



Christian Life Community

Australia

President's Report for 2012-16 at Australian Assembly, 2016

It is with real delight that I present this report because I feel that in the last four years there has been one Australian CLC Community working in harmony. This Community has taken the priorities from the last Assembly in 2012 in Brisbane and put flesh to them in all the regions.

The report includes the Mandate of the National Executive Council for 2012-16 and the plans, and outcomes, from each Executive Committee in the five regions for this same period.

CLC Australia currently exists in five regions, and at present has 365 people attending CLC groups, with 261 being registered members of CLC Inc.

I would like begin by acknowledging all the CLC members who have shown leadership in CLC during the past 4 years, on both the National Executive Council, the Executive Committees of each region, Chris Hogan, our World Consultor from Australia and Michael Walker, our Asia Pacific representative. Their contribution to the governance of CLC in Australia, in Asia Pacific and in the World Executive has enabled us to continue serving the members of CLC. I believe this taking up of leadership roles is a sign of our maturity as a community.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the good working relationship that CLC has with the Australian Jesuits. We have been blessed with many Ecclesial Assistants from the Jesuit order over our forty years in Australia. We have constantly worked together with the Jesuits in many areas; specifically in the Tertianship retreat program, Formation ministries in Centres of Ignatian Spirituality, in Jesuit parishes and the FSE Ministry.

I would also like to congratulate all the members of CLC in Australia over the past forty years for the graces you have brought to our Australian Community. On behalf of NEXCO I thank God for you all.

Membership of NEXCO 2012-16

Chris Gardner, President

Kay Hooper, Vice-President

Helen Cantwell, Secretary

Mark Samuel-King, Treasurer till Dec 2013

Louise Howell, Ordinary Member

Maria Shelley, Ordinary Member

Fr Robin Koning SJ, Ecclesial Assistant till 2014

Fr Iain Radvan SJ, Ecclesial Assistant (2014 onwards)

Anna Munari, co-opted ordinary member till Dec 2015.

Tony French, co-opted Treasurer till 2016.

Veronica Hendriks, co-opted Ordinary Member.

There were some changes to the NEXCO elected in 2012 occasioned by the tragic death of Mark Samuel-King in December 2013. Kay Hooper, Helen Cantwell, Louise Howell and Maria Shelley and myself have faithfully completed the 4 years and more recently have been assisted by co-opted members Tony French, Veronica Hendriks and Anna Munari. In 2014 we said a sad goodbye to Fr Robin Koning and enthusiastically welcomed our current EA, Fr Iain Radvan. Thank you one and all for serving our community so generously.

Discerned priorities at Assembly, 2012-16

The discerned priorities for CLC Australia at the Australian Assembly in July 2012 were:

- To grow membership and to nourish members;
- To offer CLC to young adults;
- To outreach to diverse groups;
- To have one collective apostolic work;
- To network as a national community;
- To celebrate 450 years of Ignatian Lay groups;
- To make formal commitment in CLC available;
- To ensure good communication and administration;
- To use the First Spiritual Exercises as a means of achieving these priorities.

(i) Growing and nourishing Membership

There has been a concerted effort to grow our membership in CLC through running First Spiritual Exercise retreats and following up with people who wish to remain in a community which shares 'life and faith'.

Other groups have formed through direct contact with people who have responded to a “come and see” approach to joining an Ignatian Group. Two documents have been developed, “Membership of CLC” and “National Guidelines for Criteria, Selection, Appointment and Formation of Guides in CLC” to support this process.

As I mentioned earlier, at present we have 261 registered members of CLC (as at 1 June, 2016), with another 106 people who attend groups but who have not registered. Each October NEXCO has followed up with regional EXCOS to encourage increased membership registration. Last year this helped our number of registered members to increase by 50.

Through the Tertianship Program, there has been a plan to follow-up people who would like to continue exploring Ignatian Spirituality in a group. I will refer to this later in the report. CLC is steadily growing and I am thankful for member’s dedication to initiating and following up and generally encouraging others to consider joining CLC.

For those CLC members who are no longer able to attend groups NEXCO has initiated a “Life Membership” category. Life members are invited by letter to pray for things related to CLC. Each edition of Annotations is emailed to them and this year they were each given a CLC badge. Active members from their region are encouraged to keep contact with these Life Members.

Nourishing our members firstly occurs in the CLC group. Other specific ways that groups have been nourished have been through the provision of special reflections. The 3 reflections on “Wisdom Language”, and the 12 reflections on “Care for Creation” have been warmly received. “The Joy of the Gospel” and “Laudato Si” “ have also been sources of reflection for groups over the last few years. Members were invited to reflect on the Synod on the Family and Pope Francis’ initiatives on Prayer for the Environment.

Overall, great attention has been given to providing our members with experiences that have helped nourish their spirituality, the CLC way of life and their apostolic outreach. All regions offer annual events including Gatherings, World CLC Day events, retreats and celebrations of the Feast of St Ignatius, etc.

(ii) Outreach to diverse groups and young adults

From a recent survey of our membership (2015) it is evident that CLC members provide formation, service and leadership to various Church groups and parishes. These include retreats for women, teaching

scripture, giving the FSE, leading a Pastoral team in a hospital, providing individual spiritual direction and facilitating and leading faith-based groups and parish roles. Other examples include Board Member of a Catholic High school, State Co-ordinator of Jesuit Volunteers and a convenor of asylum seeker support group.

Finding culturally appropriate ways to engage younger adults is a real challenge for CLC. Mentoring by older CLCers of younger adults to co-ordinate groups seems to be one way forward. Several new groups of young adults have formed in different states. One group in NSW even has meetings by Skype.

In attempting to engage with young adults the following is important to recognise:

- There are some young adults scattered through CLC groups;
- Some younger CLC members have recently taken on positions of leadership within CLC;
- Family-friendly CLC events have been held;
- Attempts at attracting younger members have involved meetings with staff of Catholic Youth Ministries and Universities;
- Visits have been made to identified ethnic parishes with young adults.

(iii) To have one collective apostolic work

Our one collective, apostolic work is the Jesuit/CLC Tertian Program which has been mentioned above. In 2015, after ten years as Co-ordinator of the Tertian Program, Felicity Flynn stepped down and Noreen Nicholson has taken up the reins. Sincere thanks to Felicity for her generous and faithful work in this program. At the same time our agreement with the Jesuits was renewed and there has been a significant drive to get CLC regions involved with the follow-up to these retreats.

This year, Fr Steve Curtin and Noreen Nicholson organised nine retreats across Australia in rural and remote areas. There were 273 participants and CLC members have made contact with many of these to offer follow up and support using the 5 meetings called "The Program for Life.

Related to the Tertian Program, is the involvement of CLC in the FSE Program. In 2013 approximately 40 members of CLC (from all 5 regions) attended the Pilot Training for Givers of the First Spiritual Exercises in Melbourne/Sydney. While this did not become a National Project for CLC, we contributed greatly to FSE retreats throughout Australia.

In 2014 NEXCO and the Chairpersons decided that for 12 months CLC would explore the possibility of training and certifying CLC members as Givers of the FSE.

As national and state FSE teams were formed CLC members were involved. The development of a Train the Trainer program has allowed for further CLC involvement. CLC has collaborated with the FSE ministry throughout this process. (Collaboration seemed a better way than running our own FSE training.)

I would like to make mention of the great work that Jocelyn and Rob Randabel-Williamson have initiated in the Fleurieu region of SA, setting up a formation team to give the FSE retreats and then providing follow up. They and many others have been involved in the FSE ministry as part of their apostolic activity.

(iv) To network as a National Community

Networking and collaboration have been hallmarks of our way of proceeding in CLC. NEXCO and EXCO's have collaborated with a variety of Jesuit organisations in Australia such as: Jesuit Communications, Formation Ministries, Jesuit Financial Services, Jesuit Tertian Program, Centres of Ignatian Spirituality and Jesuit Archives.

As part of World CLC, we are constantly aware of the requirements of us as a National body. We have responded to the Survey of Apostolic works (2015), paid our World Dues and made a donation to the Solidarity Fund in support of poorer countries. In the past year, as President of CLC Australia, I was asked to form part of an international collaborative ecological group to respond to the encyclical "Laudato Si".

As part of any apostolic outreach our members also network with a myriad of organisations that are involved with marginalised people, the environment, family crises and health agencies. Some members are involved in supporting refugees and migrants.

Use of Annotations, Facebook and email (Daily blogs from 2013 World Assembly in Beirut) increasingly have formed part of our CLC attempts at networking and communicating.

(v) To celebrate 450 years of Ignatian Lay groups

During the last four years we have had occasion to celebrate the 450 years of Ignatian Lay Groups and are currently celebrating the 40 years of graced history of CLC in Australia. During the 450 years celebration each region celebrated liturgically or with a large event such as a dinner.

Features of our history were advertised in Annotations and access to the 450 years of Ignatian Groups via the publication by Louis Paulussen SJ, “God works like that, origins of the Christian Life Community” was made available on our website.

Many people are astounded at the length of time that Ignatian Lay Groups have been in existence and we in Australia, are grateful for our 30 year history.

(vi) To make formal Commitment available

At the World Assembly in Fatima it was recommended that National Communities discern the topic of Formal Commitment as part of the CLC way of life. What followed in Australia was a deepening conversation through Annotations.

Prior to the Gathering in 2014, CLC members interested in formal commitment were invited to share in small groups the four meditations in our “Colloquy on Commitment”, written by Fr Robin Koning SJ. Those who discerned that they wished to make a formal Commitment then shared a series of meditations taken from a Portuguese CLC manual on Commitment.

At our first Formal Commitment ceremony offered in January 2014, 15 members made Permanent Commitment and 1 member made Temporary Commitment. A Committee was then established to reflect on and develop appropriate practices and protocols for Australia.

Since then Commitment documents have been developed and are available for future use.

The opportunity to make Permanent Commitment was again offered in 2015 and there will be three members making Permanent Commitment at this Assembly.

(vii) To ensure good communication and Administration

Structures and Communication established over the 4 years

- To ensure continuity, NEXCO co-opted other members to fill vacancies as they arose.
- Annual meetings between NEXCO and the Regional Chairpersons were held annually.
- We developed Internal Procedures for practical CLC matters.
- The introduction of the Link newsletter following each NEXCO meeting increased direct communication with EXCOs and Guides.

- We established Regional roles for Annotations; the database and the website.
- Policies related to membership were developed and circulated to Guides.
- We have conducted an annual review of the membership database with follow up letters.
- Exploration of Professional Standards guidelines as relating to CLC events
- Regular communication with World EXCO and Asia/Pacific region.
- We explored the possibility of hosting the World Assembly 2018 and decided against it.
- We have developed an online registration form this year to make it easier to return registrations.
- We have revised our Constitution in accordance with the Victorian Consumer Affairs Act of 2012 and from this our Statutes for CLC Australia have been written, with wide consultation with all regions.

Multi Media

- We produced a CLC DVD for promotion of CLC.
- Following a review of Annotations A revised process for producing each edition was developed. A new CLC Facebook page has been developed by Michael Walker.

We have now updated the CLC Website – CLC documents added to the website as well as resources for Guides and meeting material sent to groups.

(All Australian Formation and Governance Documents have been revised by a small committee and together with the World Formation Documents are available on the CLC website. The “World and Australian Apostolic Journey from 1998-2015” has been developed and placed on the website. This document outlines the journey from World Common Mission Statement to Australia’s First Mission Statement and up to the present day.)

Finances

- Financial policies were reviewed and National and Regional guidelines established.
- Trustees for the Special Project Funds were appointed (Chris Gardner, Tony French, Mary McInerney). They developed and implemented an Investment Strategy for this Fund. This involved investing \$250,000 in ME Bank for 2 year fixed Term at 3.30% and \$150,000 invested in reputable shares. The interest earned on the

Special Projects Fund is used to finance any applications from members.

- The Finance Committee has included Chris Gardner, Tony French and Mary McInerney.

Finally, I feel a great sense of gratitude for the development all these aspects of the organisation that continue to maintain and grow our community. For me working with NEXCO and the Chairpersons I have seen the development of one community in Australia. The opportunity to attend the World Assembly in Lebanon I consider a highlight of my life.