

Media Release

14 July 2020

Strengthening our Catholic identity

VMCH is proud of its Mission to continue the caring ministry of Jesus by supporting people of all faiths and abilities to live their best lives.

With this in mind, we are pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Zachariah (Zach) Duke to the position of VMCH Formation and Ethics Advisor within our Mission team.

Zach will support and guide us in enhancing our Mission and Catholic identity, and provide formation opportunities for staff, volunteers and members of our Board.

Disability theology is something Zach is very passionate about, and well-known for, thanks to his in-depth research and conference presentations on the topic. Zach's membership with local associations such as the Living Fully Network, People with Disability Australia and Deaf Australia have seen him advise Government agencies on various disability policy, including the NDIS.

So recent news out of the Vatican that catechesis guidelines will be updated to ensure people with disability have access to the Church's Sacraments was welcomed.

"As someone who participated in these preliminary discussions with Pope Francis and a handful of other theologians and practitioners, I'm incredibly proud that the Catholic Church has taken our recommendations seriously and adopted these necessary changes," Zach said.

Archbishop Peter A. Comensoli has also welcomed the news.

"Personally, I am grateful to Pope Francis for emphasising for pastors that the great gift of the Sacraments is of course to be shared fully with Catholics who share in some form of disability," Archbishop Peter said.

"Parish Priests and other ministers will need to read the guidelines published by the Holy Father and take them to heart."

Despite progress in the past few years, particularly under the leadership of Pope Francis, Zach says there is still more to be done to realise a fully-inclusive environment within the Catholic church.

“There’s room to grow this (catechesis) commitment on the ground to ensure it doesn’t become rhetoric or tokenistic. It would be wonderful to see more people with disability occupy valued roles within their parish communities; a greater number of Catholic schools catering specifically for children with disability; and new and innovate ways of utilising Catholic resources to create spaces and places for people with disability.”

Photo: Dr. Zach Duke. Higher res image available on request.

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About VMCH

Here at VMCH, our services are as diverse as the people we support.

Our values underpin the work we do. As a Catholic not for profit organisation, compassion, respect and inclusion aren’t just words to us, they guide us in everything we do.

While we’ve been around for over a century, we’re always moving forward. Always staying true to who we are by supporting people and families to live their best lives; providing a place to call home and spaces to learn and grow.

Our professional and compassionate teams are with you on your life journey; helping you with a wide range of support from early learning and therapy, specialist education, disability services, affordable homes, residential aged care, retirement living and at-home aged care.

