



ACCC Constitution

Statutes of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy
as revised at the Annual General Meeting of 22 August 2024,
Adelaide

PREAMBLE

1. These Statutes are inspired by the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Sacred Scriptures, and Tradition of the Church, and are largely drawn from the Code of Canon Law, January 25, 1983.
2. In the original Statutes the organisation was named the Australian Association of Catholic Clergy. These Interim Statutes were approved by the Inaugural Meeting of October 9, 1985, at Riverwood, Sydney, and became the Statutes after the first Annual General Meeting on January 28, 1987, at Wahroonga, Broken Bay. The texts of Statute IX §5 & §6 were added at the Annual General Meeting of April 5, 1988, Monash University, Melbourne, to meet the requirements of the taxation laws. This final version of the Statutes and the renaming from an association to a confraternity were passed by the Annual General Meeting on July 13, 1989, at Brisbane.
3. Abbreviations used in this document are: Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy – ACCC; Annual General Meeting – AGM.

STATUTE I – STATUS

1. The ACCC is a private, voluntary, and fraternal association of Catholic clerics of the Dioceses of Australia.
2. This confraternity of clerics gives expression to Canon 275 §1:

“Since all clerics are working for the same purpose, namely the building up of the body of Christ, they are to be united with one another in the bond of brotherhood and prayer. They are to seek to cooperate with one another, in accordance with the provisions of particular law.”
3. The right of association is granted by Canon 278 §1:

“The secular clergy have the right of association with others for the achievement of purposes befitting the clerical state.”
4. The ACCC is also mindful of Canon 298 §1:

“In the Church there are associations which are distinct from institutes of consecrated life and

societies of apostolic life. In this association, Christ's faithful, whether clerics or laity, or clerics and laity together, strive with a common effort to foster a more perfect life or to promote public worship or Christian teaching. They may also devote themselves to other works of the apostolate, such as initiatives for evangelization, works of piety or charity, and those which animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit."

5. The ACCC acknowledges that its autonomy is subject to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and the Holy See, as laid down in Canon 305 §1:

"All associations of Christ's faithful are subject to the supervision of the competent ecclesiastical authority. This authority is to ensure that integrity of faith and morals is maintained in them and that abuses in ecclesiastical discipline do not creep in. The competent authority has therefore the duty and the right to visit these associations, in accordance with the law and the statutes. Associations are also subject to the governance of the same authority in accordance with the provisions of the canons which follow."

And §2:

"Associations of every kind are subject to the supervision of the Holy See. Diocesan associations are subject to the supervision of the local Ordinary, as are other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese."

STATUTE II — NAME AND ADDRESS

1. The name of the association is the: AUSTRALIAN CONFRATERNITY OF CATHOLIC CLERGY.
2. The canonical address of the ACCC, its headquarters or "centre" as required by Canon 304 §1, shall be that address of its National Chairman.

STATUTE III — PATRONS

The Patroness of the ACCC is Our Lady Help of Christians. The other heavenly patrons are:

- Sts Peter and Paul;
- St Pius X;
- St John Fisher;

- St Thomas More;
- St John Baptist Mary Vianney; and
- St Charles Borromeo.

STATUTE IV — AIMS

The aims of the ACCC are:

1. To give glory and honour to the Most Blessed Trinity.
2. To assist the eternal salvation and holiness of the members of the ACCC.
3. To foster unity among Catholic Priests and Deacons, with the Bishops, in loyalty to the Pope and his Supreme Magisterium, particularly in heeding Canon 273:

“Clerics have a special obligation to show reverence and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff and to their own Ordinary.”

and Canon 333 §1:

“By virtue of this office, the Roman Pontiff not only has power over the universal Church but also has pre-eminent ordinary power over all particular Churches and their groupings. This reinforces and defends the proper, ordinary, and immediate power which the Bishops have in the particular Churches entrusted to their care.”

4. To encourage all members of the clergy to be faithful to the priestly life and ministry, in accord with Canon 276§1:

“Clerics have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives, because they are consecrated to God by a new title through the reception of orders and are stewards of the mysteries of God in the service of His people.”

5. To provide assistance to Bishops, Priests and Deacons in the fulfillment of their ministry of teaching, sanctifying and ruling. The following canons are especially relevant:

- a. Canon 375 re Bishops:

§1 “By divine institution, Bishops succeed the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who is given to them. They are constituted Pastors in the Church, to be the teachers of doctrine, the priests of sacred worship and the ministers of governance.”

§2 “By their Episcopal consecration, Bishops receive, together with the office of sanctifying, the offices also of teaching and of ruling, which however by their

nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head of the College and its members.”

b. Canon 519 re Priests:

“The parish priest is the proper pastor of the parish entrusted to him. He exercises the pastoral care of the community entrusted to him under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, whose ministry of Christ he is called to share, so that for this community he may carry out the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling with the cooperation of other priests or deacons and with the assistance of lay members of Christ’s faithful, in accordance with the law.”

c. Canon 204 §1 re the divine institution of sacred ministers:

“By divine institution, among Christ’s faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are also called clerics; the others are called lay people.”

STATUTE V — OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the ACCC to be pursued in the fulfillment of its aims (see Statute IV), include:

1. The active promotion of the Magisterium through study groups, sermons, talks, written works, conventions, distribution of printed matter, etc.
2. Upholding and practising the Church's way of life for clerics, particularly noting the following canons:
 - a. Canon 276:

§1: "Clerics have a special obligation to seek holiness in their lives because they are consecrated to God by a new title through the reception of orders, and are stewards of the mysteries of God in the service of His people.

§2: "In order that they can pursue this perfection:

1. "They are in the first place faithfully and untiringly to fulfill the obligations of their pastoral ministry.
2. "They are to nourish the spiritual life at the twofold table of the Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist; priests are therefore earnestly invited to offer the Eucharistic Sacrifice daily, and deacons to participate daily in the offering.
3. "Priests and deacons aspiring to the priesthood are obliged to carry out the Liturgy of the Hours daily, in accordance with their own approved liturgical books; permanent deacons are to recite that part of it determined by the Episcopal Conference.
4. "They are obliged to make spiritual retreats, in accordance with the provisions of particular law.
5. "They are exhorted to engage regularly in mental prayer, to approach the Sacrament of Penance frequently, to honour the Virgin Mother of God with particular veneration [eg. The daily recitation of Her Rosary, as indicated for seminarians in Canon 246 §3], and to use other general and special means to holiness."

- b. Canon 277:

§1: "Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, and are therefore bound to celibacy. Celibacy is a special gift of God by which sacred

ministers can more easily remain close to Christ with an undivided heart, and dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and of their neighbour.”

c. Canon 909:

“A priest is not to omit dutifully to prepare himself by prayer before the celebration of the Eucharist, nor afterwards to omit to make thanksgiving to God.”

d. Canon 284:

“Clerics are to wear suitable ecclesiastical dress, in accordance with the norms established by the Episcopal Conference and legitimate custom.”

(See the statement of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, October, 1985.)

e. And also by spending some time each day before the Blessed Sacrament.

3. Providing a structured framework at three levels, namely:

- a. National Executive for Australia;
- b. Councilor for each ecclesiastical province; and
- c. Branches for local groups of the clergy, so that members of the ACCC may meet for consultation, prayer, study, retreats, and fraternal support at regular and publicised intervals.

4. Publishing a Newsletter and supplying, promoting and publishing other materials that accord with the aims and objectives of the ACCC to help the clergy in their life and ministry.

5. Fostering priestly vocations by advice based on discernment and by support for clerical students throughout their seminary years.

6. Bringing to the attention of the Episcopal Conference and the Congregations of the Holy See suitable proposals from the members of the ACCC.

7. Encouraging Religious in fidelity to their life and apostolate, noting especially Canons 573, 576 and 801.

8. Encouraging the laity to take their place in Church, civic and public life to spread the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, as stated in Canon 275 §2:

“Clerics are to acknowledge and promote the mission which the laity, each for his or her own part, exercises in the Church and in the world.”

9. Entering into fraternal relations with other Confraternities of Catholic Clergy in other countries, especially in any English-speaking country, as long as they have similar aims and statutes.

STATUTE VI — DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

1. Each and every motion presented at the Annual General Meeting, National Executive or Local Branch shall in all respects be in total accord with the Code of Canon Law, with the Magisterium and the faith and morals of the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church. Such motions shall be in utter obedience to, and reflect respect for and reverence towards the authority, position, and person of the Supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ and Bishop of Rome, and the Bishops teaching in union with him.
2. Any motion which is contrary to, opposed to, or seeks to modify, mollify or nullify in any way whatever Statute VI §1 shall be null and void.
3. In case of dispute about motions mentioned in Statute VI §1 and §2 which occur at the Branch level, the matter shall be referred to the National Executive. An appeal may be made to the AGM after a six (6) months or more cooling off period, calculated from the date on which the National Executive hands down its decision. All appeals to the AGM must be circulated to every financial member within three (3) months of the AGM.

STATUTE VII — MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the ACCC shall consist of ordinary and associate membership according to the following:

1. Ordinary members are from the Clergy mentioned in Canon 266 §1:

“By the reception of the diaconate a person becomes a cleric, and is incardinated in the particular Church or personal Prelature for whose service he is ordained.”

From these alone the National Executive and other Officers are drawn.

2. Associated membership is for priests and deacons who are members of religious institutes or secular institutes. Associate members are to heed Canon 307 §3:

“In accordance with their own law, members of religious institutes may, with the consent of their Superior, join associations.”

3. Ordinary membership and associate membership in the ACCC shall require:
 - a. A signed application accepting these Statutes;
 - b. The acceptance of this application by the National Executive; and
 - c. The payment of the annual membership fee.
4. The annual fees, for both ordinary and associate membership, shall be as determined from time to time by the Executive, and published in *The Priest*.

5. The laity may enjoy a lesser sort of associated membership as subscribers to the Newsletter for an amount to be set by the National Executive sufficient to cover costs. They shall be called Lay Associates of the ACCC.

STATUTE VIII — THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE,
COUNCILORS, AND BRANCHES

1. The governing body of the ACCC shall be its National Executive, consisting of its Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Editor of the Journal, plus no more than seven Councilors representing the ecclesiastical Provinces.
2. The only authorised spokesman for the ACCC shall be its National Chairman or any of its other five chief National Executive Officers in matters pertaining to their office and in consultation with the National Chairman.
3. The election of the National Executive shall be at the AGM in odd years and is for a period of two years. Nominations must be made in writing, either in advance by post to the secretariat or in person to the secretary no less than two hours before commencement of the AGM. Nominations must be seconded. Those nominated and those nominating and seconding them must be financial members. The election shall be at the AGM by a secret ballot of those financial members present. Postal votes for candidates received in advance are also acceptable.
4. The AGM shall normally be arranged to coincide with a major convention of the ACCC at which the principal speaker shall be a cleric or lay person of acknowledged eminence and loyalty to the Magisterium.
5. A Councillor shall act only in the name of members of his own Province. A Councillor shall be elected for a period of two years at a meeting of the financial members of the Province normally to take place during the AGM in odd years (the same as for members of the Executive). Nominations must be made in writing, either in advance by post to the secretariat or in person to the secretary no less than two hours before commencement of the AGM. Nominations must be seconded. Those nominated and those nominating and seconding them must be financial members belonging to that province. Postal votes for candidates known in advance are also acceptable.
6. The ACCC, besides the National Executive, shall have a Councilor in each ecclesiastical Province where there are enough members to form at least one Branch. A Councilor shall act only in the name of members of his own Province. A Councilor shall be elected at a meeting of the financial members of the Province or, if such a meeting is considered inconvenient for those entitled to attend, by a postal vote organised by the National Executive, with new elections held by the end of each AGM.
7. The ACCC shall have Branches in each Province, usually several in each Diocese consisting of no less than three (3) members each, from whom a Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer shall be elected. The Officers of a Branch shall act only in the name of the Branch members. A Branch must meet at least annually.
8. Any group of three (3) clerics, whether Bishops, Priests or Deacons may set up a Branch of the ACCC provided that:
 - a. There are at least three (3) clerics ready and willing to fulfill the membership requirements set out in Statute VII; and

- b. The National Executive gives its consent.
9. Both office and membership in the ACCC can be terminated by the next higher body of its structure, in accord with Canon 308:
- “No one who was lawfully admitted is to be dismissed from an association except for a just reason, in accordance with the law and the statutes.”
10. If a Branch lapses its goods are to be transferred to the National Executive.

STATUTE IX — FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION

1. The funds of the ACCC shall be administered by the Treasurer as administrator according to Canon Law, particularly:
- a. Canon 1280:

“Every juridical person is to have its own finance committee, or at least two counselors, who are to assist in the performance of the administrator’s duties, in accordance with the Statutes.”
 - b. Canon 1286:

“Administrators of temporal goods:

 - 1. In making contracts of employment, are accurately to observe also, according to the principles taught by the Church, the civil laws relating to labour and social life;
 - 2. Are to pay to those who work for them under contract a just and honest wage which will be sufficient to provide for their needs and those of their dependents.”
2. The National Executive of the ACCC exercises oversight and stewardship of national confraternity funds and their uses.
- a. For the ordinary operations of the ACCC, a schedule of financial delegations is presented to the AGM annually to be approved by a simple majority.
 - b. Two members of the national executive and/or the secretariat are required to authorise all payments.
3. At least three-quarters of the requisite membership fee shall go to the National Executive and the other quarter shall, on request, be returned to the Branch.
4. The National Executive may levy the Branches where there are extraordinary circumstances.

5. The income and property of the ACCC whencesoever derived shall be applied solely towards the promotion of the objectives of the ACCC, and no portion thereof shall be paid or transferred directly or indirectly by way of a dividend bonus or otherwise howsoever by way of profit to the members of the ACCC, provided that nothing herein shall prevent the payment in good faith of remuneration to any officer or servant of the ACCC or to any member of the ACCC in return for any services actually rendered to the ACCC or reasonable and proper rent for the premises let by any member to the ACCC.
6. The ACCC shall not be dissolved except by a General Meeting of the ACCC specially convened for the purpose and by a Resolution carried by a majority of four-fifths of the votes recorded in respect of the same. If upon the winding up or dissolution of the ACCC there remains after the satisfaction of its debts and liabilities any property whatsoever the same shall not be paid to or distributed among the members of the ACCC but shall be given or transferred to some other institution or institutions having objects similar or in part similar to the objects of the ACCC and which also shall prohibit the distribution of its or their property among its or their members, such institution or institutions to be determined by the members of the ACCC at or before the time of dissolution or in default thereof by the Chief Judge of such Court as may have or acquire jurisdiction in the matter.
7. Financial Statements are required from:
 - a. All Branches, to be presented to the National Executive at least one (1) month prior to the AGM; and
 - b. The National Executive to be presented at the AGM.
 - c. Financial statements include balance sheets, annual statements of income and expenditure, and a schedule of discretionary expenditure outside the ordinary operations of the ACCC.

STATUTE X — DISSOLVING THE ACCC

1. The ACCC lapses if it lacks enough members to continue in operation according to these Statutes, or by provision of Canon 326 §1:

“A private association of Christ’s faithful is extinguished in accordance with the norms of the Statutes. It can also be suppressed by the competent authority if its activity gives rise to grave harm to ecclesiastical teaching or discipline, or is a scandal to the faithful.”
2. If the ACCC disbands its goods are to be disbursed to the Society of St Peter the Apostle, of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies according to the prescriptions of Church Law and Civil Law.
 - a. Canon 326 §2 states that:

“The fate the goods of a private association which ceases to exist is to be determined in accordance with the statutes, without prejudice to acquired rights and to the wishes of the donors.”

- b. Statute IX §6 states the prescriptions of Civil Law.

STATUTE XI — CHANGES TO THE STATUTES

These Statutes can be amended only at an AGM by a two-thirds majority vote of the financial members, provided that notice of motion has been given in an issue of the Newsletter at least thirty (30) days before the AGM, and due regard has been taken for Statute VI.

LAUDETUR IESUS CHRISTUS IN AETERNUM.

AMEN.