

Catalyst for Renewal

Patrons

A paper for consideration of Members, March 2023

Introduction

The Catalyst for Renewal Members' Handbook includes this statement:

“A number of people have over the years been appointed as Patrons by the Executive Committee of Catalyst for Renewal, after consultation with members. They are not members but are well known and respected Catholics whom we honour as special supporters of our mission. Our patrons provide a sign of our connection with and commitment to the tradition of the church. The present patrons are:

Sr Maryanne Confoy RSC
Rev Andrew Hamilton SJ
Br Julian McDonald cfc
Rev. Francis J. Moloney, SDB
Sr Mary Shanahan rscj”

The patrons were appointed early in the life of Catalyst and (as far as I can tell) there has been little change over the years until relatively recently. Robert Fitzgerald resigned in about 2013 and Bishop Geoffrey Robinson died at the end of 2020. Decisions need to be taken as to whether and how to replace these losses.

Current and Past Patrons

I sought to meet with the five current patrons and one former patron over October and November 2022. Each person I called upon greeted me warmly and expressed appreciation for their association with Catalyst and their willingness to continue in the role if that is also our wish.

Andrew Hamilton sj

Andrew Hamilton is a Jesuit priest in Melbourne. He taught theology at the United Faculty of Theology for many years, and has contributed widely to theological and religious journals. He has had a long-standing engagement with refugee communities and issues.

Maryanne Confoy rsc

Maryanne Confoy is a Sister of Charity in Melbourne. She was a member of the United Faculty of Theology in Melbourne, serving as president for three years, and was made a fellow of the Melbourne College of Divinity.

Francis Moloney sdb

Frank Moloney is a Melbourne priest in the order of the Salesians of Don Bosco. He is an alumni of Melbourne University, the Salesian Pontifical University (STL: 1970), the Pontifical Biblical Institute (SSL: 1972), and the University of Oxford (D. Phil.: 1976). He is a world-leading biblical scholar.

Julian McDonald cfc

Julian McDonald is a Christian Brother living in Sydney and a former Chancellor of Australian Catholic University. He has been a frequent speaker at various SIP groups and has contributed several times to our Hunters Hill Reflection Mornings.

Mary Shanahan rscj

Sister Mary has had a long association with Kincoppal Rose Bay. Sister Mary is a past principal and continuing chaplain of Sancta Sophia College, Sydney University. She was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2019.

Robert Fitzgerald

Robert is the Ageing and Disability Commissioner for NSW. Robert was a Catalyst patron until 2012 (check) when he resigned subsequent to his appointment to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, where he served until 2017. He has frequently contributed as a speaker in Catalyst forums.

Discussion

The Constitution of the association is entirely silent on the matter of patrons. The Members' Handbook suggests that appointments of patrons are made by the Executive Committee. Selection of patrons, I'd suggest, should be a matter of discernment by the whole organisation. At least, it would seem prudent to seek endorsement of decisions by a general meeting of the members.

Our present patrons include three males, two of whom are ordained and the other is a consecrated religious, and two females both of whom are consecrated religious. It might better reflect the nature and purpose of the organisation if a balance is maintained between males and females and between ordained/consecrated and non-consecrated laypersons. Prior to Robert's resignation there were seven patrons and this is perhaps the appropriate maximum number for the future. Prior to Bishop Geoffrey's death there was always one bishop. It might add weight for our purpose if we continue this tradition.

We were advised of our patrons' experience in other organisations. It seems each organisation approaches the role differently. Broadly, there are three levels of engagement:

- a name on the letterhead only (to lend credibility to the organisation);
- as speakers;
- involved in strategic planning and other consultation.

As to involvement of patrons in the life of Catalyst, the following protocols are suggested:

- invitations to potential new patrons will make clear that the name will be added to our letterhead and used for the purpose enunciated in the Members' Handbook, including in fundraising;
- patrons should receive the same information updates as are provided to the archbishops (currently the annual report of the committee to the members and the annual (advanced draft) calendar of events);
- patrons will be invited to attend the annual eucharistic reflection and may be invited to other major events in their city of residence;
- patrons should be consulted in advance of any major policy decision, especially any that might imply a change of direction of the organisation;
- program coordinators should be mindful of the potential availability of any of our patrons who are willing to participate in our events programs as speakers or facilitators.

Current List of Possible New Patrons

The following list has been compiled from discussion amongst the Catalyst executive and members. No evaluation is attempted here. It is expected that there will be additions to and deletions from this

list over time. The purpose of this list is to provide a pool of “well known and respected Catholics whom we honour as special supporters of our mission” who would be expected to “provide a sign of our connection with and commitment to the tradition of the church.” Approaches to possible future patrons might then be made by selection from this list.

Bishops Long (Parramatta), Homeming (Lismore), Ingham (retired, ex Wollongong), Mackinlay (Sandhurst).

Frank Brennan sj

Richard Lennan (priest, Diocese of Newcastle; professor of theology, Boston College)

Mary Coloe pbvm (Assoc Prof, biblical studies, YTU - UD)

Frances Baker rsm (theologian CTC - UD)

Virginia Bourke

Susan Pascoe

Claire Victory (svdp society)

Robert Fitzgerald

Recommendations

1. That the ongoing appointment of eminent persons as patrons of Catalyst be endorsed in principal.
2. That the number of patrons be capped at seven but with tolerance of short term variations in this number.
3. That the body of patrons will usually include one bishop.
4. That Robert Fitzgerald be invited immediately to accept re-appointment as a patron of Catalyst.
5. That following a process of discernment by the members, a further invitation be made either to one bishop or one laywoman.
6. That subsequent appointments be made with a view to establishing and maintaining balance between males and females and between ordained/consecrated and non-consecrated laypersons.

These recommendations were endorsed by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 20 February 2023.

Bob Birchall

President

7 November 2022 updated 2 March 2023