

CRAGC INFORMATION FOR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE MEMBERS

APRIL 30, 2020

CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCE AND NEEDS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE IN AUSTRALIA IN 2020

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA), a public juridic person, has resolved to accept responsibility to put in place appropriate governance and management initiatives for religious institutes moving towards completion.

The proposal for CRA Council to be appointed to the role of *Commissary* is a response to current circumstances and trends within Religious life in Australia which need to be acknowledged, addressed and planned for.

A *Commissary* is a Canonical Congregational Administrator, who performs the leadership functions for a Religious Institute that no longer has the members available or competent, to exercise leadership roles. The Commissary is appointed by an Ecclesial Authority, the Holy See in the case of a pontifical institute or the diocesan bishop in the case of a diocesan institute.

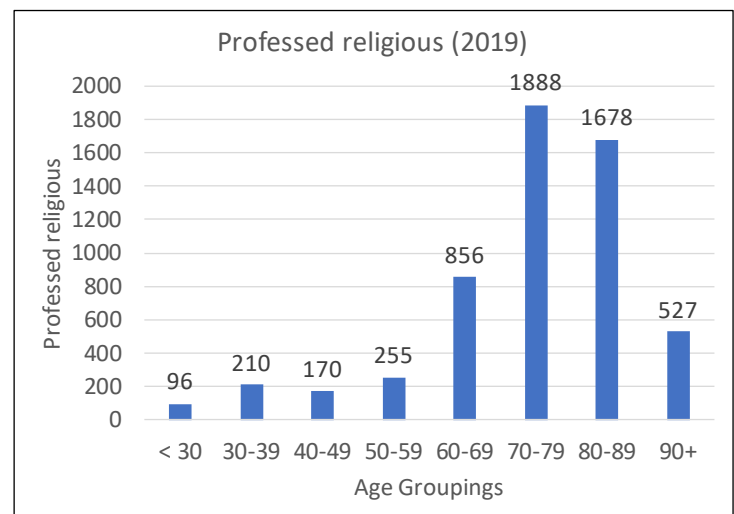
In the recent past in Australia and overseas the role of commissary for religious institutes not able to provide their own leadership has been accepted by the leader of another institute.

But the numbers of suitable religious to take the responsibility of Commissary are diminishing whilst the projected need will grow rapidly over the next 3 – 10 years.

In 2019, almost three quarters of professed religious (72%) were 70 years or older, whilst only 8% were under 50 years of age.

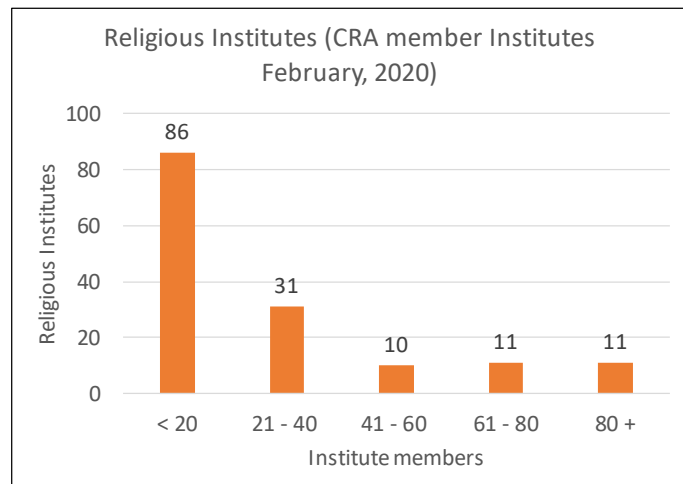
In the 12 months from February 2019 to February 2020 the total professed religious have reduced in number from 5,680 to 5,409.

Some Religious Institutes no longer have members who are suitable to constitute Canonical leadership and many more expect to be in this position within the next 3 to 10 years.



Larger Religious Institutes will be unable to take on the responsibility of Commissary for other groups as the need grows and they themselves diminish.

Larger Religious Institutes have already taken additional canonical responsibility for those Institutes currently in need of an appointed Commissary, but this is not sustainable as they themselves are diminishing at the same pace as the smaller RIs and the need for suitable religious to undertake the role of Commissary will grow rapidly over the next decade. At present there are 86 CRA member Religious Institutes with 20 or fewer members.



In response to this developing situation, since late 2017 a CRA Emerging Futures Committee has been exploring possibilities and in early 2020, the CRA Council established the CRA Governance Collaborative (CRAGC) to carry on the work of ensuring the future for religious institutes progressing towards completion.

What is the vision of CRAGC?

In his apostolic letter to all consecrated people (2014) Pope Francis expressed his hope “for a growth in communion between the members of different Institutes,” calling on Religious Institute members “to step out more courageously from the confines of our respective Institutes and to work together, at the local and global levels”. This he says, “would make for a more effective prophetic witness”.

Pope Francis goes on to invite Religious Institute members to be “part of a true communion which is constantly open to encounter, dialogue, attentive listening and mutual assistance”.

Our emerging vision is unfolding as:

- being in communion with each other for mission
- choosing to work together to create our future
- coming together to liberate and generate a freedom for energy and transformation.
- creating a new picture of and for religious life
- a platform from which new possibilities might emerge
- governance and support for groups in need of assistance is a part of our emerging future
- acknowledging the sense of urgency and acting now.

Since it began on March 2, 2020 CRAGC has

- staff in place: Sharon Price rsm Transition Manager and Judith Lawson op Charism Animator;
- a consultant in place, Peter Cranko;
- an Executive team in place: Anne Lane pbvm, Monica Cavanagh rsj, Sharon Price rsm, Judith Lawson op, Peter Cranko;
- been working with five religious institutes in four states who are working towards completion.

We look forward to sharing more about our work next month.