



FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCES OF OCEANIA

The Episcopal Conferences of Australia • New Zealand • The Pacific •
Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands

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Oceania bishops finalise response to Synod's working document

MEDIA RELEASE

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Representative of the four bishops conferences in Oceania have approved the region's final response to the working document published last October for the Synod of Bishops for a Synodal Church.

The new executive council of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania recently met via videoconference, along with members of the discernment and writing group tasked with drafting the Oceania response.

That group, which met for five days in January, synthesised reports from the four bishops conferences and the Eastern Catholic Churches in Oceania responding to the Working Document for the Continental Stage, titled *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*.

The draft report was considered in an atmosphere of prayer and reflection during the FCBCO's February assembly in Fiji, before final amendments were made ahead of last week's online meeting.

Broken Bay Bishop Anthony Randazzo, who took over as FCBCO president last month, said the completion of the report is an important milestone for the Church in the region.

"We are, in many ways, still a young Church here in the Pacific, but we are an integral part of the Body of Christ around the world," he said.

"Alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ from the other regions of the world, we offer our shared prayers and reflections for the international conversation on communion, participation and mission in the life of the Church."

Bishop Randazzo said the bishops of Oceania worked together at the recent FCBCO assembly to prepare their own reflection for inclusion in the final document.

"As pastors of our people, we felt it was important to provide some guidance and support as we continue this years-long Synod of Bishops journey," he said.

Last week's videoconference opened with prayer, drawing from Scripture, prayers of intercession and passages from the Oceania document. The document was then formally accepted by the FCBCO executive.

Archbishop Peter Loy Chong, who served as president of the FCBCO from 2018 to 2023, paid tribute to the significant work that took place in preparing, reviewing and finalising the document.

“As someone who was involved in the discernment and writing group’s work, I was able to see how committed people were to honouring the voices of the People of God in our region,” he said.

“From the large cities of Australia to the highlands of Papua New Guinea to the low-lying islands of the Pacific, we are a diverse region but we are a faith-filled people unified by our belief in and love for Christ and his Church. This document captures that unity and that diversity.”

Susan Pascoe, who served as chair of the Oceania Taskforce for the Synod of Bishops preparations, said the evolution of the process to conclusion has been quite profound.

“When we think back to the initial invitation for people to participate in local consultation and fast-forward to this report, so much prayer has been offered, so much passion expressed and so much energy poured out,” Ms Pascoe said.

“There is still some way to go in the journey of this Synod of Bishops, but the Church in Oceania can be proud of what it has achieved in producing this document.”

Bishop Randazzo will submit the Oceania document to the Synod Secretariat before this week’s deadline. The FCBCO executive council agreed on its recent videoconference to publish the response in the week after Easter.

The Oceania response and the other continental documents will inform the preparation of the working document, or *instrumentum laboris*, for the first session of the XVI General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October. The second session is scheduled for October 2024.

The Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania comprises the episcopal conferences of Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands.