



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

29 September 2010

Church raises national awareness of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people

This media release is available for viewing at the following link

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KFsZpq2jzw8>

The Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life have established a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee under the auspices of the Australian Catholic Disability Council (ACDC).

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee will work specifically to address barriers to inclusion and participation in the Church experienced by people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Ms Michele Castagna, Chair of the ACDC, applauds the establishment of this Committee saying "The Catholic Church in Australia is at the forefront of continuing to address the barriers to inclusion for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

This focus committee has an extremely important role in bringing issues to the attention of the wider church community at all levels. The ACDC looks forward to working collaboratively with the Committee to ensure the Word of God is 'heard' by all."

The formation of the Committee is an outcome of participation in The XXIV International Conference 'Ephphetha! - The Deaf Person in the Life of the Church' which was held in Rome in November 2009.

Australia was the first country to report back with information about specific actions planned, the first step being the establishment of the National Committee for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Measures discussed and recommended by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee will include training priests to use sign language, having regular interpreted Masses and other diocesan events and creating awareness throughout the Church of the rights by Baptism of deaf and hard of hearing people to fully participate at all levels in the life of the Church.

Chair of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee, Ms Nicole Clark, says that the Committee will be a voice for those who are often without a voice in the Church.

"The Church through new action and a new approach can truly fulfil the words of Jesus when he said 'Ephphetha -be open'. With a true commitment to Jesus' teaching, the Church can empower and encourage Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to take their rightful place in the family of God", Ms Clark stated.

Ms Danni Wright (Sydney Archdiocese), Ms Rebecca Miller (Melbourne Archdiocese), Mrs Barbara Harris and Fr Paul Pitzen (Perth Archdiocese) are members of the Committee.

For more information, contact: Mrs Patricia Mowbray, Disability Projects Officer for the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on (02) 6201 9868 or by email disability@catholic.org.au