



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

General secretary elected provincial, to leave Bishops Conference

MEDIA RELEASE

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Fr Stephen Hackett MSC has been elected provincial superior of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Australia, and will conclude his time as general secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in July.

Fr Hackett's ministerial background included appointments within secondary and tertiary education, as a parish priest in several Australian dioceses and as vicar general in the Diocese of Darwin.

He took over the role of general secretary, leading the day-to-day operations of the Bishops Conference, in 2016.

He currently chairs the National Liturgical Architecture and Art Council and is a member of the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research – two advisory bodies to the Bishops Conference. He is also a member of the ecumenical Australian Academy of Liturgy.

Fr Hackett was elected provincial superior during the recent Missionaries of the Sacred Heart provincial chapter in Sydney. He will replace Fr Chris McPhee, who has served as provincial of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Australia since 2017.

Bishops Conference president Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB said Fr Hackett has led the General Secretariat during a period of significant change.

"The bishops have undertaken some major projects in recent years and have been fortunate to have Fr Hackett's significant ecclesial experience and understanding," he said.

"The 10-year review of Conference, a major financial review and restructure, the conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the review of diocesan and parish governance are just some key moments in the past seven years.

"At the same time, the operations of the General Secretariat have been built up anew.

"On behalf of the bishops, we thank Fr Hackett for his contributions and wish him well as he undertakes this new ministry."

Fr Hackett said some of those tasks had been challenging, but he felt that he had been part of positive change within the Conference.

"The Bishops Conference has an important place in the life of the Church in Australia, enabling bishops, and sometimes dioceses, to collaborate on issues where a national approach makes sense for the benefit of all," he said.

"With the support of a committed group of colleagues at the Conference, I believe we had made major strides in recent years, always focused clearly on Christ and the mission of the Church."

Fr Hackett said he looks forward to the next phase of his ministry.

"My vocation came through the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and while I enjoyed serving in a variety of capacities in the Church, it is a privilege to take on this leadership role within my province for the next several years," he said.