



Summary of **NATIONAL COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS** FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT DECEMBER 2023



National Council met on 2 - 3 December 2023 in Canberra. Below is a summary of matters discussed.

CONGRESS 2023+

National Council (NC) reflected on the outcomes arrived at by participants during Congress 2023+. The Sydney event at the end of October 2023 generated a great deal of enthusiasm and goodwill to explore new ways to revitalise the Society and to attract new members.

The six agreed principles identified by Congress Delegates as central to the implementation of any revitalisation program reached were endorsed by NC. These principles will guide the Society's current and future governance structures.

1. While remaining a Catholic Organisation, there was consensus that the Society is open to anyone who shares our social justice mission and the Society seeks to make them welcome.
2. We will help them to belong first, with pathways to believing and becoming Catholic for those open to it. A top priority out of the Congress is a national understanding of our renewed shared story, and a national recruitment campaign targeting diverse audiences.
3. We are committed to supporting new leaders in our organisation with training and mentoring.
4. We are highly supportive of new forms of more flexible Conferences, which can exist alongside more traditional forms that suit existing Members.
5. We need to shift from hierarchical communication to models that allow Conferences and members to connect directly, across borders, for mutual interests, knowledge sharing and support.
6. Every member is involved in making the change, through reflection, action and interactions with the people around them.

Next steps include the Secretariat: (a) establishing a digital platform to assist Congress Delegates communicate and collaborate on implementation initiatives; (b) setting-up Listening Forums in early February to brief Congress Delegates on NC's next steps on our revitalisation journey; and (c) preparing Workbook 3 as a resource for Regional and Central Councils to assist them encourage and mentor local Conferences' exploration of revitalisation initiatives beyond 2023.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

All State and Territory Councils, with the exception of WA State Council and most of the Society's related corporate bodies, provided updates on the work in progress they were undertaking in order to have the respective corporate body comply with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. There is now a level of confidence that many parts of the Society will be compliant by 30 June 2025 which is the date set by the Catholic Church in Australia.

AMELIE HOUSING LTD

It was agreed to change the name of this National Council related corporate body to "St Vincent de Paul (Society) Housing Australia" and amend the Constitution so that National Council, as the Class A member, could nominate a person from NC to sit on the Board of Directors.

SPIRIT OF YOUTH (SoY)

NC was informed there is a rebuilding of many youth programs and communities across the Society with the SoY Standing Committee to have three main pillars of focus: 1. Community Building; 2. Training and Formation; and 3. Resources and Support for youth members.

This framework had been tailored to support the development of a national network and to share ideas and work across the SoY.

Recognising youth are the future of the Society, National President and Vice President Patrick Wallace will write to State and Territory Councils to encourage the allocation of funds in advance to cover the costs of young Society members participating in national and overseas youth activities in coming years.

EVANGELISATION IN OUR CATHOLIC TRADITION

Archbishop Christopher Prowse joined members of NC to discuss Catholicity and its application within the Society. He outlined the synodal approach being introduced by Pope Francis which sought to always propose but never impose the Gospel message highlighting preaching comes with actions not words. Within a Vincentian context these proposals closely align to servant leadership.

The conversation covered the proposition that if a charitable organisation like the Society became mission driven and excluded encountering the poor (those who are lost or last or least), it would likely be in danger of becoming just another philanthropic organisation.

Source document for this conversation: Evangelisation: Encounter, Discipleship, Mission: A biblical theological reflection for all Catholics 2024.

UPDATE ON REVIEW OF THE RULE PART III

It is proposed that National Council approve forwarding the 2nd amendments to Society Members in early March 2024 with a view to a further review of feedback received before approval to forward to Paris for ratification in late 2024.

OVERSEAS PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

NC noted and agreed to a proposal from the Overseas Partnership Advisory Committee to establish an OPP National Network constituted by Society Members and approved the Overseas Partnership Program Engagement Plan that seeks to renew and strengthen understanding or, interest in, commitment to and engagement with the OPP.

NC endorsed the extension of the overseas partnerships training to include the twinned partner countries of Fiji (twinned with NSW) and Solomon Islands (twinned with Qld) following the successful training delivered in Sydney and Brisbane. Training and cultural awareness sessions will be delivered in countries with members of local National Councils in early 2024.

OUTGOING NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

On behalf of the Society in Australia, the National President expressed thanks to Mr John Feint, Canberra-Goulburn Territory Council President (June 2019 – December 2023), and Mr Maurice Ryan, Vice President (March 2019 – December 2023) for the service they had given to National Council and to the Association during their years of appointment.