



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## Bishops prepare to elect new Conference president

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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Archbishop Mark Coleridge's tenure as president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference will conclude next week, after the Holy See asked that bishops not serve in leadership roles in bishops conferences past 75.

Archbishop Coleridge, elected president of the Bishops Conference in 2018, will complete his second two-year term this month.

Presidents of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference normally can serve three consecutive terms. But with Archbishop Coleridge set to turn 75 in September 2023, he – and other bishops aged 73 or older – will not be able to start a new term as president or vice-president at this month's plenary meeting.

"It's been a great privilege to serve the Bishops Conference as president through a turbulent time, which has made the role more intense and demanding than I expected," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"In some ways the four years has seemed longer, and I'm not sorry to be passing the baton to someone else. Presidents come and presidents go, but the work of the Conference, which is the work of the Gospel, continues."

In March, the Holy See's Congregation for Bishops wrote to bishops around the world affirming the expectation that no one should be elected president or vice-president of a bishops conference if they will turn 75 during their term of office.

The Congregation prohibited a bishop already aged 75 or over from being elected.

Bishops must submit their resignation to the Pope when they reach 75.

The letter explained that when presidents or vice-presidents turned 75 during their term, it restricted the Pope's freedom to accept their resignation as a diocesan bishop, which would create a vacancy in the conference's leadership.

While a new president will be elected on the opening day of the plenary meeting, which begins on May 6, Archbishop Coleridge will chair the entire meeting.

The new president will be announced shortly after the election.

The upcoming plenary meeting, to be held in Sydney, will be the first the bishops have held in person since November 2019.

At the meeting, elections will be held for three-year terms on the 11 episcopal commissions that support the Conference's work in key areas.

There will also be pastoral discussions on a range of issues, including the ministries of catechist, acolyte and lector, the return to parish life and worship after COVID-19, and the Catholic Church's engagement with the National Council of Churches Australia.

As is customary for the May plenary meeting, the bishops will meet with leaders of religious institutes for prayer, conversation and reflection on their shared leadership roles in the Church.