

MEDIA RELEASE

RETIRING EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBER TRACES HISTORY

Fr Austin Cooper OMI, recently retired, and the first member of the editorial board of *The Australasian Catholic Record* has published, for the first time, a history of the editorial board.

The Australasian Catholic Record is the premier Catholic theological journal in Australia. It began in Sydney with Cardinal Moran in 1895 “a ‘tiny barque’ departing the shore with the task of confronting the enemies of the church, ‘Irreligion, Immorality and Anarchy’”.

After lapsing for some years, it was revived by Archbishop Sheehan as a service to the Church - “a permanent organ to deal with its domestic problems, to enshrine its history, to reflect its learning.” Published quarterly, the current series is now in its 94th volume.

In a detailed article in the July 2018 issue, Fr Cooper explains how the journal has broken out of its exclusively clericalist mould to become a journal with wider appeal beyond the narrow scope of academic theology.

In 1973 The then managing editor, Fr Frank Mecham established an independent editorial board including in its membership Fr Austin Cooper OMI, John Thornhill SM and Bishop David Walker (still serving). Doyen of Australian Church History, Professor Patrick O’Farrell, the first lay member, joined shortly afterwards.

“Revitalising the ACR Frank Mecham established a distinctive collegial spirit at board meetings: a great Catholic achievement in an age when many of diverse views were losing the art of talking to one another,” Fr Cooper writes.

In July 2017, noted social commentator, Gerard Henderson commented: “At this time of instant news, journals of record like *the Australasian Catholic Record* have become increasingly important. Such periodicals will have a life that far exceeds that of Twitter or Facebook entries.”

Fr Cooper concludes: “It has been a privilege to serve on the ACR Editorial Board for more than forty years. This enriching and pleasant experience has centred around meetings that have been informative, frank and courteous. For all this I am deeply grateful to numerous colleagues over these many years. The ACR is a very ‘Catholic’ venture: may it prosper and continue to enrich the faith in this region.”

Inquires about subscriptions can be sent to current managing editor Dr Gerard Kelly
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