



National Centre for Evangelisation

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EVANGELISATION

AN AGENCY OF THE
AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE
INCLUDES THE
CATHOLIC ENQUIRY CENTRE

FIVE-YEAR PLAN

JANUARY 2017 – DECEMBER 2021

PREAMBLE

The Church's engagement with the world has been a topic for much debate and reflection throughout the 20th Century, as Christendom came under increasing pressure from modernism, secularism and other forces, and the world reeled from two major wars and any number of smaller ones. This led many to question old certainties. It was as a response to this situation that Pope John XXIII called the 2nd Vatican Council, and at least two of the central documents of that Council articulated the Church's desire to revision its place in, and response to, the contemporary world.¹

Then from Pope Paul VI through to Pope Francis, the Vicars of Christ have explicitly called the Church to launch out again to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ to the world.²

Building on the important contribution made by Pope John Paul II and then himself, in 2010 Pope Benedict XVI announced the formation of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelisation, and the 2012 General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was dedicated to the theme "The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith."

I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. 'Mere administration' can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be 'permanently in a state of mission'.

[Evangelii Gaudium no. 25]

It is as part of the response to the Church's ongoing call to renewal and contemporary engagement that the National Centre for Evangelisation exists.

1. See Lumen Gentium & Gaudium et Spes

2. See Evangelii Nuntiandi & Evangelii Gaudium

NCE MANDATE

To assist in the formation and resourcing of Catholics as they seek to live out their baptismal and confirmational call to proclaim the presence of Jesus Christ 'holy in their hearts' [1 Peter 1:15].

To provide a quality response to Catholics returning to the practice of their faith and to those currently not members of the Catholic Church.

NCE VISION STATEMENT

A guiding light for agents and seekers of faith.¹

NCE MISSION STATEMENT

We exist to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ as expressed by the Catholic tradition. We engage with dioceses and agencies to enhance our shared evangelisation endeavours. We model an engagement with seekers and enquirers that is respectful, authentic and open. We reach out and respond to the disillusioned and the disconnected as a matter of priority. We have a truth to speak and we are mindful of God's presence in the world. We undertake our mission in the spirit of servant leadership with Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do.

PILLARS²

A. COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOURS³

The NCE facilitates growth and co-responsibility in evangelisation with dioceses, parishes, communities, networks and agencies to enhance and build on initiatives in order to achieve outcomes not otherwise achievable.

B. EVANGELISATION FORMATION⁴

The NCE assists Catholics who, having experienced God's love, are confident and resourced to be a guiding light for others.

C. REACHING OUT⁵

The NCE supports a return to the practice of the Catholic faith in those disconnected from church (seekers) and engage with those not currently Catholic (enquirers) to provide opportunities to hear and experience the Good News.

1 **Agents of faith:** This is intended to be a succinct term to describe those individuals and groups who, by virtue of their baptism, understand the importance of their vocation to share their faith with others. A central role of the NCE is to assist in supporting them as they grow in their understanding and experience of what this means. **Seekers of faith:** This term intends both seekers and enquirers. **Seekers:** those Catholics returning to the practice of their faith. **Enquirers:** those who have never formally been part of the Catholic Church asking for further information with the possibility of later becoming Catholic. 'Seekers' and 'enquirers' are not formal terms but are employed to note the different situations of returning Catholics to those who have never been Catholic.

2 The *pillars* are the three central tasks of the NCE that emerge from the approved mandate and thus from the Vision and Mission Statements.

3 It is understood that a central task of the NCE is to facilitate collaboration between dioceses and agencies to better advance the work of evangelisation across the whole country. The NCE is not a 'stand-alone' organisation.

4 Evangelisation formation: faith formation with an evangelisation emphasis. Typically, faith formation employs the best of the Catholic theological tradition to assist individuals to reflect on how the teachings of that tradition impact on their lives as lived (spirituality, ministry, moral lives, commitment to social justice etc.). Evangelisation formation builds on faith formation by facilitating an understanding of how and by what means one's ongoing journey in faith can and should be shared with others. The NCE takes a facilitative role in evangelisation formation and reaching out (see following footnote) to promote an appropriately Catholic national perspective on evangelisation in conformity with the mind of the BCE and the ACBC as a whole.

5 Reaching Out: prompting interest in the Catholic faith amongst those who have not really been exposed to it in the past. The first two pillars relate to the forming and resourcing of Catholics as we grow in our understanding of what it means to proclaim our relationship with Jesus Christ with our lives. This third pillar sends Australian Catholics out into the world as we seek ways of sharing our faith with others. It is the very essence of the baptismal vocation and central to the work of the NCE as it continues the work of the National Office for Evangelisation (NoE) and the Catholic Enquiry Centre (CEC).

GOALS AND STRATEGIES⁶

A. COLLABORATIVE ENDEAVOURS

1. Build national networks within the broader Australian Catholic Church with a focus on shared evangelisation endeavours

This goal speaks to the imperative to actively develop networks for the purposes of identifying evangelisation resources and opportunities. Networks include, but are not limited to, dioceses and parishes, national Catholic agencies, groups, movements, religious orders and organisations serving minority groups.

Strategies

- a. The NCE Consultation and Support Network (CSN)
 - b. General and Executive Forums (ACBC agency representatives)
 - c. The Agents of Evangelisation Network (AEN) (includes national Catholic agencies (not ACBC), groups and movements and the lay faithful within Australia)
2. Develop engagement opportunities with secular society

This goal addresses the role of the NCE in actively discovering opportunities to build partnerships that can have evangelisation outcomes beyond Catholic structures.

Strategies

- a. Research possible opportunities and strategies for engagement with secular society: e.g. media, government schools, sporting bodies, galleries etc.

B. EVANGELISATION FORMATION

3. Lead nationally in evangelisation formation opportunities

This goal speaks to the role of the NCE in contributing to the development of an authentic Catholic approach to evangelisation in contemporary Australian society.

Strategies

- a. Assist with good quality formation for those involved in lay ministry
- b. Work with the Office for Clergy Life and Ministry to collaborate and provide assistance for seminarians and clergy in the area of evangelisation formation

- c. Attend and, where appropriate, contribute to national and regional conferences (where NCE is **not part** of the organising team)
- d. Organise, attend or, where appropriate, contribute to national and regional conferences (where NCE is **part** of the organising team)
- e. Consult with networks on the meaning of evangelisation formation and ways to facilitate it
- f. Develop new evangelisation formation opportunities to supplement those currently offered by some dioceses and agencies
- g. Scope and develop a project around the revision of current NCE print resources
- h. Develop new resources for Enquirers
- i. Develop new resources for Agents of Evangelisation

4. Collate and share best resources and practices

This goal addresses the role of the NCE in promoting the best of existing resources and initiatives within evangelisation networks to avoid duplication of effort.

Strategies

- a. Audit of local evangelisation projects, programs, events and resources
- b. Share resources etc. discovered during audit
- c. Assist those dioceses and agencies less well-resourced with personnel and access to resources, while calling on more well-resourced dioceses and agencies to assist as appropriate

C. REACHING OUT

5. Increase and strengthen opportunities for seekers and enquirers to connect with the faith of the Church.

This goal speaks to the central task of responding to people who make enquiries about the Catholic faith, building on and expanding the work of the Catholic Enquiry Centre. This necessarily entails staff training and the development of specific resources to address particular needs. It will require an ongoing proactive marketing and social media campaign.

Strategies

- a. Review current marketing and communication strategies to assess their effectiveness and so build on them
- b. Evaluate current NCE (NoE)/CEC Social Media sites to better harness their potential as vehicles for evangelisation by the NCE in the contemporary context

⁶ The *strategies* are the ways in which the goals under each of the three central pillars will be attended to by the NCE over the course of the next five years. During the initial phase the strategies are at times deliberately broad. They will be made more specific and measurable as a result of the 'deep consultation' period (concluding December 2017). The success of each of the strategies as developed will be evaluated during the review period (July 2021 – December 2021).

- c. Redevelop NoE/CEC websites in conformity with current best practice
 - d. Develop the National Prayer Outreach [NPO]
 - e. Develop an outreach strategy to encourage seekers and enquirers to contact the CEC
 - f. Develop an outreach strategy to encourage the disillusioned and the disconnected to contact the CEC
 - g. Respond to all who contact the CEC by phone and email with timely, clear, professional and pastorally suitable responses
 - h. Develop a range of clear, professional, accurate and pastoral responses to enquiries received from the disillusioned and disconnected as a matter of priority
 - i. Link seekers and enquirers with their home dioceses
 - j. Improve the awareness of the work of the CEC among our networks
6. Inspire and engage seekers and enquirers by sharing the rich range of thought, science and artistic creativity that comes from outside the Catholic tradition and yet points to the truths the Catholic faith holds as evident.

This goal employs carefully considered visual material and appropriate language to engage people beyond the Church in a way that is meaningful to them. It can also accommodate sharing Catholic 'Good News' stories and references the best of Catholic music, literature and the visual arts. The intention is to lead seekers and enquirers to engage in a conversation on aspects of the Catholic worldview.

Strategies

- a. Source and evaluate current national and international resources designed to engage the contemporary/secular society with the best of Catholic thought and worldview
7. Provide access to the Catholic spiritual tradition in a simple and meaningful way to a society searching for spiritual authenticity.

This goal addresses the need to touch people's hearts and to assist them to reflect on their experience as they learn to respond to the invitation made to them by God in Christ.

Strategies

- a. Evaluate current resources developed by external parties with a view to sharing through appropriate mechanisms
 - b. Develop NCE resources with a view to sharing through appropriate mechanisms
8. Assist parishes to become communities for evangelisation

This goal speaks to the need to support the revitalisation of parishes to promote their continuing development as communities where the faith of Catholics is nurtured and new Catholics are welcomed and formed.

Strategies

- a. Assess and devise strategies for assisting parishes
- b. Post Royal Commission reforms

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Evangelisation is not a word that always sits easily within the Catholic context. It would be fair to say that, until relatively recently, it is a word we would more closely associate with our Protestant and Evangelical brothers and sisters. Catholics have often taken a more subtle and comprehensive approach to announcing the Good News; one in which the culture itself is transformed by Catholic values in its institutions, music, art, architecture and literature. People were either brought into the life of faith by their emersion within the Christian milieu, or by means of the missionaries who came to them if they were not part of that milieu.

The age of Christendom is now behind us: we are experiencing a change of era that, while it began some time ago, is gaining momentum. No longer can we assume that faith will be caught by some sort of Christian osmosis. Rather, faith now more than ever needs to be taught, and individuals must be invited into it. Evangelisation is squarely on the agenda.

Proclaiming our faith need not be difficult. The Father longs to share the Good News manifest in the life, death and resurrection of his Son. The Holy Spirit has been poured out to guide, assist and sanctify us as we live our lives of faith and we reach out to others. By assisting Catholics to engage effectively in the mission which is an intrinsic part of our vocation, the NCE contributes to the renewal of the Church in Australia: a Church committed to working to form a people who are spiritually mature and living out the vocation to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. Evangelisation might be a new word to Catholic ears, but it expresses a call that is as old as God's relationship with humanity: the call to come home to God.

Shane Dwyer

Director: National Centre for Evangelisation