



Archbishop
Christopher Prowse

Archbishop Prowse responds to an intemperate article by Jack Waterford in the Canberra Times published June 2, 2023

It's always better to listen and talk. Dialogue is essential in communities where people have different beliefs and interests.

We all share the same city and great country, so talking is the best way to keep people together. It's the key to resolving divisions and ensuring they don't become bitter.

It would have been far better if dialogue had been the chosen way for the government in its forced takeover of Calvary Public Hospital Bruce.

We Catholics are a proud part of our Canberra community. We feel we have contributed to its welfare.

Christian organisations, from Vinnies to the Salvation Army to Anglicare, work hard for people who fall through the cracks.

They do it quietly on the streets and at night, putting bread in hungry people's mouths. They put roofs over homeless people's heads. They do this with funds they raise themselves – but often also with the government's help. Organisations of other faiths – Hindu, Muslim, Jewish and others – also work hard.

The great faiths have a central belief in love for our fellow human beings, and that love should involve active help.

But the Canberra Times columnist Jack Waterford does not recognise this contribution adequately. He argues that religious organisations should not receive government funding for schools, hospitals and aged care.

It is a fashionable argument. Increasingly, there seems to be a dismissal of faith – and by implication, a dismissal of the people of faith.

But I would remind him that the latest census found that half Australians profess a religious belief. Just under half profess the Christian faith, but those who believe in a Muslim, Jewish, or Hindu deity are a growing and important part of our faith-based community.

I cannot speak directly on behalf of all believers, but I can testify to the benefits people of faith bring to our public life. People of faith enhance this marvellous country and the place in which we live.

The story of religious Australia is one of a community of people drawn together by shared but also diverse beliefs to serve those in need and strengthen the common good.

Continued on page 2

CATHOLIC VOICE

ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN

SPECIAL EDITION



SIGN the Save Calvary Petition
www.savecalvary.com.au

Shock, anger, hope and everything in between

BY VERONIKA COX

The Supreme Court has been urged to block the ACT Government's "hostile" and "unwelcome" acquisition of Calvary Public Hospital at a hearing on Wednesday.

Chief Justice Lucy McCallum said the court would rule on the legislation's validity by no later than June 13.

In seeking an injunction, Calvary Health Care barrister David Williams argued the legislation was extraordinary, unique, and invalid.

"We would say there is no reasonably valid construction that grants Calvary a right to obtain reasonable compensation of just terms in this act," he said.

Earlier in the month, the ACT Government announced their plan to build a new \$1 billion hospital on Calvary's Bruce site.

The takeover has been met with staunch opposition from the Catholic Church, as well as ecumenical leaders and secular society.

Head of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn action group Fr Tony Percy described the takeover as a "monstrous



Cartoon by Johannes Leak, Editorial Cartoonist at The Australian, published Monday, 5 June.

attack on democracy".

"What we've got is an ACT Government that is actually suspending its own Land Acquisition Act, whereby you do compulsory acquisitions on just terms," he said.

The Save Calvary petition has surpassed 38,000 signatures.

As news of the government's plan reverberated around the country, Archbishop Christopher Prowse called for new discussions to "resolve difficulties respectfully".

"Calvary is part of the great-

ness of Canberra. For 44 years, it has offered a touch of human transcendence – from conception to natural death," he said.

"If this goes ahead, it will be the first time in Australia's history that a federal state or territory government has engaged in a hostile takeover of a church institution," he said.

On May 24, ecumenical leaders from around the region gathered at a prayer vigil at St Christopher's Cathedral.

Lutheran pastor Rev Gabor Szabo said the forced acquisition

brought back bad memories.

"I grew up in a country, Hungary, that was not free for over 40 years after the second world war by a socialist government," he said.

"Now, the planned acquisition of Calvary Hospital brings back bad memories – the dark times of the 1950's and 60's, when hospitals, schools, land, real estate were confiscated from Christian churches with no negotiation possible. I thought all this was in the past. The acquisition of Calvary Hospital sends alarming signs that something is going very wrong."

Calvary has been frustrated by the ACT Government's refusal to consider any meaningful options to resolve negotiations since the introduction of the Bill on 11 May.

"Our review of the proposed legislation and associated regulation indicates that just terms are simply not available," Calvary National Chief Executive Martin Bowles said.

"All we have is an announcement and an imposed unrealistic timeline that has distressed our people and could ultimately put clinical safety at risk."

An increase of homeless women in ACT

AFTER her beloved husband of 50 years passed away, 70-year-old Joan* found herself suddenly homeless.

"I'd lost my husband, I'd lost my home. I mean, I had nothing to live for. I didn't even have a pension," she said.

"I never thought I'd end up homeless on the street in my 70s."

The St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra-Goulburn Winter Appeal has raised over \$100,000 since its launch last month.

"The most recent census data revealed that all forms of homelessness had remained stubbornly high in our region with a significant increase in women being affected," St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra-Goulburn president John Feint said.

"Between September 2022 and February 2023, 68% of people who called the Vinnies Emergency Helpline identified as female and were likely to be within the



The St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn Winter Appeal aims to support people escape homelessness in the ACT and surrounding region.

age cohort of 25-49 years (62%) and 50-64 years (23%)."

Director Fundraising, Marketing and Communications at Vinnies Canberra-Goulburn Philip Jones said women often take unpaid time off work to look after their families.

"So, when they retire, women have less money to live on than

men," he explained.

"If they separate, divorce, or become a widow, they're more vulnerable. That's why financial insecurity is one of the main reasons women become homeless in Australia."

Mr Jones said the alarming numbers call for urgent action.

"This winter, we are aiming to

raise \$400,000 to support people in the ACT and surrounding regions," he said.

"The funds will be used to provide urgent and practical support such as food, clothing, essential goods, rental payments, accommodation assistance, and medical costs to help prevent homelessness."

Through St Vincent de Paul Society, Joan was placed in crisis accommodation and met volunteers Jess and Maria.

"First stop, Maria organised for me to go to Centrelink to sort out my finances.

"Today, I've got a beautiful home I never thought I'd have again."

Last winter, Vinnies Canberra-Goulburn volunteers provided emergency assistance worth approximately \$550,000 in ACT and surrounds.

• To donate, please call on 13 18 12 or visit: www.vinnies.org.au

Continued from page 1

It is indeed a flawed story where some, including Catholics of my tradition, have failed in disastrous and even criminal ways. Still, nevertheless, it is a story where countless ordinary people of faith have striven to help others.

Believers of all kinds have shaped Australia overwhelmingly in positive ways. Australia's first Catholic saint, Mary MacKillop, said, "Never see a need without doing something about it". Her words sum up the practice of religious groups in our wonderful nation.

Christian organisations are involved in providing services to Australians of all beliefs because our faith means we are called to serve others, often in partnership with the government. When Vinnies fills a soup bowl in Canberra at night, it does not ask the hungry recipient about their beliefs.

Religious groups in Australia offer healthcare, schooling and tertiary education, aged care, social welfare services and foreign aid because to do so is the core of our belief.

Like all hospitals, Catholic hospitals try to provide the very best medical care. Across Australia and around the world, they have reputations for research and care which are second to none.

Mr Waterford seems dismissive of this contribution. But imagine what would happen if the faith-based organisations were not involved in all that good work – good work with the homeless and the hungry, good work with the young in schools and the old in aged care homes.

Would the state really step in? Would taxpayers be happy to fill the gap in funding?

Religious charities – either directly through the synagogues, churches, temples and mosques or through their volunteer and professional bodies – contribute hugely to this country.

They help those in need – and by doing so, ease the burden on the taxpayer. They do it often better than governments can because they are driven by deep belief.

Religious organisations, including my own Catholic Church, serve the community. They sometimes have help from the government, but they also raise their own money, often in collections every Sunday from ordinary people – from ordinary Canberrans.

I offer these thoughts in a spirit of dialogue – and of love. We all want to make Australia the best society it can be. We Christians are part of this great community.

The thurible king's homecoming

HUMBLE, dedicated and meticulous were just some of the words used to describe one of the Archdiocese's most beloved Sacristan and Acolyte.

Family and friends celebrated Peter Sutherland's life this week at a moving requiem Mass at St Christopher's Cathedral.

Offering his condolences, Archbishop Christopher Prowse told the congregation that Peter was the first to show him around the Cathedral when he arrived almost ten years ago

"He was a very meticulous man, and everything was done according to order, and in his hands, you felt that things were going to go very well, very quietly spoken but firm when things needed to be pulled into line."

Two of Peter's children, Anne and Paul, presented the eulogy describing their father's career achievements and, in later years, his dedication to his faith.

Peter was a sacristan and an acolyte at St Christopher's Cathedral and St Peter Chanel parishes for almost 20 years – a commitment he took on not long after his wife died in 2000.

Daughter Anne described how Peter, grief-stricken from losing



Beloved Sacristan and Acolyte, Peter Sutherland

his wife, decided to be reconciled with God because, as he had said, "he didn't want to be separated from her for all eternity."

He called this decision his "homecoming".

Peter was appointed sacristan the day after the then parishioner, elderly and unsteady on her feet, had dropped a tray of sacred vessels while stepping off the altar.

"Dad's first day on the job was unforgettable", Anne told the congregation." As he went to set up for Mass, he couldn't find

the tabernacle key. Both he and 'self-appointed first in command' Betty O'Neil searched the working sacristy from top to bottom, but there was no sign of it. Panic rose at the possibility of reporting this loss to the Archbishop.

"However, Betty had the inspired idea that maybe the tabernacle key had gone flying with the tray the night before and, in the clean-up, had ended up in the garbage bin."

Peter climbed straight into the hopper and, after wading waist-



Peter with his wife on their wedding day

high in garbage bags eventually, found the key.

Anne said the story about the tabernacle key was a metaphor for her father's life.

"For the rest of his earthly search, he climbed back into the mess of his Catholic faith and simply trusted. Once or twice, I asked him specifically the reasons for his faith crisis in his early years; he only ever alluded to one major struggle, which was his inability to believe in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist."

"I smile with understanding to see the gospel Dad chose for today. 'I am the bread of life'. Because from beyond the grave, he is telling emphatically that what started as doubt has ended in certainty."



The joy of singing

Students from primary schools around the Archdiocese gathered last month to experience the joy of singing together.

Big Sing is the brainchild of Mother Teresa School music specialist teacher Susan Curbishley.

Armed with a passion for all children to have the opportunity to sing and experience a mass choir, Mrs Curbishley invites local catholic schools to come together twice a year.

This term, students came from Mother Teresa School in Harrison, St Jude's in Holder, St Monica's in Evatt, Holy Spirit in Nicholls, Holy Trinity in Curtin, St Matthew's in Page and, for the first time, St Mary's in Young and Year 5 students from St Edmund's College in Griffith.

"Students arrived and rehearsed those songs they had learnt as well as learning some

new repertoire for the concert held in the afternoon," Mrs Curbishley said.

"On the way home the St Mary's students sang for their supper at McDonald's before getting their dinner and returning to Young!"

Mrs Curbishley said the Big Sing had many benefits for those involved.

"It is true that music is a language that the whole world speaks," she said.

"Gathering together in music as a collective group increases students' confidence and builds relationships."

Mrs Curbishley said the Big Sing allows students to see and hear that music has the power to bring happiness.

"It is ultimately about joy in singing for performers and audience alike," she said.

What's going well and what needs improving?

YOUTH and young adult leaders from parishes, movements, universities and ecumenical groups participated this week in a consolation session led by Archdiocesan Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

With several young Archdiocesan priests in attendance, a broad cross-section of young adults came to listen and discuss their insights and hopes and to determine what was being done well and what could be improved.

Archbishop Prowse led the consultation offering a 'master-class' on evangelisation which was based on a Statement from the Bishops Commission for Evangelisation, laity and Ministry, called *Evangelisation: Encounter, Discipleship, Mission*.

A strong advocate of ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, Archbishop Prowse strongly encouraged participants to discern the Holy Spirit's work and put aside proselytism.

"The Catholic church now recognises the sacramental validity of Baptism from so many Christian denominations...so we work together because we have common baptismal promises and responsi-



bilities. That's why I'm delighted to see the outreach to the universities. It must be ecumenical; it won't work if it's just Catholic," he said.

Archdiocesan Mission and Culture Coordinator, Christian Nobleza said many participants appreciated the opportunity to gather.

"Participants highlighted the large variety of ministries and different initiatives being offered across the Archdiocese and expressed a desire for the coordination of information.

"We want to foster a congeniality among the represented ministries leaders", Mr Nobleza said.

"At the heart of the gathering was a genuine desire for fellowship", he said, which was apparent with most participants staying behind to socialise well after the formalities of the evening had finished.