



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

May 16, 2011

Statement from Catholic Bishops on 120th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*

In celebration of Pope Leo the XIII's great social Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, the Australian Catholic Bishops have today released a statement which reflects on the 120 years since its writing.

Sunday 15 May 2011 was the 120th anniversary of the Encyclical, which is considered the genesis of Catholic teaching on the spiritual, economic and social aspects of modern industrial societies.

The statement from the Bishops recognises that while the Encyclical was firmly placed in its context 120 years ago, that it has surprising relevance to today.

"The Encyclical was very much a product of its time, and even in Australia it had its influence on our evolving industrial relations system."

"Today, Monday 16 May 2011, almost exactly 120 years after *Rerum Novarum*, Fair Work Australia will begin hearing final submissions in this year's Annual Wage Review."

The Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations has filed extensive submissions in support of low paid workers with family responsibilities.

The statement comments on these submissions, focusing in particular on the *Fair Work Act 2009* and the review which is taking place at Fair Work Australia.

"The Tribunal will make a decision under provisions in the *Fair Work Act 2009* that are consistent with the objective stated in the 2005 Statement. However, it is only by the outcomes of the decisions that the success of the legislation can be measured."

The statement ends with an exhortation to the future, with hope that *Rerum Novarum's* words might continue to ring true in the area of industrial relations today.

We hope for outcomes that are truly consistent with the great vision of *Rerum Novarum*, a vision born of the Gospel and no less relevant to the situations we face now than it was to the situation addressed by Pope Leo XIII at the end of the nineteenth century.

The statement is available in electronic form on the website www.catholic.org.au

For media enquiries, please contact Fr Brian Lucas on (02) 6201 9845