

FIFTH PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Media and Communications Protocol During Plenary Council Assemblies

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia is both a wonderful and significant moment in the life of the Catholic Church in Australia. It is of interest to many people across both Australia and internationally. That interest will extend to Catholic media, mainstream media and the general public.

It is the goal of the Plenary Council's Facilitation Team and the Steering Team for the Council Assemblies to make the Council as visible and inclusive as possible. Those groups are being supported by a Communications Working Group.

This information seeks to outline media and communications protocols, as well as to provide advice, for the Council Assemblies, with a particular focus on the first Assembly (Sunday, 3 October 2021 – Sunday, 10 October, 2021).

- Four people are designated as official spokespeople for the Plenary Council:
 - a. Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, President;
 - b. Bishop Shane Mackinlay, Vice-President;
 - c. Archbishop Mark Coleridge, President, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference; and
 - d. Lana Turvey-Collins, Plenary Council Facilitator.
- All Members of the Council – approximately 280 in number – are ambassadors for the Council's journey of prayer, listening, dialogue and discernment. As such, Members are reminded that your language, behaviour and conduct should communicate the spirit and ethos of the Plenary Council, which is built upon the foundations of the Gospels.
- There will be a national communications team, which will be supported by several people providing local coverage of the Assembly. If a diocesan gathering is taking place, any local communications person will be introduced on the opening day and will have a lanyard to identify them. They will be likely to take photos, write stories and record audio and video content. **Please note that communications staff will not record any audio during the small group discussions, though some video or photography might take place.**

- Content that is created locally will typically be shared with the national communications team, allowing for a diversity of locations and voices to be captured in stories, images and multimedia content disseminated from the national team. Some local communications people will be creating content for local and national publications.
- Where applicable, you are asked to support the work of the local communications person as much as possible, helping to ensure the engagement with the Council Assembly by those who aren't Members.
- As a Member of the Council, your image, voice and likeness will be used in communications material relating to the Council, including in photos, videos, websites or print publications.
- Portions of the morning "plenary" sessions each day will be live-streamed, as would have happened if the Assembly was taking place in person. Members should be aware that any and all content shared during the live-stream period (which will commence when the day opens, and which will conclude at a specifically announced time) will be viewable by the public, not just the Council Members. As a reminder, the **small group** discussions **will not** be live-streamed.
- In keeping with the desire that small group discussions are times for open sharing and deep listening, Members should not divulge anything another Member says during those small group discussions, even if doing so without naming the other Member. The safe environment necessary for small group discussions would be compromised if confidences were betrayed in any way. This protocol applies to conversations with people covering the event, or one's own content, e.g. social media, columns, blogs, etc.
- Some other events during the Assembly, e.g. the opening Mass from St Mary's Cathedral in Perth, will be live-streamed to the public. Members will be notified of any other events that will be live-streamed or recorded (especially with audio).
- Other than during the live-streamed portions of each day, Members are under no obligation to agree to being recorded (audio or video) during the Assembly, if requested. If diocesan gatherings take place, some Members may be invited to participate in content creation. Other Members participating from home might be contacted by the national communications team or other media and communications staff for interview – for written or multimedia content.



- Given the historic nature of the Plenary Council, it is possible that mainstream media might also be interested in covering the Assembly. Members are under no obligation to speak to Catholic or mainstream media personnel who might contact you and you can request assistance from the national communications team if needed (see below).
- The Council Assemblies are times for deep reflection and discernment, considering the future of the Catholic Church in Australia. Members are invited to consider if and how they might interact on social media during the Assemblies in keeping with the spirit of the Council.

Any media and communications questions should be directed to Gavin Abraham, Media and Communications Director of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, by emailing gavin.abraham@catholic.org.au or calling 0408 825 788.

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