

Catholic Religious Australia Governance Collaborative

Briefing Paper, March 2020

Version: 18 March 2020
Long version (to be adapted as needed)

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Glossary of key concepts

Concept	Description
Commissary	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.
Ecclesial Authority	A Commissary is appointed by a competent Ecclesial Authority, i.e. either the Holy See (for Pontifical Institutes) or the Diocesan Bishop (for Diocesan Institutes). The Ecclesial Authority therefore has the canonical authority to act as an Institute Superior General / President.
Petitioning the Ecclesial Authority	This is a request made by the RI to the Ecclesial Authority when it no longer has the members available or competent to exercise leadership roles. The 'petition' would ask the Ecclesial Authority to appoint a Commissary. This request would include a recommendation of who the Commissary should be.
Congregation Will and Distribution Plan	<p>A Congregational Will and Distribution Plan is prepared when a congregation foresees that, before too long, it will complete. It sets out in writing the living, completion and legacy of the RI concerned.</p> <p>The Congregation Will and Distribution Plan is used to direct the Commissary to act in accordance with the RIs wishes and the expectation is that it would be incorporated into the Ecclesial Authority's decree to appoint a Commissary.</p> <p>Generally, this document includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The congregation's intention to perpetuate elements of its charism and mission. • The ministry and works the RI would like to support. • Designated percentages rather than leaving actual sums, so that X% will go to this activity, and Y% to another, and so forth. • The RIs spiritual and temporal inventory.

Chronology

Date	Overview
Late 2017	<p>Emerging Futures Committee established</p> <p>The Emerging Futures Committee was established as a CRA Committee to contribute to re-imagining the expression of the universal charism of religious life, focusing on the emerging issues for the living and governance of religious life as it is evolving in Australia.</p>
June 2018	<p>CRA Assembly 2018</p> <p>Emerging Futures Committee informs CRA members of their intent to establish a collaborative structure which offers common governance and a sense of communion to Religious Institutes as they move towards completion.</p>
October 2018	<p>Emerging Futures Committee restructures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiative ONE to establish a shared opt-in leadership structure • Initiative TWO to explore leadership and interculturality
Mid 2018 – mid 2019	<p>Concept design phase – Initiative ONE Co-design process</p> <p>Concept design Phase commenced with an open co-design workshop in September and concluded with a start-up proposal presented to the National Assembly in 2019.</p>
July 2019	<p>CRA Assembly 2019</p> <p>Start-up proposal presented: To establish a Collaborative Canonical Leadership Structure</p>
Mid – late 2019	<p>Start-up strategy</p> <p>Two pronged start-up strategy adopted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canonical Leadership: CRA create a submission to the Holy See (CICLSAL) to request approval for CRA Council to be appointed as Commissary • Establish CRA Governance Collaborative as a new entity to replace the Initiative ONE Work Party.
February 2020	<p>Establishment of CRA Governance Collaborative</p> <p>CRA Governance Collaborative (Transition Committee and Transition Management team) appointed. The transition structure’s work priorities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set-up planning and implementation • Service provision to initial RIs in need of support

1 Introduction

The CRA Council has resolved to accept responsibility to undertake the role of Commissary for Religious Institutes moving towards completion. This is with the proviso that the Council would be appointed to this role by the relevant Ecclesial Authority on the request of the Religious Institute concerned.

In this regard, the CRA Council has established the CRA Governance Collaborative (CRAGC) with the purpose of acting on behalf of the CRA Council in undertaking its responsibilities as a Religious Institute Commissary, and to provide ‘shared services’, to support and serve Religious Institutes in transition.

This briefing report describes the background, purpose, rationale and current status of the newly established CRA Governance Collaborative.

2 Rationale

Evolving story

The establishment of CRAGC is in the context of evolving consciousness and change in the landscape of our Religious Life in Australia.

Our narrative is underpinned by deepening awareness, of coming together in relationship, of collaboration, of transformation and of expanded thinking. We are profoundly aware of the cosmological and ecological interconnectedness and of humanity’s small place within the 14 billion year old universe story.

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*”.

Emerging vision

Our emerging vision is unfolding in the context of our evolving story and we embrace God’s transformative dream of kin-dom and the interrelationship of the whole Earth community as a call to communion.

- *Being in communion with each other for mission*

We seek to live into our evolving awareness of God’s communion which emerges from our common charism of apostolic Religious Life and drives what we create for the future. We are called to be courageous people of heart on mission in our world and to act together with common purpose and for common good.

- *Choosing to work together to create our future*

We come together to create a shared vision and approach. We embrace the shared spirit that nurtures the sharing of life and mission and that gives expression to the different charisms, and we actively choose to work together to create our future.

- *Coming together to liberate and generate a freedom for energy and transformation.*

We come together because that's who we are, and in so doing we generate a freedom for energy and transformation. We let go of ways that hold us back and use this freedom to walk forward with a common purpose, respectful of each unique context. Through deep listening to one another and to society, we discover new areas, and respond through our shared charism, anticipating a transformative experience which is yet to be revealed.

- *Creating a new picture of and for Religious Life*

We now move forward together to create a new picture of and for Religious Life. This is our participation in a new expression of being church on mission in the world, which is collaborative, energetic, responsive, inclusive and with equal voice for women – especially in governance and decision making.

- *A platform from which new possibilities might emerge*

Our next steps should be creative and new, and shaped to adapt to new, hopeful possibilities in a manner that provides a platform from which new possibilities for mission, apostolic Religious Life and communion emerge.

- *Governance and support for groups in need of assistance is a part of our emerging future*

At this time of change, diminishment and new opportunity, part of our evolving process of reimagining apostolic Religious Life and mission in Australia is to ensure support is in place for Religious Institutes to address pressing vulnerabilities which would otherwise emerge as they move toward their completion.

- *Acknowledging the sense of urgency and acting now*

The time when there are no longer members to take responsibility for governance and leadership has arrived or is not far away for many Institutes and we cannot afford to be unprepared for this reality. We acknowledge the sense of urgency and the need to act now.

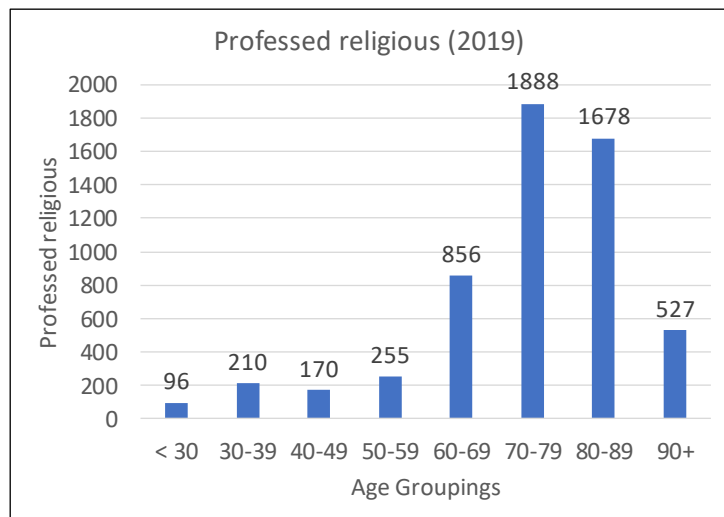
Current circumstance and needs in religious life

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.

- *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.

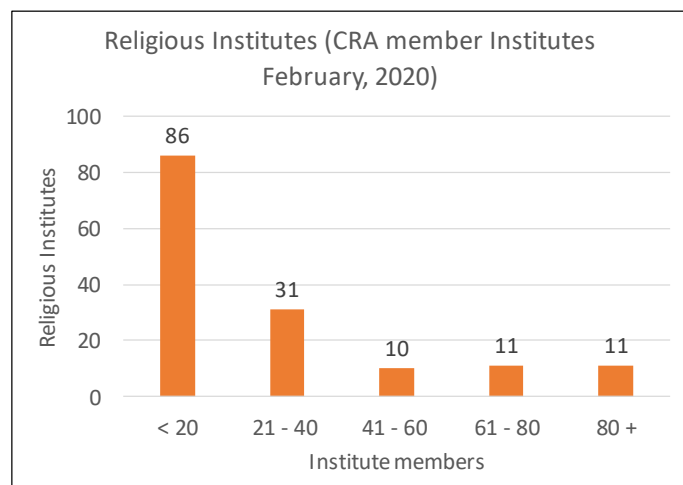
In the 12 months from February 2019 to February 2020 the total professed religious have reduced in number from 5,680 to 5,409.



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 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.



- *The CRAGC is the preferred arrangement for many Religious Institutes – 48 have expressed interest in writing.*

Many Religious Institutes who will require a Commissary within the foreseeable future have indicated that the proposal for CRA to be appointed as Commissary would be their preferred arrangement.

- *The establishment of a centralised Commissary is best suited to the Australian continent due to its relatively thinly spread population over vast geographical areas.*

3 Trends

International trends

The challenging trends related to diminishment are not unique to Australia and various responses are being seen globally.

The initial response in the early 2000's saw larger RIs stepping in to assist smaller ones through amalgamations or covenant agreements. However, the *merger or covenant models* are not sustainable as larger RIs are diminishing at the same rate as smaller ones, and there is a range of unintended complexities associated with mergers.

In the 2010's we have seen a new approach, and various *collaboration models* have emerged. These models seek to hold the charism of each congregation within the charism of religious life. Important examples reflecting this trend include:

- Canadian Religious Stewardship (CRS) was first established in 2009. CRS is now a PJP which provides management, administration and support services to RIs in transition. Furthermore, CRS manages, safeguards and if required, accepts ownership of ecclesiastical temporal goods.
- Wisconsin Religious Collaborative (WRC) comprises nine Religious Institutes which have together, established a company to facilitate provision of (and will probably soon provide) management, administration and support services.
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious in the US have adopted a twin strategy of offering a pool of appropriate religious to be appointed as Commissary (canonical leaders) and to complement this have established a Transition Support Division.
- Other new initiatives i.e. the Institute of Austrian Orders and the Collaborative Governance Project (Missouri).

Trends in Australia

Australia has mirrored global trends. We have been through a phase of amalgamations and at present leadership teams of three of our larger congregations have taken on the office of leadership for small diminishing congregations. However, neither of these two approaches will be sustainable into the future, and the collaborative model is now the preferred approach for the future.

4 CRA Governance Collaborative

4.1 Purpose and aims

CRA Council

The CRA Council has resolved to accept responsibility to undertake the role of Commissary for Religious Institutes moving towards completion, with the proviso that the Council would be appointed to this role by the relevant Ecclesial Authority on the request of the Religious Institute concerned.

The CRA Council has now lodged a submission with the Holy See asking the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) to approve the proposal that CRA Council be eligible for appointment to the role of Commissary.

CRAGC Purpose

The CRA Council has established the CRA Governance Collaborative with the purpose of acting on behalf of the CRA Council in undertaking its responsibilities as a Religious Institute Commissary, and to provide 'shared services', to support and serve Religious Institutes in transition.

CRAGC Aims

The aims of the CRA Governance Collaborative are to:

- a. Be a mission led structure, holding the charism of each congregation within the charism of religious life.
- b. Meet the needs of Religious Institutes in transition.
- c. Meet the needs of Religious Institute members within the transitioning Religious Institutes.
- d. Facilitate Religious Institute ownership of and trust in, their own transition and the new structure.
- e. Be 'Religious Institute focused' providing services and support in keeping with a tailored 'service and support agreement' with each Religious Institute.
- f. Be accountable to the Religious Institutes, to their members, their stated wishes and their asset distribution plans.
- g. Take responsibility for known and unknown obligations that are transferred from the Religious Institutes.
- h. Be financially self-sufficient and to offer financial support to RIs in need of it.

4.2 Outcomes

Generic transition phases with specified outcomes are set out to guide the development of this new collaboration. This is especially important in order to coordinate bottom up (each Religious Institute) and top down (Governance Collaborative) planning and processes.

Transition phase	Transition outcomes	
	Religious Institutes	Governance Collaborative
<p>1. Pre Transition Phase</p> <p>The final leadership team is in sight and traditional governance, care, ministry, or administration models are unsustainable.</p>	<p>Congregation Will and Distribution Plan and future planning are in deep development and owned by RI leaders and members.</p> <p>Commencement of new models, inclusive of others, in governance, care, admin, and/or ministry.</p>	<p>Provide guidance and support to RI transition planning, on request.</p>
<p>2. Transition Phase</p> <p>Leaders work with others in governance, administration and ministry.</p>	<p>Congregation Will and Distribution Plan and future plans are documented.</p> <p>Evolution of new governance, care, admin, and/or ministry models.</p> <p>Petition Ecclesial Authority to request the appointment of a particular Commissary, i.e. Canonical Leader.</p>	<p>Provides a suite of (civil) governance, care, admin, and/or ministry related support.</p> <p>Service mix to each RI is tailored and evolving.</p>
<p>3. Congregational Administration Phase</p> <p>There are no longer RI members to constitute Canonical leadership.</p>	<p>Ecclesial Authority appoints Commissary and decree of appointment details the scope of the appointment.</p> <p>Governance, admin, care and/or ministry models fall under Commissary's authority.</p>	<p>Undertakes the role of appointed Commissary.</p> <p>Provides canonical and civil leadership, governance, care, admin. and/or ministry related support.</p>
<p>4. Completion Phase</p> <p>The RI is being completed.</p>	<p>Congregational Will and Distribution Plan directs Commissary.</p>	<p>Administer completion procedures.</p>
<p>5. Post Completion Phase</p> <p>The RIs stated legacy is taken into the future.</p>	<p>RI completes.</p>	<p>Ensure wishes of the RI as set out in the Congregation Will and Distribution Plan are carried out into the future.</p>

4.3 CRAGC focus areas and services

The work of the CRAGC will focus on the following two priorities:

- Canonical congregational leadership.
- Shared Services.

The CRAGC will offer Religious Institutes in transition the suite of services and supports listed below to address these two priorities.

Each RI will work with the CRAGC to establish its specific requirements and timeframes and will then enter into a tailored service agreement to ensure their requirements are understood and met.

Canonical congregational leadership

Subject to the response of CICLSAL to the CRA's submission, it is expected that the CRAGC will assist the Council to undertake its responsibilities as Religious Institute Commissary. This will involve:

- Undertaking the role of canonical superior of a Religious Institute to assist that institute to continue living according to its own history, identity and legacy when it is no longer able to elect a 'full general government' from its own members.
- Holding the canonical authority of superior general for governance of the institute according to universal law, the constitutions of the institute and the letter of appointment.

In this regard, specific responsibilities of the CRAGC might include, but will not be limited to:

- Ensuring all leadership (canonical and civil) responsibilities are met and addressed
- Ensuring mission is at the heart of all functions and responsibilities
- Ensuring the wellbeing of RI members
- Maintaining links and partnerships including links with:
 - Australian bodies (e.g. ACBC, AMP, Redress)
 - International bodies (e.g. UISG, USG, LCWR, CICLSAL)
 - International leaders where Australian members make use of CRAGC services.

Shared services

Shared services on offer will include, but not be limited to:

Service stream	Including but not limited to the following
Care and support for RI members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Care coordination, pastoral care, accommodation and living arrangements, individual companionship and advocacy• Funeral arrangements
RI admin, finance and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Archives• Compliance• Finance, investments and property• Safeguarding and professional standards• Redress• Upkeep of graves

Ministry support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage resources for mission • Support RI members in individual ministry • Trustee for incorporated works / PJPs
Transition support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisting RI transition planning including: canonical, spiritual, human, operational, administrative and legal dimensions • Assistance with preparation of key transition documents e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distribution Plan – Recommendation to Ecclesial Authority (regarding appointment of Commissary) – MoU with Governance Collaborative – Phased in transition process

4.4 Governance and management

Governance model

The CRA Governance Collaborative will first be established as an unincorporated body. It will take the form of a ‘ringfenced’ structure which falls under the CRA Council. It will therefore hold the same legal identity (canon and civil) as the CRA and will be separate from and sit alongside the CRA Secretariat.

It is expected that at a later stage the Governance Collaborative will transition to become a registered not-for-profit company which is owned and overseen by the CRA Council.

Start-up structure

The CRA Governance Collaborative ‘start-up’ model comprises a Transition Committee and organisational structure of employed staff.

- *Transition Committee*

The Transition Committee is appointed by and accountable to the CRA Council. Its role is to lead and govern the Governance Collaborative on the CRA Council’s behalf and in due course is expected to evolve first into a Committee of Management and later into a Board structure.

During the Transition period it is expected that the Transition Committee will establish Work Parties and be involved in various operational tasks to assist with the CRAGC set-up.

- *Staffing structure*

A transitional staffing structure led by a Transition Manager has been appointed. The Transition Manager and team are responsible for:

- Start-up, planning and budgeting
- Carrying out the purpose, aims and services of the CRA Governance Collaborative during the transition phase
- Succession planning for, and overseeing the smooth transition to, the appointment of a permanent Executive Director within an approximate 2 year timeframe.

- *Service delivery model*

The service delivery model and structure will start small, learn by doing and gradually evolve and in this process will address key design issues such as

- Which functions and services should be centralised and /or decentralised
- Which functions and services should be delivered by in-house staff and which should be brokered or outsourced and delivered by others.

- *People*

The Transition Committee members and Transition Team comprises:

Committee Members	
Anne Lane pbvm	Chair (RI)
Monica Cavanagh rsj	Deputy Chair (RI)
Bobby Court	Ordinary member
Catherine Brabender rndm	Ordinary member (RI)
Clare Nolan rsc	Ordinary member (RI)
Des Powell	Ordinary member
Gabrielle McMullen	Ordinary member
John Spillane	Ordinary member
John Thompson fms	Ordinary member (RI)
Gabrielle Morgan pbvm	Service user rep (RI)
Stancea Vichie mss	Service user rep (RI)
Transition team in attendance	
Sharon Price rsm	Transition Manager
Judith Lawson op	Charism Animator
Peter Cranko	Organisation consultant

4.5 Governance Collaborative finances

The Governance Collaborative will work to a cost recovery model which balances ‘at cost fee-for-service with subsidisation of RIs in need. This will be achieved through various income streams including but not limited to:

- Service charges for services provided.
- Contributions by Governance Collaborative members and supporters.

The cost recovery model is to be complemented by an approx. \$1.2 M start up budget (i.e. \$600,000 per year for the first two years).

5 Set up plans

Indicative set-up milestones

Phase 1 Set up, start small and learn by doing 2020 - 2021	Phase 2 Scale up, cost recovery and succession planning 2022	Phase 3 Not-for-Profit Company with lay team 2023 - onwards
Piloting the model including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition structures (governance and staffing) • Commissary submission • Start-up service users: Provision of shared services and transition support • Financial modelling and setting targets • Development of foundation documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Committee evolves into Committee of Management • Foundation documents in place and adopted • Full suite of services delivered • Cost recovery and scaling up • Identify and train lay team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal NFP Company in place (work of CRA Council) • Sustainable model in place with growing service users (targets set and met)

Set up focus areas

Focus area	Overview and next steps
CRA Council	The CRA Council and CRA Governance Collaborative to convene a joint workshop to clarify and agree their respective roles and responsibilities.
Transition Committee	The Transition Committee will begin its work with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction • Establishing initial Work Parties • Strategic planning.
Commissary	The CICALSAL submission has been lodged in Rome and a date for the presentation in Rome is to be confirmed.
Shared services	An Inception planning workshop has been held with the initial 5 service users to begin discussing service requirements and timeframes. Next steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commence support on a fee for service basis including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Drafting transition roadmaps and service agreements – Providing transition support – Extending services to include both service brokerage and direct CRAGC service provision • Upscaling of users / services.
Staffing structure	The Transition team commenced on 2 March 2020. Next steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental growth to meet RI needs • Commencing succession planning
Finances	Start-up funds of \$864,000 have been raised to date. Next steps include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial model including fees schedule • Set targets: service users, invoicing and fundraising • Budget (12 month and MT projections)
Engagement with RIs	48 RIs have expressed interest (one third of the CRA membership). The next step is to adopt an RI communications plan including a regular newsletter and program of information sessions.
ACBC	To date: Informal meetings have been held with the President; the President has written a letter of support to CICALSAL; and the ACBC Permanent Committee has been formally briefed (18 March 2020). Ongoing engagement with the ACBC will need to be maintained.
International Networking	A series of meetings are arranged including with: UISG/LCWR/CRC/CRAGC; individually with LCWR; UISG; CRC; Amy Hereford; a visit to WRC. International engagement will continue and the CRAGC will seek to meet generalates of relevant Australian Provinces/ communities
Foundation documents	Concept design documents must now be replaced with foundation documents including: Constitution; Strategic plan; and Financial model /budget

6 Benefits

Some of the benefits of the proposal for CRA Council to be appointed as Commissary, are outlined below.

- *The CRA Governance Collaborative has begun to work with diminishing Religious Institutes and has a plan to address the needs of each individual institute*

Through our work on addressing the future requirements of diminishing Religious Institutes the Governance Collaborative has begun to explore needs and to offer support. CRAGC therefore has a practical understanding of the supports and advice required and a plan to ensure these support needs are met.

- *The Governance Collaborative will provide standardised planning and governance guidelines and processes for diminishing Religious Institutes*

Planning and governance guidelines will be adopted to meet the highest standards of governance and stewardship when diminishing Religious Institutes set out their plans and requirements for the future. This includes provisions to ensure the wellbeing and care of every Religious Institute member and to ensure that the Religious Institute receives appropriate advice and professional assistance in the management of their assets in the service of God's mission in accordance with the charism.

- *The establishment of the CRA Governance Collaborative will enable the CRA Council to respond to its canonical obligations*

CRA is established by the authority of the Holy See with the status of a public juridical person.

CRA Statutes establish CRA as the "formal association of Leaders of Religious Institutes in Australia" ... "to promote and support religious life in the Australian Church". CRA "deals with affairs which are common to all and works to establish suitable co-ordination and co-operation with Episcopal conferences and with individual Bishops".

Religious Leaders in Australia take the view that the newly established CRA Governance Collaborative will enable the CRA Council to address to its canonical obligations. Ensuring there are suitable religious in place to be appointed to the role of Commissary is a Leadership Conference issue as it addresses an underlying challenge of common concern that impacts all Religious Institutes.