



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL ORTHODOX BISHOPS AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

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Communiqué

The members of the 7th Episcopal Assembly of Oceania met in Sydney in the Central Offices of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia on Thursday 8th February, 2018 under the *ex officio* chairmanship of His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos of Australia.

Once again, the opportunity was given for the Hierarchs of this Assembly to affirm and reinforce their unity in the Orthodox faith.

Present were: His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos (Ecumenical Patriarchate); His Eminence Metropolitan Basilios (Antiochian Church); His Grace Bishop Siluan (Serbian Church); His Grace Bishop Mihail (Romanian Church); His Grace Bishop Ezekiel (Assistant Bishop); His Grace Bishop Seraphim (Assistant Bishop); His Grace Bishop Iakovos (Assistant Bishop); Fr Amphilochios Vasiltsotelis (Ecumenical Patriarchate, New Zealand); Fr Michael Protopopov (Russian Church) and Fr Michael Solomko (Ukrainian Church) and.

In the opening session, the Chairman, His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos of Australia welcomed all Hierarchs on behalf of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. He noted the contribution and support, towards the work of the Assembly, of His Eminence Archbishop Paul (Saliba) (Antiochian Church), who reposed in the Lord, after a long and blessed episcopal ministry.

His Eminence Metropolitan Basilios, from the Antiochian Church, who attended the Assembly for the first time, was also welcomed and congratulated for his recent elevation to the episcopacy.

Following this, all Hierarchs were provided with the opportunity to raise common concerns confronting the Orthodox Churches in Oceania and benefit from the experience of fellow bishops.

The Assembly deliberated on the following pastoral challenges confronting the Orthodox Churches of Australia and New Zealand, and in light of the discussions that ensued, rendered the following decisions:

1. **The Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse:** The Assembly listened to the presentation made by Mr Peter Makris, Compliance Officer for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, on the recently published 10 recommendations issued by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. These recommendations related to training, reporting, procedural policies (including complaints investigation), pastoral screening, confessional and records management. He highlighted the importance of Churches aligning their current practices to these requirements.

The Assembly strongly denounced all types of abuse that threaten the spiritual, moral, emotional and physical safety of minors and children.

2. **Religious Freedom Review (Australian Government: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet):** The Assembly expressed its concern for the religious freedom of the Orthodox Churches to continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it has been handed down through the centuries, especially in light of the recent legalization of same-sex marriage. The Assembly decided that it would make a formal submission to the Ruddock Religious Freedom Review on behalf of all Orthodox Churches.
3. **Labour Agreement with the Department of Home Affairs:** In light of recent difficulties experienced by the Orthodox Churches who wish to bring Priests from overseas, it was decided that representatives of the Assembly seek to meet with the Federal Minister of Home Affairs, the Hon. Peter Dutton in the hope of streamlining the process and easing the financial burden on the Churches, communities and prospective Priests and their families.
4. **Canonicity:** It was decided to revise and update the list of all non-canonical 'Orthodox' Clergy in Australia and New Zealand to be published in the Assembly's website.

The Assembly once again remembered and prayed for the safe return of the two kidnapped Hierarchs in Syria, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Paul Yazigi (brother of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch) and the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop John Ibrahim. The Assembly expressed its concern with regards to the plight of the Orthodox Christian faithful in Syria and of all peoples of the Middle East.

Furthermore, the Assembly denounced all forms of violence and bloodshed taking place in the Eastern Ukraine, Kosovo and Metohija, the Middle East, Egypt and all places throughout the world. It affirmed the important role of religion in bringing people together, irrespective of differences in race, gender, language and culture.

Dated 8th day of February, 2018.



His Eminence Archbishop Stylianos (Ecumenical Patriarchate)



His Eminence Metropolitan Basilios (Antiochian Church)



His Grace Bishop Siluan (Serbian Church)

+ Bishop Mihail

His Grace Bishop Mihail (Romanian Church)

+ Bishop Ezekiel

His Grace Bishop Ezekiel (Assistant Bishop)

+ Bishop Seraphim

His Grace Bishop Seraphim (Assistant Bishop)

+ Bishop Iakovos

His Grace Bishop Iakovos (Assistant Bishop)

+ Rev. Amphilochios

Fr Amphilochios (Ecumenical Patriarchate, New Zealand) representing His Eminence Metropolitan Amphilochios

Fr Michael Protopopov

Fr Michael Protopopov (Russian Church) representing His Grace Bishop George

Fr Michael Solomko

Fr Michael Solomko (Ukrainian Church) representing His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony