



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council

ROLE DESCRIPTION

SECRETARIAT FOR PLENARY COUNCIL

Discernment and Writing Group Chair

June 2019

This document outlines the role, areas of responsibility and accountability for the Discernment and Writing Group Chair. It follows on the experience gained from previous documents and is approved by Chairman of the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council.

Role

Discernment and Writing Group Chair

This is a voluntary role, appointed by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), accountable to the Conference through the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council.

This role is for a period of fourteen (14) months from August 2019 to October 2020.

The Discernment and Writing Group Chair is eligible to apply for membership of the body of delegates of the Plenary Council.

Key Areas of Responsibilities

The work of the Discernment and Writing Group Chair is, always in the context of faith and prayer, to:

- a) Facilitate the process of communal discernment and guide the Discernment and Writing group through a theological reflection in order to draft a working paper on the appointed national theme of discernment by March 2020, which will help to form the agenda for the first session of the Plenary Council.
- b) Chair the meetings of the Discernment and Writing group using practices of listening and dialogue, spiritual conversations and communal reflective sharing.
- c) Invite and schedule advisors, practitioners, testimonies or other expertise to contribute to the discernment and theological reflection of the Discernment and Writing Group as required.
- d) Manage the limited face-to-face time with the Discernment and Writing group effectively by: forming the meeting agenda; ensuring that Discernment and Writing group members receive accurate, timely and clear information and prepare in advance; encouraging and enabling the individual contribution of all Discernment and Writing group members.



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council

- e) Represent the Discernment and Writing group at meetings of Discernment and Writing Group Chairs with the Plenary Council Facilitation Team and the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council.
- f) Attend and participate in the formation programs provided by the Plenary Council Facilitation Team and encourage similar formation for your Discernment and Writing group members.
- g) Provide interim reports and updates on the process and progress of the Discernment and Writing group to the BCPC through the facilitation team when required.
- h) Communicate effectively and work collaboratively with the Plenary Council Facilitation Team.
- i) Manage the costs associated with the operations of the Discernment and Writing Group within budget constraints.

Essential Knowledge, Skills & Attributes

- a. Proven commitment to the faith, life and ministries of the Catholic Church in Australia and the mission of God.
- b. Proven ability to lead a group of diverse people to work together and achieve their objective.
- c. Significant previous experience of leading communal discernment that is, coming to a shared decision using processes of listening, prayer, reflection and dialogue.
- d. Knowledge of and experience with theological reflection.
- e. Practical expertise in your chosen thematic area for discernment:
 - i. Missionary and evangelising;
 - ii. Inclusive, participatory and synodal;
 - iii. Prayerful and Eucharistic;
 - iv. Humble, healing and merciful;
 - v. A joyful, hope-filled and servant community;
 - vi. Open to conversion, renewal and reform.
- f. Excellent written and oral communication skills.
- g. Highly organised, with an ability to manage small details whilst maintaining focus on the big picture.
- h. An understanding of information privacy principles and that the work involves working with confidential information.



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council

Accountability

- (a) The Discernment and Writing Group Chair reports to the Chair of the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council. On behalf of the Bishops Commission, the Plenary Council Facilitation Team will lead and manage the Discernment and Writing Group Chairs.
- (b) The members of the Discernment and Writing Groups are appointments of the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council and are accountable to the Discernment and Writing Group Chair.
- (c) Each Discernment and Writing group will be allocated a budget and it is the responsibility of the Discernment and Writing Group Chair to determine the effective use of the available funds. Any additional financial expenditure must be applied for in writing and approved by the Plenary Council Facilitation team.

Organisational Environment

The Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council (BCPC) oversees the planning for and preparation of a plenary council, which the Church in Australia will celebrate in 2020.

The Plenary Council Discernment and Writing Groups have the responsibility of providing reports to the BCPC through discernment, reflection and discussion of the themes emerging from submissions to the Plenary Council.

The Discernment and Writing Group Member must conduct themselves at the highest level of integrity.

As a volunteer, the Discernment and Writing Group Chair is responsible for their own working environment. The personal work environment must comply with relevant State work health and safety legislative requirements.

Expenses

Discernment and Writing Group expenses, as previously approved and budgeted for in the project costs of the Plenary Council, will be paid by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. This includes flights, accommodation and administrative costs for Discernment and Writing Group meetings and communications.

Review

A review of progress and status of the Discernment and Writing Groups will be conducted by the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council and the Facilitation Team in November 2019 and immediately after Easter 2020. Any changes to the appointment of Discernment and Writing Group Chairs or members are at the discretion of the Bishops Commission for the Plenary Council.