consider appropriate formation activities where MPJP Stewards spend time with and hear from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.</p> <p>AMPJP Council representatives meet with NATSICC to discuss their work and possibilities for joint action.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide NATSICC with a list of training options open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics so that a register can be created and maintained. • Encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the MPJP to pursue further training. • Create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to share their stories • AMPJP to acknowledge the history and stories of its relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people • Include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in discussions on issues that affect them • Hold events, meetings and consultations in Aboriginal /Torres Strait Island communities 	
1.1	a) acknowledges in a prominent and appropriate manner the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which their buildings stand;	<p>AMPJP install a NATSICC Acknowledgement plaque or similar in a prominent place at the entrance to its office by Oct 2022</p> <p>Significant AMPJP meetings and events continue to start with a Welcome to or Acknowledgement of Country.</p> <p>AMPJP to recognise Country in postal address and other written and verbal communications by Dec 2022</p>
1.1	b) includes the online Cultural Competency in a Catholic Context course developed by NATSICC and approved by the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the orientation and/or ongoing formation of staff and volunteers to enable more effective and appropriate ministry;	<p>All current AMPJP Councillors and employees to complete the online NATSICC Cultural Competency course or equivalent by Dec 2023 and new personnel within 12 months of commencement</p>
1.1	c) ensures that any retreats and other formation activities offered are culturally appropriate;	<p>AMPJP Formation Committee to develop a process of ensuring the cultural appropriateness of new formation activities by Dec 2022</p> <p>AMPJP Formation Committee to consult with NATSICC or equivalent about the cultural appropriateness of existing formation activities by Dec 2023</p>
1.1	d) works actively to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on its committees, boards and decision-making bodies.	<p>AMPJP to report on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander membership of MPJP Councils</p>

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		and of the boards that they appoint by 2023
1.2	That the advisory councils of the Bishops' Commission for Liturgy, in partnership with NATSICC, will develop options for the liturgically and culturally appropriate use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols and rituals in Catholic liturgical contexts, with respect for the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.	AMPJP to consult with NATSICC or equivalent about the culturally appropriate use of ATSI symbols and rituals in formation and prayer activities by Dec 2023
	Note: While not a Decree, the Plenary Council also: "...endorses the <i>Uluru Statement from the Heart</i> and encourages engagement with processes for implementing the statement, including local, regional, and national truth-telling efforts."	AMPJP to consult its Members regarding AMPJP endorsement of the <i>Uluru Statement from the Heart</i> by Dec 2022
2.	Choosing Repentance - Seeking Healing	
	Note: While not a Decree, the Plenary Council (7.f) also: <i>"requests the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons, with assistance from appropriate experts, to study, acknowledge and address systemic factors which have facilitated abuse within the Church."</i>	AMPJP Council Chair to discuss this action with ACBC and CRA leaders when they meet on 21 August 2022. Eventual AMPJP response might include a minor role for AMPJP as it was not a party to the Royal Commission or the Church's response.
2.1	That to express more fully the aims of the annual "Safeguarding Sunday", in consultation with those who have been harmed by abuse:	AMPJP acknowledge "Safeguarding Sunday" (second Sunday of September) and encourage participation in it by 2022
3.	Called by Christ – Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples	
3.1	That those responsible for Catholic schooling and early childhood education, in consultation with representatives of Catholic parents' groups and parish-based organisation, led by the National Catholic Education Commission and drawing upon the document, <i>A Framework for Formation for Mission in Catholic Education</i> (2017), establish a national forum, which will seek to:	AMPJP to ask CORMSAA to indicate by Dec 2023 what response, if any, it recommends to this Decree's
3.1	a) identify and respond to the needs of the diverse and distinct circumstances of Catholic schools in Australia;	
3.1	b) build partnerships which enhance the vision of Catholic education as an instrument of evangelisation and an essential dimension of the contemporary mission of the Church;	

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3.1	c) offer a process for critical reflection and discernment of the vocation of Catholic education today;	
3.1	d) support formation opportunities for catechesis, faith formation, leadership development and religious education pedagogy; and	
3.1	e) to assist parish engagement with schools and young people.	
3.2	That the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service establish a triennial National Forum of Catholic social service, health and aged care, disability, prison ministry, refugee and asylum-seeker, and justice, ecology and peace organisations and representatives of those served by these organisations; and that the purpose of this forum include:	AMPJP to participate in triennial National Forum and encourage its members to do likewise
3.2	a) providing opportunities for dialogue that will contribute to the ability of the Church in Australia to attend to “examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel”;	
3.2	b) identifying and exploring priorities for evangelisation through outreach, service provision, advocacy and formation;	
3.2	c) addressing gaps;	
3.2	d) seeking opportunities for collaboration; and	
3.2	e) informing the development of local social teachings to be issued by the Australian Bishops.	
3.3	a) That each diocese and eparchy identify ways of promoting ecumenical and interfaith relationships (e.g., an Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer) that are practical and appropriate for the diocese.	AMPJP to promote ecumenical and interfaith events/resources in weekly FYI newsletter and on AMPJP website, e.g., the 78 significant dates in the interfaith and ecumenical calendar
3.3	b) That the Bishops Commission for Christian Unity and Inter-religious Dialogue – in collaboration with Catholic tertiary institutions and theological associations – provide guidance, advice and resources to dioceses for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and relationships, and formation for those responsible for ecumenical and interreligious relations.	AMPJP to consider and promote any resulting guidance, advice and resources
4.	Witnessing to the equal dignity of women and men	
4.1	That the Plenary Council commits the Church in Australia to ensuring:	AMPJP Council to consider an annual review process to ensure that all Councillors feel heard, considered and valued by 2023
4.1	a) through formal policies and intentional practice, the experiences and perspectives of women,	

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	including women who exercise ministry, are heard, considered and valued at local, diocesan and national levels. This is particularly important for matters which affect them distinctively;	
4.1	b) that women are appropriately represented in decision-making structures of Church governance at the parish, diocese or eparchy, and national level, and in Church agencies, entities, and organisations;	AMPJP to consult with its Members if there is a significant imbalance in the gender composition of the AMPJP Council AMPJP to continue to report in March each year on gender equity in MPJPs and the boards that they appoint
4.1	c) that dioceses and eparchies recognise and value publicly, and properly remunerate, women who lead and serve in the Church in various ways.	AMPJP annual plan from 2023 to include monitoring that there is no gender bias in the manner which its paid and volunteer workers are recognised and valued, and remunerated
4.2	That each Australian diocese and eparchy commits to supporting, with appropriate formation and recognition, new opportunities for women to participate in ministries that engage with the most important aspects of diocesan and parish life.	AMPJP annual plan from 2023 include monitoring that there is no gender bias in the formation and appointment of its paid and volunteer workers
4.3	That the Plenary Council commits the Church in Australia to implementing more fully the undertakings made by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in their Social Justice Statement, <i>Woman and Man: The Bishops Respond</i> (2000), in response to the research report <i>Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus</i> (1999).	AMPJP to establish a working group that will report by July 2023 on the applicability to AMPJP of the recommendations of the report <i>Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus</i> (1999).
4.4	That, should the universal law of the Church be modified to authorize the diaconate for women, the Plenary Council recommends that the Australian Bishops examine how best to implement it in the context of the Church in Australia.	-
5.	Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the world	
5.1	That dioceses promote exercise of and formation for the ministries of Lector, Acolyte and Catechist.	AMPJP will continue to assign roles in prayer to people regardless of whether they are a Lector, Acolyte or Catechist
5.2	That in the light of the change in circumstances over the past twenty years, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference review the provisions and guidelines it issued in May 2003 for lay people to participate in a formal ministry of Preaching in the Latin Church, as provided for in canon 766 of the Code of Canon Law.	AMPJP to continue to invite both men and women to offer reflections on Scripture and faith. AMPJP to consider any revision in the Church's formal ministry of Preaching when this is available

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5.3	That the Bishops' Commission for Liturgy institute a sustained program of catechesis of the Sacrament of Penance to promote an understanding of the conditions for, and appropriate practice of, each of the three forms of the Rite of Penance.	AMPJP to appropriately promote the Bishops' Commission for Liturgy catechesis of the Sacrament of Penance when it is available
5.4	That the Plenary Council request that the Holy Father consider whether the Third Form of the Rite of Penance might have wider use on occasions when it is particularly appropriate, granted an understanding among the Faithful of its distinctive nature and requirements.	-
6. Formation and leadership for mission and ministry		
6.1	That each diocese and eparchy develop or strengthen strategic policies grounded in fidelity to the Gospel and closeness to Jesus Christ, to identify and support ministry and leadership formation. These will:	AMPJP to ask AMPJP Formation Committee to recommend by Dec 2023 what, if any response is required to this Decree
6.1	a) acknowledge the generational, cultural and ethnic diversity of the contemporary Church in Australia;	
6.1	b) recognise the changing community profile of many parish and faith communities, incorporating an awareness of and outreach to those beyond these communities;	
6.1	c) enhance knowledge and skills for participating in local churches' structures and processes for consultation, dialogue and decision-making;	
6.1	d) address the particular needs of clergy, with focuses on initial formation and selection processes, and ongoing support and formation;	
6.1	e) include strategies for initiation, ongoing formation and appropriate forms of mentoring and accompaniment (human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral) that foster collaboration and are grounded in adult education principles;	
6.1	f) provide ongoing support and strategies for those who minister to young people;	
6.1	g) support opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholics to undertake formation and training, ensuring that local circumstances and social data are taken into account; and	
6.1	h) consider avenues for financial support through scholarships, sponsorships and grants.	
6.2	That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference commission the Australian Catholic Biblical Association and the Australian Catholic Theological Association to liaise with appropriate Catholic and	AMPJP to appropriately promote resources and formation programs developed in response to this Decree

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	diocesan agencies, institutions and educational providers in order to enhance cross-institutional engagement and development of resources and formation programs. The design of these resources and programs will carefully consider the needs of rural and regional areas and creatively assess the use of available technology in order to improve delivery and accessibility.	
6.3	That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference establish a working group with expertise in formation to develop national Formation for Leadership strategies and guidelines designed for clergy, religious and lay leaders to address the possibilities and challenges of synodal leadership in parishes and diocesan and eparchial agencies and support the Church's work of evangelisation. These strategies and guidelines will:	AMPJP Council to liaise with the AMPJP Formation Committee to ensure appropriate participation in the development of a national strategy for Formation for Leadership
6.3	a) have a national scope and be adaptable to local circumstances;	
6.3	b) aim to enhance competencies in leadership and commitment to synodal practices, with a focus on building communities that are welcoming to all, with particular attention to those on the margins of society and the Church;	
6.3	c) identify and promote models of effective engagement with government and civil society;	
6.3	d) ensure leaders are formed in scripture, tradition and ecclesiology; and	
6.3	e) foster a spirituality of leadership through personal and communal prayer, connection to the sacramental life of the church, and commitment to service	
6.4	That the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference establish a working group with expertise in Catholic Social Teaching to develop a national framework for formation in Catholic Social Teaching that will encourage, support and expand the offering of programs in Catholic Social Teaching. Situated within the broader teaching and mission of the Church, this framework will emphasise the social dimension of the Church's mission, incorporating contemporary analysis of the Australian context, with a particular focus on the formation requirements of leaders in Catholic social service, health and aged care organisations, Catholic education and dioceses.	AMPJP Council to consult with the AMPJP Formation Committee to ensure appropriate participation in the development of a national framework for formation in Catholic Social Teaching
7.	At the service of communion, participation, and mission: governance	
7.1	That dioceses and eparchies support parishes to establish and strengthen appropriate synodal structures by developing guidelines and providing	AMPJP Council review its policies by Dec 2023 to ensure that they are appropriately synodal

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	resources for the flourishing of Parish Pastoral Councils, Parish Finance Committees, and other parish bodies.	
7.2	That representatives from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons form a working group to develop and establish a roundtable structure, after appropriate and broad consultation, with the proposed name of the National Catholic Synodal Life Roundtable, to foster, assess, and report periodically on the development of synodal leadership across the Church in Australia. The roundtable will bring together representative members of those groups with Diocesan Pastoral Councils and other key national bodies of the Church, including Catholic social and community services, health, and education.	<p>AMPJP Council Chair to discuss this action with ACBC and CRA leaders when they meet on 21 August 2022.</p> <p>Eventual AMPJP response might include:</p> <p>AMPJP Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine its representative(s) for the working group to develop terms of reference for the National Catholic Synodal Life Roundtable; • determine its representative(s) to the National Catholic Synodal Life Roundtable; and <p>consult with MPJPs regarding shared approaches to appropriately support the process of developing a synodal leadership across MPJPs in Australia.</p>
7.3	That the National Centre for Pastoral Research be commissioned to study the implementation of recommendations from <i>The Light from the Southern Cross</i> which has already happened, to identify examples of effective initiatives that have been taken and thus promote further implementation of those recommendations judged helpful and practicable.	-
8.	Integral ecology and conversion for the sake of our common home	
8.1	That, witnessing to their communal ecological conversion and the urgent need for action, by 2024, each Catholic parish, diocese, eparchy, educational institution or organisation commits to joining the <i>Laudato Si'</i> Platform; and by 2030 either develops its own or participates in an established <i>Laudato Si'</i> Action Plan which includes the following elements:	AMPJP Executive Officer to present the AMPJP Council with a draft AMPJP response to this Decree by Dec 2022
8.1	a) a public commitment;	
8.1	b) a governance model, processes and procedures;	
8.1	c) a mechanism for listening to the ecological wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, developed in partnership with Aboriginal	

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	Catholic Ministry and diocesan justice, ecology and peace bodies where these exist;	
8.1	d) regular reporting on progress towards and accountability for defined goals and objectives; and	
8.1	e) co-construction of those goals and objectives with the people they are meant to support and serve.	
9.	The implementation phase of the fifth Plenary Council	
9.1	That the Plenary Council adopt the following steps for ensuring the effectiveness and accountability of the Implementation phase, to take place over a period of five years:	-
9.1	a) the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council will be responsible for establishing terms of review for the Plenary Council's implementation;	-
9.1	b) a roundtable body such as that proposed in the motion at paragraph 96 will be responsible for co-ordinating the review;	AMPJP Council Chair to discuss this action with ACBC and CRA leaders when they meet on 21 August 2022. Eventual AMPJP response might include: AMPJP Council to determine its representative(s) to the Plenary Council Review roundtable
9.1	c) interim reports will be published in 2023 and 2025; and	AMPJP to contribute to reports and to appropriately support Review process
9.1	d) the final review report will be published five years after the Second Assembly, in 2027.	

Plenary Council issues not in Decrees but of interest to AMPJP and where appropriate action will be taken, such as:

- Providing assistance to ensure AMPJP-MPJPs better understand and practice the behaviours/attitudes of synodality and discernment;
- Continually improving AMPJP relationship with ACBC leadership and new Bishops;
- Exploring appropriate opportunities for MPJPs/MPJP ministries to engage Catholics in prayer, liturgy, service and community as parish/diocesan capacity/presence diminishes (especially in regional areas);
- Increasing MPJP/MPJP ministry capacity to identify, celebrate and support the in-breaking of the Reign of God; and
- Increasing MPJP/MPJP ministry capacity to dialogue and find mutual learning with people of different and no faith.