

Leader editor bows out

In Sydney last month, ACPA members met over lunch to farewell Marcus Kuczynski, who has resigned as editor of The Catholic Leader. Marcus has been a committed member of ACPA for 10 years. He embodies the spirit of the association and has always upheld the highest standards of professional journalism. During his term as editor, The Catholic Leader has won numerous ACPA Awards for Excellence in Catholic publishing. As ACPA's Vice President, the Executive has appreciated his commitment to the association and his wise counsel.

The Catholic Leader, 6 May 2007.

AFTER a decade as Editor of The Catholic Leader, Marcus Kuczynski is leaving the position to take up a senior role with The Courier Mail newspaper in Brisbane. This is his final issue in charge of The Leader.

Mr Kuczynski started as Editor in January 1997, after coming from the Cumberland Newspaper Group in Sydney.

He has presided over some significant moments in the history of the newspaper, including its launch on the Internet in 1999 and its award-winning coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II and election of Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

Mr Kuczynski said he was sad to be leaving The Leader but was looking forward to new career opportunities. He said The Leader was well positioned for future success.

"It has a tremendous future and it is a real jewel for the Archdiocese of Brisbane to have a weekly publication of high regard," Mr Kuczynski said.

During his editorship the newspaper has won the Australasian Catholic Press Association newspaper of the year award on three occasions.

"This is a credit to all staff and contributors over the past 10 years," he said.

Mr Kuczynski said he hoped during his tenure The Leader has been well regarded for its fair and truthful reporting.

"It is part of our mission to publish the good and bad and to be fair to all sides in any debate," he said.

"I have tried to make it an open newspaper which is committed to providing the truth for its readers."

Archdiocesan Moderator Fr Peter Meneely paid tribute to Mr Kuczynski for his commitment and dedication.

"Marcus has been a strong advocate for The Leader and committed to it being a means of communicating with the Catholic population in Queensland and beyond," Fr Meneely said.

"Producing a high-quality newspaper each week with a small staff is not an easy job and his commitment and fidelity to this task are among his greatest attributes."

Mr Kuczynski has also been a long-serving member of the Australasian Catholic Press Association and the Australasian Religious Press Association. He is the serving vice-president of the Australasian Catholic Press Association.

President of the Australasian Catholic Press Association, Jane Favotto, said his leadership was responsible for raising the professionalism of the organisation and its members.

"By upholding the highest standards of professional journalism he embodies the spirit of the association," Ms Favotto said. "He has raised the bar for all of us in the Catholic press."

The Leader's sub-editor, Peter Bugden, will be acting editor until a permanent appointment is made later in the year.

The Catholic Leader also recently welcomed three new reporters to its ranks.

Paul Dobbyn has joined The Leader as a general news and regional reporter, Selina Harris will cover parishes and youth, and Amy Simmons will cover schools news.

Mr Kuczynski said the new staff were a welcome addition to the paper's professional journalistic team and would ensure The Leader had a strong future ahead.

Some parting thoughts

Marcus Kuczynski, The Catholic Leader, 6 May 2007.

HAVING the last word is one of the joys of being a newspaper editor. But after 10 years in the chair and more than 500 editions later, this time the last word comes with mixed emotions.

This is my final issue as Editor of The Catholic Leader. I am moving on to return to the secular media and to take advantage of an exciting new opportunity.

I leave with great joy at what these new horizons hold for me and sadness to be saying farewell to a newspaper that has been an integral part of my life and an important ministry to me.

It occurred to me recently that I have spent a quarter of my life at The Leader. My wife will probably testify it has been longer, but let's not count the hours.

The past 10 years at The Leader have been exhilarating and at the same time challenging.

A Church newspaper is not like most other publications. It is more like a double-edged sword.

In Church terms, it has to be obedient to the head (or hierarchy), and yet free to allow the body (or the people) to speak.

Sometimes the two do not quite connect, which can leave the editor in a bit of a pickle.

When they work together, however, they bring life to a Church which sometimes struggles to meet the needs of the modern world.

During the past 10 years it also has been my privilege to serve as Vice-President of both the Australasian Catholic Press Association (ACPA) and the Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA).

You may be surprised to know that Australia has more than 50 Catholic publications, most of them produced by either one or two (sometimes unpaid) staff on a shoestring budget.

Dedication does not start to define the amazing work these people do – for little earthly reward or thanks – to spread the Good News.

Just over a year ago, Australia's Catholic bishops issued a pastoral letter on the Church and the media called Go Tell Everyone.

It was an excellent document that clearly called on the Church to embrace the media – not fear it.

In relation to the Catholic media, it said, “A strong Catholic media nourishes our Church. It helps people of faith to know that they are not alone”.

The document also supported the role of Catholic media to be “at the service of Truth”.

It pointed out that “the Catholic media must always report in honesty, even if, when scandal is involved, this is painful for the Church. The Church's credibility is always reliant upon its role as Proclaimer of the Truth”.

Despite the occasional pressure not to cover certain issues, I have always done my best to ensure The Catholic Leader takes seriously its role “at the service of Truth”.

I am often told The Leader is the most respected Catholic newspaper in Australia. I hope it is for this reason.

The three top awards for Catholic Newspaper of the Year and the many other accolades The Leader has won over the past 10 years mean little unless Truth is at the core of what we do.

I would like to thank the staff, contributors and volunteers who I have worked with at The Leader. Their combined talents are what make this Australia's leading Catholic newspaper.

Finally, I would like to thank Catholic Leader readers for continuing to support this key apostolic ministry. It has been my pleasure to get to know many of you and to share some of your stories. Without you The Leader would not exist.