



## Review of the Implementation of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia

### Terms of Reference

**Prepared by the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council in respect to the Ninth Decree, Article 1a:**

*The Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council will be responsible for establishing terms of review for the Plenary Council's implementation.*

1. The Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council conveys to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (Bishops Conference) the Acts and Decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (the Council) for approval (in accord with the Statutes of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia, Articles 26 and 29).
2. Once the Acts and Decrees of the Council have been approved at the Bishops Conference November 2022 Plenary, the Bishops Conference General Secretary will:
  - a. Facilitate a public statement on the approval by the Bishops Conference of the Acts and Decrees;
  - b. Convey the Acts and Decrees to the Apostolic See.

The Decrees may be promulgated only after the Apostolic See has granted the *recognitio* (Can. 446).

3. The Ninth Decree, Article 1 of the Council states:

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:

- a. the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council will be responsible for establishing terms of review for the Plenary Council's implementation;
- b. a roundtable body such as that proposed in Decree 7, Article 2, will be responsible for co-ordinating the review;
- c. interim reports will be published in 2023 and 2025; and

- d. the final review report will be published five years after the Second Assembly, in 2027.

The Eastern Catholic Churches in Australia will interpret the decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia in accordance with the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and the traditions of each church *sui iuris*.

In accordance with canon 446 of the Code of Canon Law, this decree is not to be promulgated until it has been reviewed by the Apostolic See. It will be promulgated in *The Australasian Catholic Record* and the website of the Bishops Conference in accordance with its usual practice. The decrees will oblige six months after promulgation.

4. It is noted that the Seventh Decree, Article 2 – referred to in the Ninth Decree, Article 1b, reads:

That representatives from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Religious Australia and the Association of Ministerial Public Juridic Persons form a working group to conduct appropriate and broad consultation, to develop and establish a 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.

5. Subsequently, the BCPC recommends the following strategies as Terms of Reference for a Review of the Implementation of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia in satisfaction of the Ninth Decree, Article 1a:

- a. The General Introduction and the Introductions to the first eight Decrees of the Fifth Plenary Council be ‘translated’ into a pastoral study guide for use by dioceses, eparchies, parishes, schools, and agencies. The ‘Commitment’ that concludes each of the Introductions be shaped into ‘Questions for Reflection/Areas for Exploration’ as to how such aspirations may be engaged in specific and local contexts. The development of such a resource need not be contingent on the *recognitio* by the Apostolic See and would be a public way to ensure the currency of the Plenary Council for the Church in Australia. This project may also be a useful means to invite further the People of God in Australia into the synodal pathway towards the First Assembly of the Synod on Synodality in October 2023 and could be nuanced to reference this.

- i. This project be entrusted to the Bishops’ Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry.

- ii. This project be ready for publication by Pentecost 2023.

- b. Each Article of each Decree be entrusted to one of the Bishops Commissions for:

i. Integration into the existing “Horizon Plan May 2022-May 2025” and specifically in the “Work Plan May 2022-May 2023” of each Commission.

ii. Reflection and engagement at the service of the publication of a number of practical propositions, considered and costed, for review by the Bishops Conference Plenary of May 2023.

The Bishops Commissions be positioned to act as study circles of the Decrees in preparation for their eventual promulgation. In this way, the *recognitio* by the Apostolic See and the subsequent promulgation of the Decrees might be accompanied by effective pastoral strategy for their implementation.

c. The Bishops Conference Plenary of May 2023 receive the reports of the Bishops Commissions as outlined above in n.5b above in such a way as to satisfy the intent of the Ninth Decree, Article 1c. These reports be collated into a public report to act as the interim report of 2023 required by the Ninth Decree, Article 1c.

d. It is proposed that the allocation of the Decrees be as follows:

First Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
First Decree, Article 2	Bishops Commission for Liturgy
Second Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Professional Standards and Safeguarding
Third Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Catholic Education
Third Decree, Article 2	Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service
Third Decree, Article 3	Bishops Commission for Christian Unity, and Inter-religious Dialogue
Fourth Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Fourth Decree, Article 2	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Fourth Decree, Article 3	Bishops’ Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Fourth Decree, Article 4	Contingent on the response of the Apostolic See
Fifth Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Liturgy
Fifth Decree, Article 2	Bishops Commission for Liturgy
Fifth Decree, Article 3	Bishops Commission for Liturgy
Fifth Decree, Article 4	Contingent on the response of the Apostolic See
Sixth Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Sixth Decree, Article 2	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry

Sixth Decree, Article 3	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Sixth Decree, Article 4	Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service
Seventh Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, Laity and Ministry
Seventh Decree, Article 2	Permanent Committee in collaboration with the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law
Seventh Decree, Article 3	Permanent Committee in collaboration with the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law
Eighth Decree, Article 1	Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission, and Service
<i>(It is noted that Caritas Australia has already offered its services to the Commission)</i>	
Ninth Decree, Article 1	Permanent Committee in collaboration with the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law
Tenth Decree, Article 1	Permanent Committee in collaboration with the Episcopal Panel for Canon Law

e. The Roundtable Body as identified in the Ninth Decree, Article 1b and outlined in the Seventh Decree, Article 2, be convened as a response subsequent to, and aligned with, the outcomes of the First Assembly of the General Synod of Bishops (October 2023).

f. To address the reviews in 2025 and 2027, detailed in the Ninth Decree, Article 1c and Article 1d:

i. A panel of three bishops and the General Secretary of the Bishops Conference be appointed;

ii. The review be entrusted to the National Centre for Pastoral Research, with a dedicated project officer and in consultation and in conjunction with the National Catholic Synodal Life Roundtable as outlined in the Seventh Decree, Article 2.

g. When *recognitio* has been received from the Apostolic See, the promulgation of the Decrees of the Plenary Council be effected. To assist this process:

i. The Bishops Conference Plenary will formally receive the *recognitio* and issue a Decree of Promulgation;

ii. The Promulgation will be undertaken in an appropriate ceremonial manner and with a considered communications strategy.

6. Notwithstanding these Terms of Reference for the Review, the Bishops Conference, through its Permanent Committee, retains the right to modify the process should circumstances necessitate.