



AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE

WISDOM FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Considering what national renewal looks like

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We need to renew confidence and trust in our institutions.

This requires three things:

- The first is to recognise we have a problem. The evidence for this is in the various Royal Commissions and other enquiries of recent years. The recommendations from these reports demonstrate the work that needs to be done.
- A review of progress in implementing these recommendations is a second step. For example, how fully have recommendations been implemented regarding the institutional safety of children; the wellbeing of those in aged care; in disability services; or in the armed services? What about recommendations as regards the deaths of First Nations people in custody; or those impacted by recommendations on financial services; or enquiries about emergency services and also those about casinos?
- The material is available for institutional renewal. Thoughtful people of expertise have considered what is most needed. Taking this work seriously, we should review, in transparent fashion, where we have reached.
- A third step, therefore, involves political leadership. The health of our democracy depends on people's confidence and trust in our institutions.

If people feel our institutions are corrupted, unfair, unsafe and unaccountable, then democracy falters. People feel less safe. Social cohesion fragments. There is a perception that this is what we are seeing take place. A media which focuses on conflict stories amplifies this perception.

Accordingly, it would be very helpful if, ahead of the Federal Election, our political leaders would acknowledge the need for institutional renewal and commit to reviewing our progress in implementing the recommendations from recent Royal Commissions and other enquiries. Insofar as this is possible, it would be best if such a review were undertaken in bipartisan fashion and in a spirit that encourages community participation.

The culture of institutions reflects, essentially, the history of relationships within that institution. The extent that a culture is healthy or toxic depends on how people have related to each other over time. What have been the norms of behaviour? How have allegations of poor behaviour been handled? Is there believed to be a fairness of process? Are potential conflicts of interests managed in a transparent and convincing manner?

The essential point is that institutional renewal requires focused intentionality from us all.

We are blessed in that, compared to some other nations, our problems are still manageable if we have national leadership of character and competency.

There is a parallel between this need for institutional renewal and the endeavour to prevent catastrophic climate change. As the recent Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) conveyed, in the next few years our every decision matters. To keep it possible to contain the rise in global temperatures to the 1.5degree target of the Paris Agreement, every decision is relevant.

The same is true as regards our careful work to repair the health of our institutions and thus our democracy.

In this context the wisdom of our living faith traditions is profoundly relevant. Faced with a choice, can we make the decisions that are the truest, kindest and most beautiful? Such choices are infectious! They give others hope and optimism. They make people feel safer. Everyone can then be more confident about the future.

Our inner life and outer life find coherence as we make choices of such high intention.

Can this time of future planning, shaped by a Federal Election, be a time therefore of personal, spiritual and institutional renewal? It is possible, if we so choose!

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