



Australian Province of the Society of Jesus

MEDIA RELEASE

30 October 2019

Australian Jesuits announce new expanded operating model and governance structure for Spirituality Ministry

The Australian Province of the Society of Jesus (the Australian Jesuits) have today announced a new agile operating model and governance structure for their Spirituality Ministry to come into effect as of 1 January 2020, in response to a changing world and an evolving, more spiritually discerning community.

The changes support the first of the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the global Society of Jesus for the next ten years, announced in February this year, and priorities identified in the Australian Jesuits' five-year Apostolic Plan announced in April.

The Ministry, which is a priority under the Apostolic Plan, will transition from a fixed location service based at five centres of Ignatian spirituality around the country to an outreach model staffed by mobile teams that focus on bringing Jesuit and Ignatian spirituality and mission formation to those who seek it, where they seek it.

The changes, which demonstrate the Ignatian maxim of living with "one foot raised" in the direction of greatest need, a sixteenth century articulation of the modern concept of "agile", will create new opportunities not only for those seeking an experience of Ignatian spirituality, but also for spiritual directors delivering those services. Ignatian spiritual directors and presenters have until now been largely restricted to physical retreat centres for the delivery of Ignatian spirituality and mission formation. The new operating model draws heavily on the pioneering efforts of the Faber Centre of Ignatian Spirituality in Brisbane and specifically its outreach services delivered through mobile teams and electronically.

"Whilst the idea of spirituality by Skype may seem a little incongruous, the reality is that there is growing demand for a more flexible type of ministry in rural and regional areas and outside of Australia - places where the Ministry does not necessarily have a physical presence at the moment," Fr McCoy said.

"The changes present an opportunity to serve new seekers of spirituality and minister to this need."

In announcing the changes, Fr McCoy drew on the homily of Fr Bruno Cadoré OP at the opening of the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 2016, speaking of the need to "dare the audacity of the improbable."

Key elements of the new operating model include:

- Changing from multiple fixed location spirituality centres to a centralised outreach model delivered by mobile teams who engage locally with those seeking an experience of Ignatian spirituality – not only in Australia.
- Establishing of a national office for the Ministry at Peter Canisius House (PCH) in Pymble NSW.
- Investing in one dedicated residential retreat centre at Sevenhill SA.
- Maintaining one conference facility (which can also be used for residential retreats) and ministry head office at PCH.
- Encouraging all Jesuits to work within this province-wide priority in partnership with lay companions.

Key elements of the new governance structure include:

- Creation of a new governing entity, Jesuit and Ignatian Spirituality Australia Ltd, and appointment, in Q1 2020, of a board for that entity. The Board will be accountable to the Provincial, through its member, The Society of Jesus in Australia (SOJA).
- Making the Delegate for Jesuit and Ignatian Spirituality, Br Ian Cribb SJ, the Chief Executive Officer of this new entity and changing his reporting line to the Board.
- Recognising that the Ministry of the Spiritual Exercises and that of Ignatian Mission Formation are separate, but related, fields of expertise.
- Appointment of a leadership team consisting of:
 - Manager, Finance and Administration
 - Coordinator of the Spiritual Exercises Ministry
 - Coordinator, Mission Formation
- Developing accreditation and evaluation instruments.
- Communication and fundraising support for this new model of ministry.

The changes respond to a report on the review of the Ministry by Sr Elizabeth Dodds RSC in 2018.

Drawing on the words of Pope Francis to the 36th General Congregation of the Society of Jesus in 2016, Fr McCoy invoked the Ignatian concept of *Magis*, seeking the ‘more’ or ‘deeper’, distinguishing a particular aspect of Jesuit and Ignatian spirituality. As Pope Francis reminded the Jesuits at their most recent General Congregation, “Initiating processes is different from occupying spaces. The Society [of Jesus] initiates processes and leaves spaces. This is important. Other religious occupy spaces, the monasteries. The Society initiates processes.”

“The announcement today is our response to this call. It is this new process, a process that is more open, collaborative and agile, that we are now tasked to implement and develop” Fr McCoy said.

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About the Society of Jesus

Active in Australia since 1848, The Society of Jesus is the largest male religious congregation in the world comprising some 15,536 members globally. Headquartered in Rome, it has more than 100 priests and brothers in Australia and employs more than 1800 people across its various Australian ministries in Education, Social Justice, Parishes, Spirituality and Communications.

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