

## MEDIA RELEASE

### National Catholic reform group backs women's action at Plenary Council

Catholics are insisting that their Church recognise the equality of women. Catholics throughout Australia have expressed shock at their bishops' failure to support a positive statement about women's equality in the Catholic Church at the Australian Plenary Council yesterday.

Many women refused to take their seats and stood at the back of the meeting room in protest at the bishops' failure to pass two motions affirming the equality of women in the Church. The motions called for women to be "appropriately represented in decision-making structures of Church governance" and to ensure "the experiences and perspectives of women are heard, considered and valued".

The motions had been strongly supported by the non-bishop members of the Plenary Council.

Following the stand by the Plenary Council members, an overwhelming majority of Members backed a move to reconsider the two motions on "Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men". The bishops then almost unanimously agreed to reconsider the matter. How that is to be done is now to be determined.

Co-Conveners of the Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, Eleanor Flynn and Peter Johnstone, stated:

'The Coalition regards this development as a potentially major turning point in the life of the Australian Church. The grief and distress caused to many Catholics – women and men - and particularly Plenary Council members, has been enormous.

'Coalition members throughout Australia were shocked that the Australian Catholic bishops voted against accepting the equality of women and men in the church.

'We are pleased that the bishops have belatedly recognised the damage to the Church and will reconsider the motions.

'It is imperative that the Plenary Council sends the clear message to the Pope and the whole church that the Australian Catholic Church accepts the equality of women and men in life and in the Church, and wishes for women to take their rightful place in all church organisations, including the diaconate.

'Pope Francis is committed to a Church that listens to the people of God. At the very least, the bishops have a responsibility to inform the Holy See of the views of Australian Catholics, the sense of faith of the faithful.'

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*The Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR) is a coalition of 20 Catholic groups in Australia and New Zealand working for Church reform.*