



Archbishop's Message
Archbishop Christopher Prowse

"The Plenary Council is a time of inner conversion, prayer and formation as we listen deeply to the whisper of the Holy Spirit and to each other."

CATHOLIC VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN
www.catholicvoice.org.au

Lockdown Lessons:

Buy a daily cup of coffee from your local café. They need your money and we need them there when all this is over.

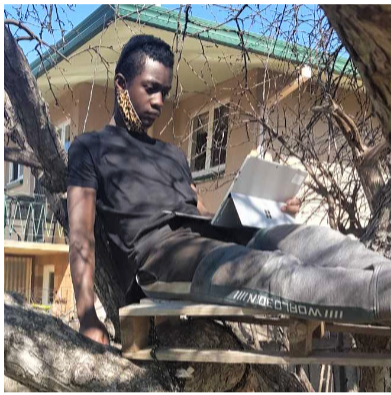
Cooma's silver lining to lockdown

BY JOSH ABROKWAH
YEAR 10 STUDENT

With the recent lifting of the lockdown restrictions in the Snowy Monaro shires, the social isolation at home and hours spent on MS Teams calls are still fresh in many students' minds. Talking through screens was the only way to learn, socialise and collaborate during our school's Connected Learning.

Knowing how much some kids complain about how boring school is, completing schoolwork in the comfort of your own home should be a dream come true... in theory. But in reality, most students had a new set of challenges.

At first, when most of the state was suddenly thrown into lockdown, it seemed that school hours would be filled with typing essays, work on assignments and filling in tests, without the usual classroom antics, engagement and human interaction in-between. But surprisingly, that



Josh Abrokwah studying in a tree wasn't necessarily the case.

The way the school organised video calls into the class timetable also ensured that students would be able to have enough time for teachers to help them with work while still being reasonably independent.

We have come to appreciate connecting to one another through a variety of ways other than texting and calling.

Now that restrictions are somewhat eased, students and staff alike are looking forward to catching up with friends and family and doing the activities that they enjoy. Every step in making the connection helps us all to look after ourselves physically, mentally and socially. The silver lining to lockdowns is a heightened appreciation of connection!



Students from St Patrick's Cooma, engaging in remote learning

ACT LOCKDOWN

Govt denies it targets churches

BY DON SMITH

The ACT Government denies faith communities are being unfairly targeted with COVID compliance checks.

The denial came after the Catholic Voice attended the ACT Government's daily COVID press conference on 22 September and queried with officials perceptions of possible inconsistent approaches to enforcement of COVID compliance restrictions. This followed recent ACT policing compliance visits to some local Catholic churches.

The ACT Government's deputy chief health officer, Dr Vanessa Johnston, said she disagreed with the assertion that compliance officers were targeting particular sectors of the community.

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Hopes at the dawn of the Plenary Council's first Assembly

Proposing the Gospel with an Australian face for our time

BY ARCHBISHOP
CHRISTOPHER PROWSE

The long anticipated First Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia is almost here.

"Walking together" (synod/synodality) is the "language" of our Council and of our Church. We are like the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24), journeying but with a sense of anticipation of more to be discovered. We know that this walking together does not simply refer to our feet. It also refers to our hearts. Here Jesus speaks and fills our hearts with fire.

The Plenary Council, there-

fore, is a time of inner conversion, prayer and formation as we listen deeply to the whisper of the Holy Spirit and to each other. From this journey, we pray, that all sorts of hopeful ways will emerge for proposing the Gospel with an Australian face for our time. This includes our institutions, structures and governance dimensions.

Perhaps, in this regard, Australia's own unique geography can assist us.

The Working Document ("Continuing the Journey") used a wonderful allusion to Uluru and our missionary task. It described Christ – the Rock at the

Centre. Jesus must be at the very centre of the Plenary Council.

Perhaps, too, our place in the world – Oceania – could be a metaphor for the importance of the waters of Baptism. This is the gateway sacrament from which missionary discipleship and mercy flows, especially with the poor and the oppressed.

The fact, too, that the majority of Australians live on the coastal regions is of pastoral significance. The desert centre of our new but ancient land is largely empty and visited by most Australians as tourists. Do we feel truly "at home" in our land? In its origins, Christiani-

ty is a desert religion – a place where the one People of God is formed from scattered individuals and groups. Perhaps the desert is a metaphor for the Australian mysticism that yearns for a fresh and irresistible articulation for our time. Our own First Nations Peoples are crucial to assist us here. "Integral ecology", as expressed in recent Roman Catholicism, can assist us too in a truly Australian evangelisation of all our peoples.

So let us place all our hopes for the Plenary Council under the protection of the Saints. As the Southern Cross has shone above us over the millennia, may

Mary, the Star of evangelisation, lead us to where Jesus wants us to be. In this year dedicated to his patronage, may St Joseph protect us. May the Australian Saint, St Mary of the Cross (MacKillop), teach us how to be real Australian missionaries in our time and place.

Come Holy Spirit of Pentecost.

Come, Holy Spirit of the great south land,

Bless and unite all people of Australia

On the pilgrim way of the Plenary Council.

Amen

ACT LOCKDOWN

Govt. denies it targets churches

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“They have done blitzes of other outdoor gatherings and mask-wearing by individuals and businesses,” she said.

“We know this is a really challenging time for all of us in the community, particularly for those people of faith who like to attend weekly church services, even for myself who attends an Anglican church and where I zoom in on weekends.”

She said that because of the level of community transmission and vaccination rates, the Government was not able to allow indoor gatherings except for time-critical events.

She underlined that moving forward, the Government would be consulting with faith communities and other sectors about what they would like to see happening as we came out of the lockdown.

Lockdown lottery for businesses

BY DON SMITH

It’s a lottery for businesses enduring the latest COVID lockdown.

Location, location, location means everything for some cafes and other enterprises that have carried on regardless of the restrictions.

For others, however, it’s has been hard going.

John-Paul Romano, an acolyte at St Christopher’s Manuka, is the proprietor of a café a short walk from the cathedral.

“Business has been difficult,” he said.

John Paul’s business interests also include a bar, which has had to close. He has had to cut shifts and put off staff, most of whom are university students.

“I assume they’re receiving support from the Federal Gov-



Manuka Cafe owner, John-Paul Romano

ernment. But as yet we haven’t received a cent from the ACT Government and that’s definitely impacting us substantially,” he said.

“We’ve applied for support



Tiler, Nathan Piper

but the process is onerous. It’s been 30 days since we applied and there’s not a cent in the bank.”

It’s been a similarly difficult year for Nathan Piper who launched his business this year as a tiler in the building industry.

The Marist College Canberra old boy had high hopes when he started but has come up against a COVID brick wall and paperwork complexities for securing income support.

While the commercial building sector has reopened, as a new participant in the field his business interests lay in residential building work.

He had potential jobs lined up but it came as a big blow when the Government said work could only take place on projects under way before the lockdown started.

“For a lot of guys I know it was a kick in the guts because we got our hopes up,” he said. “They gave us a bit of light and then they closed the blinds – unless for those fortunate enough to have jobs they hadn’t finished before the lockdown.”

For its part, the ACT Government today said it had paid out \$50 million in business support grants to 3000 applicants out of a pool of 8000 hopefuls. It is a scheme jointly designed with the Federal Government.

That’s good for some, not so good for others who await the bureaucratic wheels as they turn at different speeds.

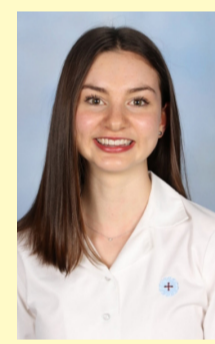
Local Life



Potential Nobel laureates at Sts Peter & Paul’s Primary School Goulburn discussing the pros and cons of flower power for our future energy needs.



Congratulations to Year 12 student at St Francis Xavier College, Evana Rabi, for being a finalist in the ACT Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year awards.



Congratulations to Sarah Mooney, elected College Captain St Clare’s 2022

VAD law sends mixed messages to most vulnerable

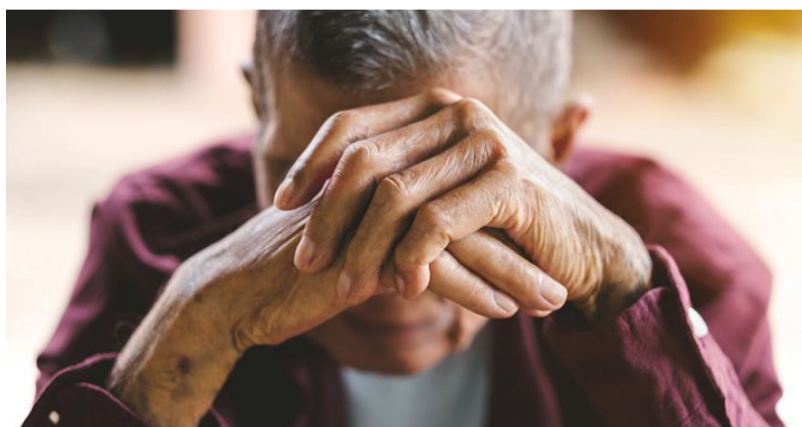
BY XAVIER SYMONS

Euthanasia legislation was recently passed in Queensland, the latest of Australia’s states and territories to do so.

There is an insidious subtext to these laws, namely, that life can lose its meaning and value. This message has consequences for vulnerable people in our society, especially those living with mental illness.

In New South Wales, Independent MP Alex Greenwich has announced his intention to introduce euthanasia legislation as soon as that state’s Parliament resumes. Dozens of politicians have expressed support for the bill, including most recently Nationals Leader John Barilaro.

At first blush, this bill is concerned with the suffering of the terminally ill and the grief of their loved ones. As Barilaro told the Sydney Morning Herald, “when humans are in agony, and there is no way out, there should be a humane way to end life with



dignity”.

Viewed from this perspective, opposition from church groups, medical professionals or disability rights activists is irrelevant or fundamentally illiberal.

But the legalisation of euthanasia is a question that concerns all of society. It establishes a considered view about when life is worth living and when it is not. With this line of thinking, our lives are only worthwhile up to a certain point. When a threshold of suffering or personal loss is exceeded, suicide becomes a reasonable option.

This view of human life affects much more than just the medical options available to people nearing the end of their lives.

My own experience of living with significant depression for many years has given me a special insight on the effect that social attitudes on suicide can have on the psychology of vulnerable individuals.

Teenagers develop depression and anxiety due to the attitudes about body image and personal worth that they imbibe from social media.

Depression is endemic in law

and medicine in part because of almost impossible expectations in the workplace.

What does this have to do with euthanasia legislation? Euthanasia legislation undercuts society’s efforts to ensure that its most vulnerable members receive one clear message: that life is worth living.

Here’s one example: search engines fortunately block access to information about self-harm and suicide. In lieu of this, however, one is instead flooded with information about access to voluntary assisted dying.

Similarly, the media filter news about suicides and publish the details of mental health services in articles containing sensitive content. Yet they supply great detail about the implementation of assisted dying in states and territories, often illustrated by vignettes of terminally ill individuals who have taken their lives.

At a time when Australia’s mental health crisis is worse than

ever, we should heed the warning of American philosopher David Velleman, namely, that “the option of dying may give people new reasons for dying”.

We ought not simply focus on the benefits of a right to die, but also the burden that assisted dying legislation imposes on more vulnerable members of the community for whom the value of life is constantly in question.

If you are depressed, you crave hope – and you find it in the kindness and optimism of those around you. MPs need to consider whether the legalisation of assisted dying sends hope to the vulnerable or gives social sanction to their feelings of despair.

Dr Xavier Symons is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow at the Plunkett Centre for Ethics, Australian Catholic University. He is currently a Fulbright Scholar and Visiting Research at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University in Washington DC.