

## **National Liturgical Music Council**

### **Training, Formation, and Remuneration of Liturgical Musicians –**

#### **Guidelines and References**

**15 October 2021**

The place of liturgical music in the reform and renewal of the Church's liturgy is strongly emphasised in the documents from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy states emphatically that "the musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value", the ultimate purpose of which is "the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful" [*Sacrosanctum Concilium* (1963) art. 112].

Given the importance attached to liturgical music by the Catholic Church, the National Liturgical Music Council of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference considers it timely to offer guidelines for training, formation, and remuneration of liturgical musicians so that, through their ministries, the faith of God's people may be enriched and parish communities might participate more fully in the liturgical rites entrusted to them [cf. SC (1963) art. 14].

It is inevitable that the development of liturgical ministries takes time to implement across a country, diocese, and parish. These guidelines aim to promote strategic suggestions and processes that will strengthen the practice of liturgical music in parishes and the Christian faith more generally amongst members of the Catholic community.

#### **The Importance of Music in the Church's Liturgy**

As noted, Vatican II highlights the importance of music in the worship of the Church. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy goes as far as saying that "the musical tradition of the universal Church is . . . greater even than that of any other art. The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy" (art. 112).

The Church's post-conciliar Instruction *Musicam sacram* (1967) builds upon the Constitution stating that "a liturgical service takes on a nobler aspect when the rites are celebrated with singing, the ministers of each rank take their parts in them, and the congregation actively participates. This form of celebration gives a more graceful expression to prayer and brings out more distinctly the hierarchic character of the liturgy and the specific make-up of the community. It raises the mind more readily to heavenly realities through the splendour of the rites (art. 5).

*Musicam sacram* (echoing SC art. 112) reiterates the importance of sacred music in the liturgy by stating that music facilitates both "the glory of God and the sanctification of the faithful" (art. 4). The Instruction calls on all ministers (i.e. pastors, composers and the faithful) to welcome and carry out these norms (art. 4).

#### **Training and Formation of Liturgical Musicians**

The implementation of the Church's liturgical vision is a responsibility that rests, ultimately, with clergy and local liturgical ministers. Just as the people of God presume that the ordained ministers of the Church receive several (normally seven) years of formal training (e.g. most complete a Bachelor or Master of Theology/Philosophy/Divinity degree), it should be expected that non-ordained ministers of music also receive opportunities for proper training and formation.

To facilitate the provision of trained liturgical musicians for present and future ministry, those currently engaged in liturgical music ministry should think of succession planning and identify collaborators who might be trained now and in the future. For example, encouraging Catholic staff and students in Catholic (and non-Catholic) schools and colleges to share their musical gifts in service of the Church's liturgy should be one priority. Many staff and students have achieved impressive levels of proficiency (e.g. some have completed AMEB grades 1-8 and diplomas in either singing, piano or organ performance during secondary schooling) and their musical gifts should be welcomed and valued by local parish communities. Many of these talented musicians could be provided with additional training and formation, particularly regarding the preparation, celebration, and evaluation of the Church's liturgy, so that their talents can be utilised and broadened for the good of the Catholic community. In this way, potential musicians can help to build up the liturgical life of the Church in parish and school contexts, now and in the future.

### **The Importance of Musical Education**

In order to address the Church's ongoing musical and liturgical needs, it is important for present and future liturgical musicians to develop increasing degrees of proficiency in both theoretical and practical musical skills. Attaining qualifications in music in particular, helps to equip Church musicians with the necessary skills as singers, accompanists or choral directors in order to improve overall standards of musical ministry.

Apart from tertiary training programmes in music and the performing arts provided in various Australian cities, there are a number of additional musical and Church organisations that provide musical formation and/or resources. Those organisations affiliated with the Church also provide specific guidance in the area of music for worship, in either Catholic or ecumenical contexts. See, for example, the following websites:

- **Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM)**  
[ABRSM: Homepage](#)
- **Australian Music Examinations Board (AMEB)**  
[www.ameb.edu.au](http://www.ameb.edu.au)
- **Australian National Choral Association (ANCA)**  
[www.anca.org.au](http://www.anca.org.au)
- **Australian Pastoral Musicians Network (APMN)**  
[www.apmn.org.au](http://www.apmn.org.au)
- **Diocesan Agencies**  
e.g. **Adelaide - Office for Worship**  
[www.ofw-adelaide.org.au](http://www.ofw-adelaide.org.au)

**Brisbane - Liturgy Brisbane**

[www.liturgybrisbane.net.au](http://www.liturgybrisbane.net.au)

**Melbourne - Proclaim: The Office for Mission Renewal**

[Proclaim: The Office for... | The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne \(melbournecatholic.org\)](http://Proclaim: The Office for... | The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne (melbournecatholic.org))

**Perth - Centre for Liturgy**

[Centre For Liturgy – Archdiocese of Perth \(perthcatholic.org.au\)](http://Centre For Liturgy – Archdiocese of Perth (perthcatholic.org.au))

**Sale – Liturgy Office**

[Liturgy - Catholic Diocese of Sale \(cdsale.org.au\)](http://Liturgy - Catholic Diocese of Sale (cdsale.org.au))

**Wollongong - Liturgy Office**

[www.dow.org.au](http://www.dow.org.au) (liturgy site TBC)

- **National Liturgical Music Council (Advisory Body to the Bishops Commission for Liturgy of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference)**  
[National Liturgical Music Council - Catholic Church in Australia](http://National Liturgical Music Council - Catholic Church in Australia)
- **Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) Australia**  
[Royal School of Church Music, Australia – An international church music association \(rscmaustralia.org.au\)](http://Royal School of Church Music, Australia – An international church music association (rscmaustralia.org.au))
- **Society of Organists (state branches)**  
e.g.  
**Hobart**  
[Hobart Organ Society - Home | Facebook](http://Hobart Organ Society - Home | Facebook)  
**Melbourne**  
[www.sov.org.au](http://www.sov.org.au)  
**Queensland**  
[The Organ Society of Queensland](http://The Organ Society of Queensland)  
**Sydney**  
[The Organ Music Society of Sydney \(sydneyorgan.com\)](http://The Organ Music Society of Sydney (sydneyorgan.com))  
**Western Australia**  
[www.oswa.org.au](http://www.oswa.org.au)

In addition to the resources and programmes provided by national and statewide organisations, “on-the-job” training in the local parish can be enriched through the provision of scholarships for organists and keyboard players, cantors, or choristers. Cathedrals and parishes with established music programmes and financial resources should be encouraged to take a lead role in training musicians for their communities, regions and dioceses, by providing formation, training, and scholarship opportunities.

### **The Importance of Liturgical Formation and Education**

When highlighting the importance of teaching sacred music in Catholic institutions and schools, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy urges that musicians and singers be given a genuine *liturgical* training [see SC (1963) art. 115]. This decree underscores the power of music and liturgy to form the hearts and minds of Christ’s faithful people, and highlights the importance of liturgical formation and education, including appreciation for its historical, theological, and pastoral dimensions.

To this end, formation and training in selecting appropriate music, based on an understanding of the Church's documents on liturgy and music is required. To understand their ministerial roles in context, liturgical musicians should also be familiar with the regular responsibilities exercised by other liturgical ministers (i.e. assembly, presiding celebrant, deacon, homilist, choir, cantor, organist/accompanist, instrumentalists, servers, readers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, sacristans, hospitality ministers, etc.).

Once formed and educated in the Church's vision of music in the liturgy, liturgical musicians can facilitate positive relations with clergy, parish offices and diocesan chanceries, including Human Resources staff who increasingly oversee employment and contractual arrangements with diocesan and parish employees. Trained musicians can also help to foster appropriate conditions of employment that foster the growth of liturgical music programmes and promote the increasing professionalisation of music ministry at local and diocesan levels.

Courses of liturgical formation and education, including professional networking opportunities, face-to-face and online teaching, are increasingly offered through the following institutions and organisations (see their websites below):

- ACU Faculty of Theology and Philosophy  
[Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at ACU](#)
- ACU Centre for Liturgy  
[ACU Centre for Liturgy](#)
- University of Notre Dame Australia  
<https://www.notredame.edu.au>
- University of Divinity in Melbourne  
[University of Divinity](#)
- Catholic Institute of Sydney  
<https://cis.catholic.edu.au>
- Diocesan Agencies (e.g. Offices for Liturgy, Worship, Evangelisation or Mission) (see websites above)
- Australian Academy of Liturgy (Ecumenical)  
[Australian Academy of Liturgy – Reflecting on worship in Australia and our regional neighbourhood \(wordpress.com\)](#)

### **Remuneration of Liturgical Musicians: Scriptural and Ecclesial Foundations**

In the Gospel of Luke, the evangelist recounts how the Lord Jesus, when sending the seventy-two out on mission, says that those who serve should accept the hospitality provided by the recipients of the ministry, for “the labourer deserves to be paid” (Luke 10:7). Building on Christ's example, the Catholic Church's *Canon of Canon Law* (1983) refers to the importance of formation and remuneration of lay people in the service of the Church in the following words:

Canon 231

§1. Lay persons who devote themselves permanently or temporarily to some special service of the Church are obliged to acquire the appropriate formation which is

required to fulfill their function properly and to carry it out conscientiously, zealously, and diligently.

§2. With due regard for can. 230, §1 they have a right to a decent remuneration suited to their condition; by such remuneration they should be able to provide decently for their own needs and for those of their family with due regard for the prescriptions of civil law; they likewise have a right that their pension, social security and health benefits be duly provided.

The concept of remuneration of liturgical musicians is not new. As far back as 1958, Pope Pius XII's Instruction *De musica sacra et sacra liturgia* refers to the training of musicians and specifically mentions remuneration standards, stating that where musicians are not in a position to provide their services gratuitously "Christian justice and charity demand that ecclesiastical superiors give them just pay" (art. 101).

The Instruction states that the local Bishop should, after consulting the Commission for Sacred Music [where these exist], publish a list which specifies for the entire diocese the recompense to be given to the various musical and other ministries [i.e. organists, choir directors, singers, musicians, et al.] (art. 102), and adequate provisions of social security should be provided in accord with civil laws or diocesan regulations (art. 103).

These exhortations from the Holy See are echoed further in a document by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference entitled *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace* (2018). This visionary document mentions the recent growing "professionalisation" of lay pastoral ministries through the establishment of professional standards and practices. Increasingly, liturgical music ministries in parishes and schools need to be seen more broadly as part of this trend.

In *Faithful Stewards of God's Grace*, the bishops mention that such a change in mentality and practice "is consistent with the Vatican II vision of a mature and committed laity, strengthened in personal responsibility and gifted with a renewed enthusiasm to continue Christ's mission of witness and service" (FSGG #2.4.2).

The provision of professional payment structures and employment conditions for liturgical musicians represents an important change of attitude and practice in Australian Catholic parishes which have traditionally relied upon the generous goodwill of voluntary musicians. It should be noted that, historically, a number of musicians who served in parishes were members or religious orders. As the number of active religious has steadily declined since Vatican II, lay people have increasingly taken up various musical roles, but there has not been a consistent acceptance of the principle, or the degree, of financial remuneration.

### **The Importance of Remuneration**

Liturgical music, as an aural form of artistic expression, can rightly be regarded as an important medium in the Church's mission of evangelisation. Liturgical music enables ministers to spread God's word "in accordance with the ministries and tasks each one has in the life of the Church, and always in cordial communion with the bishops" (FSGG #2.4.2). To this end, the Conference's document recommends the development of a pathway towards "just remuneration and conditions for lay pastoral ministers" (FSGG, Section 5, #3.1.4)

On a practical level, the remuneration of liturgical musicians means that some form of contract and commitment is entered into between the parish community and the musician/s. When employing musicians in a professional capacity, a parish can reasonably expect from the musicians the consistent provision of a suitable standard of musical leadership. If musicians are not paid, and there is no contract, a regular level of commitment and appropriate standard of musical proficiency cannot always be presumed. Remuneration of musicians also represents an acknowledgement of the God-given talents with which the musicians have been blessed and is a recognition of the training they have undertaken to achieve proficient levels of their craft.

Paid musicians who are formed in the Catholic Church's principles and practice of liturgy, music, and pastoral ministry are generally able to make good decisions about what liturgical music is appropriate in particular contexts (including genres and styles). These decisions, matched by competent musical practice, help to ensure that the Church's liturgical celebrations enrich the faith of God's people at prayer.

It can also be suggested that parishioners often give more generously to parish planned-giving programmes when they can see that the financial resources are well spent, for example, on effective pastoral ministries, including liturgical music ministers.

### **Remuneration and Employment: Government, National, Local and Diocesan Resources**

In relation to general employment conditions in Australia, by law, every employer is required to provide the Fair Work Information Sheet (see weblink below) to every new employee as soon as possible after they have commenced work (the casual employee information sheet should also be provided to casual staff).

- **Australian Government Fairwork Website**

<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/national-employment-standards/fair-work-information-statement>

The information on this website provides a solid set of legal boundaries for any employment arrangements made including situations whereby, unless stipulated in the contract or award, a casual employee does not need to provide any notice period for resignation.

To facilitate the remuneration of liturgical musicians, parishes are encouraged to establish annual music budgets, with the possibility of developing music trust funds and scholarships, funded where possible by bequests, grants or gifts from members of the local community. These financial resources can help to develop remuneration opportunities and financial support for ongoing training, formation, and education of local musicians.

Within the community at large, several organisations have prepared suggested scales of payment for musicians, which are generally organised in terms of role/s performed, time taken for rehearsal/s and performance (or ministry in a Church context) and, in some cases, qualifications earned, and experience attained. See, for example:

- **Musicians' Union of Australia**

<https://musiciansunion.com.au/calculator/>

- **Society of Organists**  
[Society of Organists \(Vic\) Inc](http://sov.org.au/schedule-of-fees/)  
<http://sov.org.au/schedule-of-fees/>

Within the Church community, individual dioceses increasingly provide guidance for the payment of pastoral ministers (e.g. pastoral associates) through their Human Resources staff or office websites. The guidelines can provide useful benchmarks for establishing payments and accreditation processes, for diocesan and parish employees, including parish musicians. See, for example:

- **Archdiocese of Melbourne – Human Resources Office**  
[Human resources | The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne \(melbournecatholic.org\)](http://melbournecatholic.org/human-resources)
- **Diocese of Wollongong – Liturgical Music Guidelines**  
[Policies and guidelines – Catholic Diocese of Wollongong \(dow.org.au\)](http://dow.org.au/policies-and-guidelines)

#### **International References**

- **Ireland - National Centre for liturgy**  
<http://www.liturgy-ireland.ie/payment-of-church-musicians.html>
- **USA - National Association of Pastoral Musicians (USA)**  
[00010-140547.pdf \(ftc.gov\)](http://www.napm.org/00010-140547.pdf)

+++++++

The National Liturgical Music Council intends to develop the information provided on this site as more documentation, resources and references from local and overseas dioceses, parishes and organisations comes to hand.

If you would like to suggest information for consideration by the National Liturgical Music Council, please forward to

**The Secretary**  
 National Liturgical Music Council  
 Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
 Email: [paul.taylor@catholic.org.au](mailto:paul.taylor@catholic.org.au)

