



STATEMENT OF CONCERN

REGARDING MUSIC PROGRAM REVIEW

- FOR PUBLIC RELEASE -

Complainants:

JARVIS, Xavier; DE FONSEKA, Nathan; RICAFRANCA, Ethan; FOSS, Sholto; FONSEKA, Riyon; SMITH, Ian; MUTOYA, Kizito; FONSEKA, Deon; PEREZ, Matthew; LOOLA, Jennifer; ALTHEIMER, Carlos; PINTO, Martin; MENENZES, Melissa; MASBATE, Benna; MASBATE, Jorge; CLOUD, Natalie; CLOUD, Andrew; VERNIE, Andy; CHAN, Dr. Melanie; JOSEPH, Blossom; OUSEPH, Joseph; NATONTON, Sophia; NATONTON, Jason; NGO, Anna; HOWARD, Lisa; HOW, Eric; FRANSISCA, Filling; FONSEKA, Roger; HO, Melanie.

Respondent:

FERNANDEZ, Sean.

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1. Introduction¹

1.1. The decision to restructure the Cathedral Music Program (the ‘Program’) recommended by the recent Music Program Review (the ‘Review’) has not been received favourably by the Cathedral community. It has caused genuine grievance and concern for all members of the Program, who are directly affected by the Review and its consequences. To avoid any ambiguity, our fundamental complaint is that the Review was conducted in a manner which violated Archdiocesan policy and flagrantly ignored key Church values. Given that the Review entails that Ms. Jacinta Jakovcevic will not remain in effective control of the Program (and even for the possibility that she will be removed entirely), we find it pertinent to question the processes by which it was produced. Ultimately, we respectfully request the revocation of the Review and all its recommendations.

1.2. We will work to justify this request over the following pages. In short, our position is anchored in an objective concern for the ideals of transparency, accountability, and community consultation. We feel there are elements of the Review process which are in contravention of Archdiocesan policy, as well as several stated Archdiocesan and Church values. Moreover, we believe that these procedural concerns impact not only the Program and its stakeholders, but are of material import to the wider Catholic community and to the reputation of the Archdiocese of Perth.

2. Procedural Concerns

2.1. We believe that the Review lacked transparency, accountability, and an appropriate level of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

2.2. Before addressing the particulars of these shortcomings, it is important to acknowledge that the ideals of transparency, accountability, and community consultation have been at the

¹ N.B. The Director of Music, Ms. Jacinta Jakovcevic, had no hand in the authorship of this document.

forefront of the Church’s mind ever since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Final Report stated that:

In accordance with contemporary standards of good governance, we encourage the Catholic Church in Australia to explore and develop ways in which its structures and practices of governance may be made more **accountable**, more **transparent**, [and] more **meaningfully consultative and participatory** ... We recommend that the ACBC conduct a national review of the governance and management structures of dioceses and parishes, including in relation to issues of transparency, accountability, **consultation and participation of lay men and women**.²

2.3. To her credit, the Church in Australia has made a concerted effort to respond to these recommendations. Indeed, His Grace the Archbishop has been a central figure in implementing reforms to enshrine these ideals in policy. Therefore, the Archdiocese should be particularly concerned with the question of whether the conduct by which the Review was made aligned with these ideals.

2.4. Furthermore, many Church documents explicitly reference these ideals, and exhort religious ministers to always strive towards them, especially when dealing with matters that directly affect their parish community. *Integrity in Ministry*, a document of principles and standards for Catholic clergy in Australia published by the ACBC’s National Committee for Professional Standards, explicitly states that clergy can live up to these ideals by “consulting widely, seeking consensus and providing feedback where possible, before making important decisions”. It also instructs clergy to seek out “opportunities to share decision-making responsibilities”.³ These standards are reflected in *Integrity in our Common Mission*, a national code of conduct published by the ACBC, of which His Grace the Archbishop was President at the time its publication.⁴

2.5. At a local level, the Archdiocese *Code of Conduct* instructs Church workers to “engage in genuine dialogue with other stakeholders through transparent, open, and honest

² Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Final Report: Volume 16, Book 1*, (2017), 44. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/unredacted-volume-16-religious-institutions-book-1.pdf>. The emphasis is our own.

³ National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry*, 5.

⁴ Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, *Integrity in our Common Mission: National Code of Conduct for Those Exercising Pastoral Ministry in the Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia* (2024), 13-4.

communication”.⁵ It also requires Church workers to “uphold the mission, ethos, values and traditions of the Catholic Church”.⁶ Finally, the Dean himself has exhorted the Cathedral community to embody the ideals of transparency and consultation by “loosening our tongues to speak” and “opening our ears to hear”.⁷

2.6. Let us now address the particulars of the Review’s non-compliance with these policies and Church values. There was no sharing of decision-making responsibility with Ms. Jakovcevic, no consultation with any of the musicians working for the Program, no request for feedback, commentary or other input from participants in the Program, nor was there any substantial feedback given to the Department about how it could improve. Indeed, prior to the findings of the Review being made public, no indication was given that the Program was underperforming in any way. These shortcomings are in clear contravention of the Church values and national/Archdiocesan policies outlined above in sections 2.2-2.5.

2.7. Finally, if the Review was truly only concerned with the efficacy of the “current organisation design and structure” of the Program (and not with Ms. Jakovcevic’s performance in particular), then why would it feel the need to recommend that Ms. Jakovcevic reapply for one of the new positions? Restructuring the Program’s “organisation design” and keeping Ms. Jakovcevic in a leadership position are not mutually exclusive options. Therefore, given its failure to support Jacinta in her role as Director, the Review is also in clear contravention of *Integrity in Ministry*’s instruction that priests should nurture and support the vocations of the lay faithful,⁸ and of Canon 275 §2, which states: “Clerics are to acknowledge and promote the mission which the laity, each for his or her part, exercise in the Church and in the world”.⁹

⁵ Archdiocese of Perth, *Code of Conduct*, 6 [4.6(j)].

⁶ Archdiocese of Perth, *Code of Conduct* (2024), 5 [4.1(a)].

⁷ Fr. Sean Fernandez’s homily at the 2024 Safeguarding Mass (11am, 8 September 2024).

⁸ National Committee for Professional Standards, *Integrity in Ministry*, 2.

⁹ *The Code of Canon Law: in English Translation* (London: Collins, 1983), 47 [275.2].

3. Conclusion

3.1. For these reasons, we are of the opinion that the administrative decisions arising from this Review and the conduct of the Review itself have failed to align with the ideals of transparency, accountability, and community consultation. Given that the Church has committed itself to these ideals in the form of general guidelines, codes of conduct, and specific Archdiocesan policies, we find it appropriate to demand that the Review and its recommendations be revoked on the basis of concerns for its procedural validity.

References

Archdiocese of Perth. *Code of Conduct*. 2024.

Archdiocese of Perth. *Constitution for Parish Pastoral Councils*. 2018.

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. *Integrity in our Common Mission: National Code of Conduct for Those Exercising Pastoral Ministry in the Dioceses of the Catholic Church in Australia*. Canberra, 2023.

National Committee for Professional Standards. *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy & Religious in Australia*. Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, 2004.

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Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. *Final Report: Volume 16, Book 1*. 2017. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/unredacted-volume-16-religious-institutions-book-1.pdf>.

Appendix A: Fr. Sean's Email

Dear Cathedral Music family,

Over the past 90 days, St Mary's Cathedral completed a review of the Music Program.

The objective of the review was to refresh the Music Program's Vision to future proof the program and meet the aspirations of the Cathedral, and its affiliates. This included a review of the required organisation structure, resources and budget to deliver the vision and aspirations of the Cathedral.

The review process included engaging various key stakeholders including the current Director of Music, Trinity College and other experts in liturgical and choral music.

The St Mary's Music Program Vision includes:

- A Music Program that is considered a centre of excellence built on a best-in-class education program.
- A Music Program that is connected, supported, sponsored, and recognised by the music community as the best liturgical choir programs [*sic*] in Western Australia and in the Top Quartile of Australia.
- A Music Program that works closely and collaboratively with local schools to compliment [*sic*] and support their programs.
- A Music Program that is frequently invited, performing and collaborating with other best-in-class music programs and institutions nationally and internationally.
- A music venue that is frequently sought out and booked by touring and local liturgical musicians to perform.
- A Music Program that is inclusive, nurtures and retains male and female choristers with a broad repertoire befitting their abilities.

To achieve its vision, the Music Program has identified seven (7) Pillars. Each of the seven (7) Pillars have Focus Areas and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) to measure success. The seven (7) Pillars are:

1. Education.

2. Community Engagement & Reputation.
3. Liturgical Experience.
4. Collaborations.
5. Venue of Choice.
6. National Benchmark.
7. Proudly Sponsored & Supported by the community.

To achieve St Mary's Music Program's Vision the current organisation design and structure was reviewed. The review determined that the current organisation design and structure wasn't adequate to achieve the Music Program's Vision.

Key Organisation changes include:

- It has been determined that a new position of Master of Music (Master of Liturgical Music) is required to achieve the vision of the Music Program in a full-time capacity.
- To support this position, a new position of Principal Organist will be established and act as Deputy Master of Music in a part-time capacity.
- Vocal Coaches will be engaged to support student choristers.
- Administration Officer hours and responsibilities will increase.
- As a result, and after careful consideration, the position of Director of Music will be made redundant, effective 2 December 2024.

What does this mean for you?

For student choristers, organ scholars, organists, lay clerks, musicians, singers and staff, we anticipate minimal disruption to the Music Program. I kindly ask for your support during this period and your assistance in welcoming the Master of Music, Principal Organist, and Vocal Coaches upon their appointments.

Next Steps:

- An international recruitment campaign will commence for the new position of Master of Music.
- Additionally, we will be advertising for a Principal Organist in a part time capacity.
- Once advertised, all qualified applicants are encouraged to apply and will be considered.

To everyone involved in our Music Program, I would like to thank you and look forward to your ongoing contributions in 2025.

I am available to meet with you to discuss any questions or concerns you may have. You can email me directly at dean.cathedral@perthcatholic.org.au.

Regards

Fr Sean Fernandez

Dean