



Catholic Welfare Australia

In The Best Interests Of Children?

SUBMISSION BY CATHOLIC WELFARE AUSTRALIA

August 2003

**SUBMISSION TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON FAMILY AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
CHILD CUSTODY ARRANGEMENTS INQUIRY**

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**SUBMISSION TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE STANDING
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Executive Summary

Presumption of shared time in separation is likely to have both positive and negative effects. It is usually in the best interests of children to have time with both parents provided it can be organised in a way **that does not impose on the child the responsibility to make it work. This means conflict has to be resolved.**

To focus specifically on rebuttable joint custody is far too simple an answer to a complex problem. It does not address the core issue of conflict between parents and its harmful effects on children. It will simply change the types of issues raised in the fights. The focus has to be shifted from the adversarial paradigm to an alternative one – that embraces conciliation. The new paradigm needs to defuse the conflict and position the warring parties to deal constructively with the changed state of the family. Catholic Welfare Australia suggests that the new paradigm be loving and responsible parenting.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends:

- as a matter of urgency, consideration should be given to strengthen commitment and relationship in marriage;
- a range of dispute resolution resources be expanded to safe-guard children's welfare post separation;
- as part of any court order, parents be required to participate in a program to maximise the chances of the order working;
- as a matter of urgency that the federal government dedicate funding to programs that strengthen parents in their parenting role, resolving conflict and maximising children's contact with both parents in a way that is beneficial to children;
- the Federal Government lead the way for the country in raising families to its number one priority; and
- all government policy be examined for its positive contribution to family functioning before being implemented.

Introduction

Catholic Welfare Australia is the peak body representing the social welfare apostolate of the Catholic Church at the national level. It is a national federation of fifty-four Catholic social service organisations, including Centacares, that operate within local communities (Appendix 1). Membership of Catholic Welfare Australia is drawn from the Catholic social welfare organisations operating under the authority of a diocesan bishop or a religious order and from Catholic lay associations. Each Centacare covers a defined broad geographical region of their state. (See appendix 2.) The reach of the network is Australia-wide.

The Catholic Church is committed to helping marriages succeed. Consequently, delivery of family services is a core function of Catholic Welfare Australia. A conservative estimate of the number of families in distress that Catholic Welfare Australia Member Organisations help annually is 120,000 plus Centacares provide over 60% of the relationship education in this country. The network has more than 250 sites around the country and Catholic Welfare Australia is the major provider of family services in remote and rural communities.

The long-standing teaching of the Church places marriage and family as the cornerstone of society. For example, in his 1994 *Letter to Families*, Pope John Paul II describes the family as an “intimate community of parents and children, and at times, a community of several generations” (par.17). The family is a “firmly grounded social reality” embodying the “fairest of loves” between husband and wife, and parents and children (par.19). The teaching of the Church also states the obvious truth that the history of the human race passes by way of the family (par.23).

These teachings of the Church are congruent with many other faith traditions. The foundational guiding principles of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth), are that the institution of marriage between a man and a woman must be protected and preserved (s.43 (a)) and that the interests of the child are to be paramount (ss.43 (c), 60B, 68D-F). Relevant international instruments to which Australia is a signatory, such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, also privilege the institution of marriage and make the interests of the child paramount.

In keeping with the social teaching of the Church, as a Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Catholic Welfare Australia is committed to equitable public policy and advocates for the preferential treatment of the most vulnerable members of the Australian community.

The Catholic Church has a long history of participating in the formulation of policy in relation to matters pertaining to marriage and family. Within Australia it has been providing services for persons who are experiencing family distress for more than sixty years. It is from this foundation and experience that Catholic Welfare Australia offers the following perspective on the current debate about child custody arrangements.

Families as the foundation of society

Marriage in Australia is increasingly vulnerable. It takes two adults to choose to marry but only one to end it. Love, commitment and relationship skills of the couple sustain and nurture the family. With nearly half the marriages that now occur in Australia not being a life time

commitment and the increasing lifestyle of serial relationships, it indicates that the essential ingredients that make marriages work are lacking in the adult population.

The second Vatican Council pointed out that families are *the first and vital cell of society*.¹ Pope John Paul II stated, *“it is in families that we first learn what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person”*² These basic learnings accompany children for the rest of their lives.

Catholic Welfare Australia wants to see both parents actively and constructively involved in their children’s lives. This support must be loving, safe, responsible, and developmentally appropriate. Unfortunately when separation occurs loving parents get distracted from parental obligations as emotion of the crisis consumes them.

In his first address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on 2 October 1979, Pope John Paul II said *“ Concern for the childis the primary and fundamental test of the relationship of one human being to another.”* This is a moral obligation on both parents that persists even after the relationship has broken down.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends that as a matter of urgency consideration should be given to strengthening commitment and relationship in marriage.

Conflict and child welfare

Living with conflict hurts children significantly. Children do not create the problems of their parents, however children do wear the consequences of parental actions. Jen McIntosh (2002) has explored the negative impact on children who are consistently subjected to conflictual situations.³ Living with entrenched conflict is the greatest predictor of negative consequences for children in attaining developmental milestones and achieving social and emotional wellbeing. McIntosh’s analysis has some support from international research. American findings indicate that the most influential factors for a child’s well being post-divorce are:

- parental conflict;
- adequate income;
- functioning of the primary residential parent;
- neighbourhood quality; and,
- frequency of moves.⁴

Are we taking the damage to children’s well being seriously? McIntosh concludes her analysis by stating *“Indeed, this research impels us to build dispute resolution climates in which children’s developmental fortitude, in the face of parental conflict, can be maximally*

¹ Second Vatican Council **Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity** no. 11.

² Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (1993) **Families: our Hidden Treasure**. Aurora Books Melbourne, pg 5.

³ McIntosh Jen (2002) **Entrenched Conflict in Parental Separation: Pathways of Impact on Child development. A synopsis of recent research** La Trobe University, Melbourne.

⁴ Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission and the Domestic Relations Commission “

What the Experts Say.

http://www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/newsinfo_reports/index.cfm?fa=newsinfo_reports.display&folder=parent&file=chap4#A12

supported, and not further challenged".⁵ Best interests of children demands that any appropriate policy response should focus on providing a range of dispute resolution services.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends expansion of a range of dispute resolution resources, to safeguard children's welfare post separation.

Being clear with terminology

Media response to this inquiry has been swift and broad. However, in the breadth of the coverage the use of terminology has become loose with many different interest groups using concepts to suit their own purposes. For instance the term 'custody' has reappeared in the media, even though the legal community avoids this terminology because of the implicit invitation in it to treat children as possessions. The Australian Family Law system replaced 'custody' with residency and contact.

In this debate the term 'joint custody' has been used synonymously with 'shared-care' and 'shared residency' arrangements. They are not the same. Overseas research, particularly American, uses 'joint custody' when referring to arrangements where both parents have responsibility for making vital decisions on their children's lives and for access to information about the child irrespective of living arrangements. This is quite different from 'joint physical custody.' In the USA for instance 'joint physical custody' is the term applied when an at least 70/30 residency/contact split arrangement applies.⁶

It is important that these distinctions are clear. The debate in Australia is somewhat confusing because of the inaccuracy with which the terms are currently being used.

Myths and reality

An illusion has emerged that marital separation deals with marital conflict. This is far from the truth. **When a separation occurs the family does not end, it is changed.** Conflict does not disappear. In fact, it is likely to intensify as the stresses, strains and the distance in relationships, afforded by separation introduces more dynamics that have to be managed.

This conflict prevents equality in residency arrangements. Research shows that both separated men and women agree on the need for fathers to be involved with their children. Yet, despite this agreement, research by Patrick Parkinson shows that last year 36% of children in separated families did not see their fathers. 74% of men wanted more contact and 41% of mothers also wanted contact to increase.⁷ Why then does this not occur? The answer again points to conflict preventing it from happening. The reality is that many parents cannot work out their disagreements.

⁵ *ibid.* p14

⁶ Kuhn R & Guidubaldi J., (1997) **Child Custody Policies and Divorce Rates in the US.** 11th Annual Conference of the Children's Rights Council October 23-26 1997 Washington DC. Copyright 1997, Children's Rights Council.

⁷ Parkinson P., (22/7/03) **Equal custody? It's not that easy.** SMH p.11. and Smyth B. & Parkinson P., (2003) **When the difference is night and day: Insights from HILDA into patterns of parent-child contact after separation.** HILDA Conference, Uni of Melbourne, Melbourne.

The Family Court system has come under heavy attack as perpetuating the conflict. One has to remember that only families where conflict is high enter the court system. Separation is sad and devastating for all family members and places great strain on all as they struggle through the changes it precipitates. In separation, family resources need to be doubled, and most families find their finances will not accommodate this. Family functions must be divided and/or duplicated requiring negotiation skills of a high order. Hence it is little wonder that courts look to prior performance in parenting when trying to make decisions.

The family law is clear on parenting obligation. This stands in contradiction to those who suggest that the law is restrictive and favours one parent over the other. It identifies:⁸

- children have a right to know and be cared for by both their parents, regardless of whether their parents are married, separated, have never married or have never lived together; and,
- children have a right of contact, on a regular basis, with both their parents, and with other people significant to their care, welfare and development; and
- parents share duties and responsibilities concerning the care, welfare and development of their children; and,
- parents should agree about the future parenting of their children.

The Act also sets out considerations for changing circumstances.⁹ When making orders the law requires that the following are taken into consideration:

- any expressed wishes of the children;
- the nature of the relationship of the child with each parent;
- the likely effect of any changes in the child's circumstances;
- the practical difficulty and expense of a child having contact with a parent;
- the capacity of each parent to provide for the needs of the child;
- the child's maturity, sex and background, including issues of race, culture and religion;
- the need to protect the child from physical or psychological harm;
- the attitude to the child and to the responsibilities of parenthood; and,
- any family violence which has occurred.

Parents enter the family court system in dispute, they often leave in higher dispute. We know the task before the courts is not an easy one. But even consent orders, where the court validates a solution negotiated by the parties, have their critics. Anecdotal accounts by both men's and women's groups raise concerns about coercion. Women from abusive relationships claim 'power over' tactics account for their consent, whilst men's groups blame precedence as the coercive factor. It is no surprise that within the adversarial system, few are satisfied. It appears that is not the law that needs changing it is the way it is administered and the way that parents themselves operate that determine the likely outcomes for their respective parenting roles.

There is no simple answer. The Family Court has been charged with protecting the best interests of our nation's children in family disputes. Removing children from the custody of their parents and placing them in the care of the State is not a viable alternative. The State makes a very poor alternative parent. Hence we have to put energy into making the current systems work better. What works for one child may not work for another. Centacares that run contact and changeover centres observe both sides of the solution – where it works and

⁸ See section 60B(2) of the FLA.

⁹ See section 68F of FLA

where it doesn't. They help families in high conflict move to self-management. They also have concerns that sometimes children are overlooked in court rulings when contact is ordered. They observe that in some matters it is more the parents' interests that are being catered for than the child/ren in question. The children can only vote with their behaviour.

Legislating rebuttable joint custody is not the sole solution. This is because it will not resolve the conflict. If shared parenting were to be ordered, without the conflict being addressed Catholic Welfare Australia fears the children would then wear the consequences of the ongoing conflict. Research in the UK has shown that shared care of children is more likely to be organised to suit parents than children and children carry the burden of trying to make such arrangements 'fair'.¹⁰

Only 3-4% of Australian families adopt 'shared care' arrangements.¹¹ Why is this so? The answer is that in the demands of day to day life it takes exceptional commitment to make it viable. An equal-time presumption without the resolution of the conflict requires at best that each parent is adequately skilled to handle all eventuality when the children are in their care.

Moving beyond conflict

Searching for a solution to disagreements within a conflict paradigm will not produce viable results. All it will produce is different sets of arguments to the ones that currently rage and potentially new areas of disagreements. It is not possible to legislate a resolution to conflict. There is a need to break out of the adversarial mould, and surely a parenting focus produces the best opportunity to do this. Most parents do love their children and want what is best for them. This fact allows focus on a common goal.

Community organisations well know the opportunity contained in this concept. Entrenched conflict has to be defeated, and this can be achieved in three ways:

- Preventing it getting started by skilling couples through an educative process when they commit to marriage and when they enter the family formation stage of their relationship lifecycle;
- Containing conflict once it has started by access to early intervention strategies through using a process of 'assisted referrals'¹² on the part of government agencies to community services that are professionally skill in intervention strategies; and
- Finding a solution once conflict has entrenched through supporting the parents to refocus their attention on the parenting role rather than staying invested in the fight.

The court system is also well positioned to aid this process. The Federal Magistrates Court has commenced a practice when handing down an order to insist that parents attend an authorised community service to help them to live with the orders. This practice affords conflictual parents the opportunity to rise above their dispute and explore better ways to carry

¹⁰ Smart C (2002) **From Children's Shoes to Children's Voices** *Family Court Review*, volume 40, no. 3 July, pp 307 – 319.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics; *Family Characteristics Survey*, Ct 4442.0, AGPS, Canberra. 1997. Attorney General's Department; *Child Support Scheme Facts and Figures, 2001-02*, Canberra, 2003.

¹² CSA has piloted an 'assisted referral' process with one community organisation and is reporting a high take up rate by persons who would not normally take advantage of such assistance. However there are resource implications of this strategy moving beyond the pilot stage.

out their parenting obligation. This will require co-operative planning and strategies by courts, funding bodies and community groups.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends that as part of any court order, parents be required to participate in a program to maximise the chances of the order working.

Information and preventative services do make a difference. The Centacare experience has been that where parents have access to timely, objective and professional information about the damaging effects of parental conflict on their children, they do take it on board, and modify their behaviour. The tragedy is that all the service providers in this area are working to and beyond maximum capacity and turning away families with expressed need every day. The same situation applies for marriages that are in trouble. Centacares know they can make a positive difference but are hampered by resource and funding constraints.

Underinvestment in areas that matter

Catholic Welfare Australia represents fifty-four community organisations, twenty-eight of which are federally funded to provide dispute resolution/mediation/conciliation and counselling services. These organisations are well equipped and professionally skilled to carry out sessions with parents. However these organisations cannot continue to increase their workload without a corresponding increase in funding.

Government figures demonstrate that within Australia, the minimal investment in the prevention of marital breakdown and family relationships is inadequate. This country provides less than \$A50 million to support, strengthen, educate, problem solve and resolve conflict in the family relationship area. In contrast it provides \$A113 million for court services¹³, \$A220 million in legal aid (much of which is spent on family matters)¹⁴ \$A4.1 billion in sole parent benefits¹⁵ and \$A215 million for the Child Support Agency (CSA)¹⁶ (although the CSA is seen by government as a revenue raising department seeing its achievements result in a reduction of sole parent benefits paid). It does not support paid maternity leave, but does support mutual obligation for Parenting Payment recipients whose youngest child have reached the age of thirteen years of age.

Services to prevent family breakdown really do work

Preventative services are effective. Consistently, government funded research outcome studies¹⁷ demonstrate the positive benefits achieved by programs funded under the Family and Relationship Services Program (FRSP) of the Department of Family and Community Services. Outcome research conducted by various Centacares further demonstrates the effectiveness of the services provided - in counselling,¹⁸ relationship education,¹⁹ contact

¹³ Family Court of Australia (2002) **Annual Report**. <http://www.familycourt.gov.au/court/pdf/oio2.pdf>

¹⁴ **What is national legal aid?** National Legal Aid Website <http://www.nla.aust.net.au/>

¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003) **Income and Income Support Programs: Department of Family and Community Services**. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf>

¹⁶ Australian National Audit Office (2002) **Client Service in the Child Support Agency. Follow-up Audit**. Audit Report no.7 2002-2003 Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia

¹⁷ <http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/aboutfacs/respubs/nav.htm#Families>

¹⁸ Kulakov A (2002) **Clients experience of Counselling from the Relationship and Family Counselling Program at Centacare Sydney 2001 financial year**. Uni of Sydney.

centres²⁰ and Indigenous Men's programs.²¹ Yet despite such proof, continued uncertainty about ongoing funding hampers the excellent work being done by these funded community organisations.

Family services programs are significantly underfunded. Catholic Welfare Australia believes that the Commonwealth Government needs to expand its funding commitment to these programs. In addition, funding needs to be more closely tied to outcomes. In the case of Catholic Welfare Australia the provision of 60% of the national relationship education (predominately pre-marriage) is delivered from 34% of the federal relationship education funding base.

The disparity in funding is particularly evident in **rural** Australia. Country children deserve the same level of support as their city counterparts. Life in rural communities involves unique challenges which flow through into the family dynamics. Centacare are leaders in developing and providing innovative services for rural and remote families.

Advocates for the rebuttable joint custody argue that presumption of shared time will reduce the divorce rate.^{22 23} They claim that such a law will force spouses to rethink the decision to leave the marriage. However, the cited research, should be viewed with caution, as there are gaps in the data that limit scope for firm conclusions.²⁴ If the claims are true, it raises the urgency about providing adequate services for marriages in distress, given that marriages that separate are in serious trouble and access to support services are stretched to their limits.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends that as a matter of urgency, the federal government dedicate funding to programs that strengthen parents in their parenting role, resolving conflict and maximising children's contact with both parents in a way that is beneficial to children.

Call for a family friendly government

The second part of the terms of reference for this inquiry asks whether the existing child support formula works fairly for both parents in relation to their care of, and contact with, their children. Clearly anecdotal data, radio talk shows, demonstrate dissatisfaction with the current system. Individually each case that receives public airing tells of limitations within the system.

Catholic Welfare Australia would contend that this question is again slanted towards the comfort and satisfaction of parents. This very question assumes that what is fair for parents, translates into fairness for children.

¹⁹ Shore L.G. (1995) **Assessing the impact of premarital education programs on relationship beliefs, satisfaction and consensus** Masters thesis.

²⁰ **Centacare Childrens Contact Services – an evaluation.** 2002.

²¹ Hunt J (in progress) **Research/ impact assessment on Centacare Wilcania-Forbes Aboriginal Men and youth program.**

²² West, W. (15/7 2003) **New moves to reduce divorce rate.** *Kairos Catholic Journal* v14. no.10
<http://www.melbourne.catholic.org.au/kairos/k2003vol14/newmovesreduceddivorce.html>

²³ Shanahan, A. (29/6/03) **Joint custody cases could ease the burden on fathers.** *Daily Telegraph* p91

²⁴ In the case of Guidubaldi 1997, the analysis seeks to ascertain a statistical relationship between the incidents of shared physical custody in 1989 or 1990 with six years of divorce rate data from 1989-95.

Anomalies exist within the current child support system. We have a system that demands that both parents contribute to the upkeep of their children. However the way it is administered has inequality built into the operation. Parents employed outside the home bear greater scrutiny of how they contribute. Income earning parents are traceable through the tax system and therefore monetary contributions are open to tax office scrutiny. Penalties apply if parents do not meet their Child Support Agency determined payment obligations. However the same cannot be said for other forms of parental contribution or even how funds that are transferred under the Child Support system are utilised. This emphasis on the definable commodities, like ‘nights under a roof’ or income, rather than outcomes just lends itself to allegations of injustice.

Quality as well as quantity must be the foundation for child support no matter with whom the child resides. Available money should be spent wisely for the child/ren in question. Time spent with each parent should be as enhancing as possible for the child’s well being. No child support formula is adequate if it does not address the issues of quality of parenting but only emphasises quantity. It is little wonder that with such an emphasis on quantity, children have been reduced to the status of commodities.

The call for rebuttable joint custody could be interpreted as being partially motivated by financial objectives. There is a sense that the presumption of equal time could be just as much about retention of earned income as it is about sharing time with one’s children. A responsible government would not insist on such a situation without providing for the social consequences of such a change. The numbers of childcare and after school care facilities in this country are already inadequate. Not to mention the crisis that will be created should shared-time arrangement become the norm.

It is not by accident that this inquiry is also looking at grandparent’s access to their grandchildren. The media is identifying the growing trend of ageing grandparents being the child-care providers of the future generations.²⁵ With limited childcare places available and the employed parent now having to cater for regular child supervision there are only two viable options available, extended family care and/or reduced working hours.

Australia needs a comprehensive family policy. The current arrangements are piecemeal, rife with decisions that inflame or redistribute but do not deal with the difficulties of relationship breakdown. Dennis²⁶ recently argued deregulation policy has been no friend to the family. Work hours are changing quicker than a family’s ability to cope. Combine this social trend with residential shared time arrangement and it is inevitable that reduced employment is the likely outcome. Smyth who conducted in-depth interviews with parents who have ‘equal time shared arrangements’ supports this in recent research. Smyth identified that it required good will to make shared care work and reduced working hours for fathers.^{27 28}

Presumption of shared time in separation is likely to have both positive and negative effects. It is in the best interests of children to have time with both parents provided it can be

²⁵ Swinford, S. & Keenan, A., (10/7/03) **Grandchildren a mixed blessing.** *The Australian*, p.4

Prior, L.,(10/7/03) **Parents turn to their parents to care for kids** *SMH*, p3

²⁶ Denniss, R., (30/6/2003) **Work strain set to break families apart.** *Canberra Times*

²⁷ Horin, A.,(21-22/6/03) **One size does not fit all, especially kids.** *SMH*, p43

²⁸ Smyth B., Caruana C., and Ferro A., (2003). **Shared parenting vs other arrangements. What separated parents with different parenting arrangements say about parent child contact.** Paper presented at the Australian Social Policy Research Conference 2003, Sydney, 11 July.

organised in a way that does not impose on the child the responsibility to make it work. This means conflict has to be resolved.

In summary, a simplistic application of rebuttable joint custody without further social reform may increase the time children spend with their fathers. However it does raise some unresolved questions.

- Will it enhance children's well being or increase the number of adjustments that children have to make?
- Will it decrease the amount of time men spend in the workforce?
- Is it likely to increase demand for childcare and after school care places?
- Will it contribute to further family violence?
- Could it contribute to the demise of marriage as a loving and caring relationship?
- A recent ABS study showed single mothers are the most poverty stricken in the country.²⁹ Is this current poverty trap of many women likely to tighten³⁰?
- Will it solve 'systems abuse' of parents and children?
- Will it do anything to reduce the conflict between their parents?

There is an urgency about getting the system right. This review has a once in a generation opportunity to make a very real difference to our country's future. Children of today are tomorrow's parents. They are learning how to relate now! Surely the message we want them to take forward is one that values marriage and the family built on the basis of loving commitment.

Catholic Welfare Australia recommends that the Federal Government lead the way for the country in raising families to its number one priority.

Catholic Welfare Australia further recommends that all Government policy be examined for its positive contribution to family functioning before being implemented.

²⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, (2000) **Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families, Australia**, Cat. no 6224.0, AGPS, Canberra.

³⁰ Smyth B.& Weston R (2000), **Financial living standards after divorce – a recent snapshot**. AIFS Research paper no. 23

MEMBER ORGANISATIONS OF CATHOLIC WELFARE AUSTRALIA

National

Catholic Society for Marriage Education
 Daughters of Charity
 Sisters of Charity
 Seasons for Growth (Sisters of St. Joseph
 of the Sacred Heart)
 Ukrainian Eparchy, Sts Peter and Paul,
 North Melbourne

Australian Capital Territory

Centacare Canberra/Goulburn
 Marymead Children's service

Queensland

Boystown Family Care
 Centacare Cairns
 Centacare Brisbane
 Centacare Employment: Mt. Isa
 Centacare Rockhampton
 Centacare Toowoomba
 Centacare Townsville
 Mercy Family Services (Qld)

South Australia

Centacare Adelaide
 Centacare Whyalla

New South Wales

Boystown Engadine
 Centacare New England North West
 Centacare Bathurst
 Centacare Broken Bay.
 Centacare Lismore
 Centacare Ballina,
 Centacare Coffs Harbour
 Centacare Port Macquarie
 Centacare Newcastle
 Centacare Parramatta
 Centacare Sydney
 Centacare Wagga Wagga
 Centacare Wilcannia Forbes
 Centacare Wollongong

Edmund Rice Community Services (NSW)
 (Christian Brothers St. Mary's Province)

Marist Youth Care
 St. Francis Welfare (Franciscan Friars)
 St. Joseph's Cowper (Sisters of Mercy,
 Grafton Congregation)
 Sisters of Mercy (Parramatta)
 Centacare Tweed Heads (St. Joseph's
 Parish)

Northern Territory

Centacare Darwin

Tasmania

Centacare Hobart

Victoria

Centacare: Ballarat
 Centacare Melbourne
 Centacare: Sale (Gippsland)
 Centacare Sandhurst (Bendigo)
 Jesuit Social Services
 MacKillop Family Services
 Marriage Education Program (Inc.)
 Sacred Heart Mission (St. Kilda)

Western Australia

Catholic Marriage Education Services
 (Perth)
 Centacare Broome
 Centacare Bunbury
 Centacare Geraldton
 Centacare Kalgoorlie
 Centacare Perth
 Centacare Employment and Training
 (Perth)
 McAuley (Mercy Community Services,
 Perth)

MAP OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE REPRESENTING COVERAGE OF CENTACARES

