



Catholic Archdiocese of  
**Canberra and Goulburn**

# **A Diocesan Pastoral Council**

**WORKING PARTY REPORT**  
August 2022

## The Year of Walking Together Icon



*I humbly walk with you and our people as these people walk with theirs and Jesus to Emmaus. Colours and gestures express the mystery of walking with God, others, and nature. Therefore faith and culture, past and present...form who we are today. With deep gratitude "we walk humbly with God" in doing justice and loving tenderly (Micah 6:8).*

### COLOURS

**Gold:** kingdom, Australia, peace...

**White:** life, new life, resurrection, Holy Spirit...

**Red:** Divinity

**Blue:** humanity

**Rose:** youth, cheerfulness...

**Green:** hope, Australia

**Yellow:** fire, Australia

Red, Blue, Yellow are three primary colours, originally created by God. He calls us to multiply from these three to hundreds of other to make life colourfully, praise the Lord.

### GESTURES

- Walking together
- Listening to each other
- Wondering, contemplating, questioning, responding, living, faith in...
- Jesus eyes look passionately at human hearts.
- Others eyes looking at Jesus, searching for life.
- Mission rolls on their hands, Jesus mission roll is revealed and opened to everyone.

- Old man, old generations, the church, human history in the past and present.
- Young person, male and female, present and future.
- The road is opened for these and all by Jesus,  
" I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"
- (Jn14:6). The earth is rough and wild.
- The youth tries to touch Jesus ' cloak (Mk 5:27).
- Jesus' stola, the cross of His Father's will (red).
- Any followers of Christ " carry a cross and follow Me"(Mt 16:24).  
Both people carry a stola, cross on them.
- Scripture quotes on Jesus s life and mission, also on our Synodal journey.
- The Holy Spirit, white colour, hovering over Jesus and others.
- The fire, light, wisdom inspire hearts and minds. Jesus'  
hallow surrounded by red (God, cross).
- Jesus' right hand ring finger crosses the thumb create an  
X = Christ, and points at his heart.
- Wounded nail holes are only Jesus' character.

## **ICONOGRAPHY**

An early Eastern church tradition. It conveys a deep meaning and inspiring spiritual reflection beyond the painting itself. It creates a dialogue between it and the prayers.

It's detailed in writing clear and sharp. Each brush stroke is a prayer, that why monks and sisters like doing it. Also we can't find signatures and writer (painter) names on them. They want the observers to focus on God and spiritual aspects.

**REPORT**  
**OF THE WORKING PARTY INTO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DIOCESAN  
PASTORAL COUNCIL IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA-GOULBURN**

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## Preface

The Second Vatican Council in its Constitution on the Church defined the Church as the People of God with the task of being the sacrament of Christ to the world. The Council identified a three-fold task for the People of God: to proclaim the salvation brought through the Risen Lord (n. 8); to bring people together in participation of the divine life (nn. 2 and 48); and, to pursue a life of faith, hope and charity (“follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ”) (n. 41).

In this way the Council explored two elements of the Christian mission: to proclaim Jesus the Christ throughout the whole world (Mk 16: 15) and the detail of that proclamation to bring the Good News to the poor in word and action (Lk 4: 16 – 20 and Mt 25: 31 – 46).

To be a light to the nations in this Archdiocese requires reading the signs of the times and asking deeply and consistently, ‘what is God asking of us today?’ This prophetic dimension – examining the ‘times’ and proclaiming the Gospel – is at the heart of the mission of the Archdiocese.

In reflecting on the needs of the Archdiocese at this point, its people and communities and the Christian imperative to proclaim Jesus, Archbishop Christopher has himself reflected on his first words to the Archdiocese. The Gospel which we proclaim poses a primal choice: that we can sit on the shore of life content with what we have or we can take the risk of fishing in unchartered waters (Prowse, 2013, Installation Mass p. 4). Given the wide and numerous challenges of our times he has also reminded us to be aware that in all our endeavours, *“that the immensity of the power is God’s and not our own. We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but never despair”* (2 Cor 4:7-8)

This report responds to the Terms of Reference provided by the Archbishop to consider whether and how to establish a Diocesan Pastoral Council to enliven and further our mission as a Church in this Archdiocese.

## Executive Summary and Recommendations

(Page references below are to pages in the full report)

### SUMMARY

1. On 12 April 2022 Archbishop Christopher Prowse created a Working Party to move towards re-establishing a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) for this era in our Archdiocese. He asked the Working Party to consider and advise on:
  - past attempts at a DPC – our legacy
  - The present context and needs; and
  - options for a workable DPC. (pp. 4 -5)
2. The broader Church context for underpinning this work included the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the associated report From the Light of the Southern Cross and the Archdiocese's Response to this Report, the considerations of the Plenary Council and the forthcoming Rome Synod of Bishops in 2023. (pp 5 – 8)
3. The Working Party examined canon law on diocesan pastoral councils, as well as the previous reports, minutes and publications related to earlier DPCs and the two Diocesan Synods (1989 and 2004) held by the Archdiocesan Archives. It called for opinions and ideas from across the Archdiocese and it met with some of those who had been involved in the past DPCs. It also conducted preliminary consultations with interested parties, including a range of priests and those calling for the re-introduction of the DPC. It has also researched international experiences which may be useful to this Archdiocese.
4. The Working Party concluded that the Archbishop and the Archdiocese would benefit significantly from reforming a DPC. It formed the view that such a body would need to be constituted differently from Councils of the past in order to be successful. A DPC will benefit the Archdiocese because it provides a broad but co-ordinated forum for issues and ideas involving parishes, priests, Archdiocesan agencies and other important Catholic entities within the boundaries of the Archdiocese. Bringing all these interests to one table enhances opportunities for listening and learning together as well as developing responses which take into account the very different experiences they bring to the evangelising mission of the Archdiocese.
5. The Working Party found that previous DPCs had a mixed legacy, with the reports of those considered most effective identifying the key factor as being a broadly representative body which was still small enough to deliver an effective work program. (pp. 11 – 14)
6. The Working Party concluded that, to be effective a DPC needed to have clear goals and workplan. In light of the recent Plenary Council, it is suggested that the initial goals should be assisting in the implementation of the Plenary Council decisions (as applicable to the Archdiocese) and being part of the planning for the forthcoming Diocesan Synod (which the Plenary Council has signalled should take place within 5 years).
7. To develop ongoing goals and work plan, the Working Party proposes that, the work of the council would be enhanced by receiving annual advice from the Archbishop on his key priorities for the Archdiocese. (p. 36)

8. Previous iterations of the DPC experienced issues with communication between the Council and the parishes, especially when conveying the work of the Council across the Archdiocese. Consequently, the working party considers it a high priority for the new DPC to publish and widely disseminate an annual report.
9. To effectively fulfil its canonical mandate, a DPC needs to be representative, equitable and skilled. There are many options for its makeup which fit these requirements but the Working Party concluded that the fairest composition for *parish* representation would be based on the four deaneries for the Archdiocese. It then recommends nominees from the Council of Priests, religious sisters and brothers, Catholic agencies such as MarymeadCatholicCare and Catholic Education, as well as other entities like the St Vincent de Paul, the Women's Taskforce, the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry. It is also recommended that other formal instruments of governance and consultation within the Archdiocese are represented, for instance Vicars-General and the Chair of the Finance Council. In addition, the Working party believes that the DPC would benefit from the appointment of **up to 8** people who have specialist knowledge or skills by representing groups who might not be well represented, such as those living with disabilities, the aged, youth and families, First Nations Catholics, and those calling for church reform and caring for creation.
10. In total this would result in 27 appointments linked to specific representation and up to 8 more as self-nominations, reaching a maximum of 35. This is in line with the earlier experiences of the DPC which indicate that a smaller body is most effective and workable over time.
11. It is accepted that even this number is large and that to be effective a much smaller 'executive' comprising the Archbishop, Chair of the DPC and 3 – 4 others would meet regularly to progress the agenda of the DPC.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

R1. The Working Party recommends a Diocesan Pastoral Council of up to 35 members with the following composition:

- Twelve parish representatives: two each from the Eastern and Western Deaneries and four each from the Northern and Southern Deaneries;
- All representatives from each Deanery will be members of their PPCs, preferably their Chairs and at least half of the representatives from each Deanery will be female.
- Half of the representatives of the Northern and Southern deaneries will be from Canberra;
- Two from Council of Priests;
- Four from Catholic entities: One each from Catholic Care, St Vincent de Paul, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and the Women's Taskforce;
- Four from Religious congregations
- Two from Catholic Education, one urban and one rural
- **Up to Eight** Archdiocesan self-nominations to enhance a broad representation and the range of required and desirable skills;
- Ex officio members would be Vicars-General and the chair of the Finance Council
- The Financial Administrator and the Chancellor would attend meetings as advisors rather than members.

## R2. DPC Executive

- Even with a limited membership, an Executive of the DPC would be necessary to ensure consistent workflow and timely advice.
- It is suggested that such an Executive comprise no more than 5 people including the Chair of the DPC and the Archbishop
- This group would meet regularly and be empowered to progress the work of the DPC between meetings.

## R3. That the Council adopt the Draft Terms of Reference:

1. Identify and monitor the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese through a synodal process.
2. Support and advise the Archbishop on matters he puts before it and on those matters brought forward by delegates. This support and advice will focus on discerning the pastoral direction and priorities for the Archdiocese, identifying the needs and necessary plans for the future.
3. Advise the Archbishop on the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary Council and their implementation in the Archdiocese, in conjunction, where necessary, by particular law emanating from a Diocesan Synod.
4. Advise the Archbishop on the implementation of the recommendations of the Light from the Southern Cross.
5. If appropriate, advise the Archbishop on the implementation of decisions of the 2023 Rome Synod.
6. Provide an effective forum for parishes through-out the Archdiocese to deeply listen to one another and to learn from each other about issues, problems and solutions concerning pastoral affairs. As well as a tangible way of joining together in pastoral ministry and prophetic proclamation.
7. As necessary, refer issues of concern to appropriate bodies for consideration; for example, the Council of Priests or the Archdiocesan Finance Council.
8. Advise and assist the Archbishop in the conduct of Archdiocesan Synods at regular intervals and to guide the implementation of their recommendations.
9. Overtime, assist in the preparation and guide the implementation of a rolling 5-10 year Archdiocesan Pastoral Evangelisation Plan, once considered and endorsed by the relevant Archdiocesan Synods.

R4. That, overtime, the DPC assist the Archbishop to prepare a draft **Synodal Evangelisation Plan** from broad consultation throughout the Archdiocese and published in time for consideration and endorsement at each Archdiocesan Synod. The Plan should include strategies to:



1. Identify and describe the core mission of the Church in the Archdiocese – Evangelisation – and articulate what this means for parishes, schools, clergy, families and individuals;
2. Describe current trends and set goals which can be set and measured.
3. Clearly state the priorities of the Missionary task. For example, in 2022 – 2027 a high priority would be to support and assist the implementation of the Uluru Statement and Voices for the Heart. Other priorities would include the implementation of the *Laudato Si'* – Caring for Creation goals, responding to the challenges of catholic education and those for young families, structural change in aged care and meeting the needs of those living with mental illness.
4. Identify the resources required to achieve the priorities and their budgetary implications.
5. Consider and recommend the construction, sale, or re-purposing of the Church's physical assets to achieve the Archdiocese's goals.
6. Recommend on the appropriateness of the Archdiocesan structure for the achievement of its goal and priorities.
7. Outline the recommended timing for the implementation of the Archdiocesan Synodal Evangelisation Plan.

R5. That the Archbishop announce his intent to celebrate a Diocesan Synod within 3 years. Further that he ask the Council to provide advice about the agenda and conduct of the first Synod. In line with the recommendations of the Plenary Council, it is proposed that further Diocesan Synods be celebrated at five year intervals.

R6. That the Archbishop advise the Council each year of his priorities.

R7. That an evaluation strategy for the DPC be developed within the first two years and that it be undertaken by an independent group of specialists at arm's length every five years.

R8. That the Archdiocese provide for adequate staff resources to conduct research, prepare Council papers, assist the Chair as necessary and support the work of the Council, including in the implementation of its media strategy and communications.

R9. That the Council be allocated a travel and accommodation budget.

R10. That the Archdiocese provide an on-going formation program for the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

R11. That the Archbishop share with the Council the annual financial reports of the Archdiocese.

R12. As part of its statutes, the Diocesan Pastoral Council will ensure its members report back to their parish or church communities preferably after each meeting, but at least, annually.

R13. That the Chairs of PPCs in each deanery meet regularly to exchange information, ideas and outcomes of the DPC.

Questions for Consultation:

1. Should the Archbishop constitute a Diocesan Pastoral Council?
1. Do you agree with the draft terms of reference for a DPC? If not, how would you modify them?
2. Using the three established criteria of being representative, inclusive and appropriately skilled, which of the options for a DPC structure offered by the report would you favour?
2. Are there elements/issues that you believe this Summary or the full Report have missed that are important for the Archbishop to consider?

**Feedback to be provided to the Working Party at [workingparty@cg.org.au](mailto:workingparty@cg.org.au) by 28 October 2022.**

**If Parishes believe that they would benefit from meeting with members of the Working Party, this may be possible. Again, please contact the Working Party at [workingparty@cg.org.au](mailto:workingparty@cg.org.au) we will do our best to accommodate all requests.**

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Archbishop's decision to establish the Working Party

Archbishop Prowse has been considering the merit of a Diocesan Pastoral Council (n.b. the term Diocesan Pastoral Council or DPC hereafter, is the one used in Canon Law and hence in this report – though some other title may be adopted in actuality) since his installation as Archbishop in 2013.

Canon 511 states that,

“In every diocese and to the extent that pastoral circumstances suggest it, a pastoral council is to be constituted which under the authority of the bishop investigates, considers, and proposes practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese.”

Necessarily, for a Bishop to determine the extent of pastoral circumstances takes time and familiarity with the See. Additionally, in the specific time of Archbishop Prowse's ministry in Canberra-Goulburn the Church in Australia has been in the midst of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse; the Australian Bishops commissioning of the *Light from the Southern Cross* Report; preparations for the Australian Plenary Council; and, more recently the forthcoming Synod on Synodality. Added to these national contextual issues with diocese specific connotations the last nine years has also coincided with a new and dramatically innovative Papacy.

Pope Francis has initiated many changes, mainly in terms of tone and emphasis, but also some of substance. Three themes have dominated this papacy:

a. *Attentiveness to the Cry of the Poor*

Probably originating in the Holy Father's origins and ministry in Latin America, but going much further, this theme focuses on a Church of mercy. This Church moves to the periphery and seeks out those in need – in whatever manner that need is manifest. Such a Church is, by design, missionary, seeking to rupture the status quo and always striving to proclaim Christ Risen to all the world. As Pope Francis has expressed it, “The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel” (Reference?)

b. *Creation as an Integral Ecology*

Pope Francis has adopted and developed his predecessors' understanding of the need for an 'ecological conversion'. He has noted that all of creation is united and integrally connected. Living a good life must, necessarily, involve care for creation; caring for creation must, necessarily, involve flourishing human life. Further, all aspects of society are connected: hence the Holy Father links the treatment of refugees, the destitute and the war-ravaged to materialist and capitalist approaches taken to their extremes.

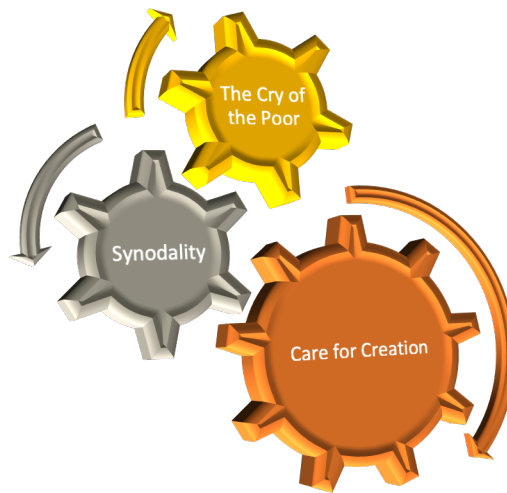
c. *The Synodal Church*

*Synodality* is an ancient term used throughout the Church across the centuries and used most frequently in modern times outside the Latin Catholic Church, to refer to processes and decision-making in Orthodox and Eastern Rite Catholic Churches *sui iuris*. The term

is also used in a number of other Christian denominations to refer to some of their processes of decision-making.

Pope Francis has given the term a particular substance and shape as both a hermeneutic device for understanding the Church and its governance; and, as a paradigm for discernment and action.

The 'Franciscan' era is one that accepts that we are in the midst of extremely complex changes at the universal level, the national level and the local level, such that Francis has indicated that this is not so much an era of change(s) but a complete change of era. As such, the three themes noted above are not distinct parallel strands but an integrated network of interwoven themes.



The Archbishop believes that, at this time, the needs of the Archdiocese, the deliberations of the Plenary Council and the Holy Father's magisterial theology has reached a point where it may be opportune to re-constitute a DPC.

### **Terms of Reference**

In April 2022, Archbishop Christopher announced to the Archdiocese that he had formed a working party to study the idea of a DPC, consider our past versions of such councils; examine the present context and needs of the Archdiocese; and propose options for a workable DPC.

### "DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL – WORKING PARTY

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

Evangelisation has been a key theme of my ministry as Archbishop and is the central message of Pope Francis. As he has taught, a Diocesan Pastoral Council is an important instrument of dialogue and collaboration to further our mission of making Jesus known and loved.

The Second Assembly of the Plenary Council takes place in July 2022 and Pope Francis is calling the Church to be Synodal.

Now is the time to create a Working Party to move towards re-establishing a Diocesan Pastoral Council for this era in our Archdiocese.

This Working Party will consider and advise on:

[1. Past attempts at a DPC – our legacy](#)

[2. The present context and needs](#)

[3. Options for a workable DPC](#)

The Working Party will consist of Alison Weeks, Brigid Cooney, Soomin Chung, Fr Tony Percy and Patrick McArdle (Convenor).

They will provide an initial report by August 2022.

The report will be made public and options for a Diocesan Pastoral Council will be the subject of wide consultation throughout the Archdiocese in the fourth quarter of the year.

Deepening our commitment to Evangelisation is the key to the future of our Archdiocese.

Please pray for the Working Party.

**Archbishop Christopher Prowse**  
**Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn.”**

From this announcement the Archbishop also provided some further description for each of the Terms of Reference (available <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/diocesan-pastoral-council/> ).

Broadly, the Archbishop requested the Working Party to look at the previous DPCs in the Archdiocese beginning in 1967 through to 2012; to consider the particular needs of the local Church at this time (which are also to some extent the concerns of the Church in Australia and internationally but necessarily particular too); finally, to propose options for a future DPC in terms of size, membership, focus and priorities.

### **Context in which this study is taking place.**

Consideration of a DPC at this particular time must take into account the specific needs of the Archdiocese within the context in which we find ourselves. Some of these have been hinted at above: living in a change of era characterised by significant change; an ecological crisis that is fundamentally reshaping the biosphere (resources, climate, diseases) and how humanity can engage with the broader creation; the urgent plight of many who are living at the margins of societies. Other issues have occupied much attention and will also contribute to an emerging understanding of how we are Church for years into the future. It is necessary to mention some of these at this juncture to provide a framework within which a consideration of a DPC is taking place.

a. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Assault

The Royal Commission was established in 2012 by the Commonwealth to investigate how institutions responded to allegations of child sexual assault. Over five years the Australian public received frequent stories of systemic failures to prioritise the needs of the vulnerable, particularly children, by ‘institutions’ of all types from government agencies, to charities, to sporting and social groups, to Churches. It should be noted that the Royal Commission specifically did not address any sexual assault that was not of minors, nor any in ‘family’ settings.

The Royal Commission conducted 57 Case Studies, interviewed 8000 people in private sessions and over 1300 witness across five years. 36% of all victims of child sexual assault in institutions in Australia were victims within the Catholic Church in the period 1950 – 2010 or 4445 potential victims (according to the Royal Commission’s statistical analysis) of 1880 members of the clergy and religious congregations.

This report is not the place for any consideration or analysis of the Royal Commission or its impact on the Church. Suffice to note, that any ministry or activity of the Church or its agencies will need to attend to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission for many years to come.

#### b. Light from the Southern Cross

The Australian Bishops and Catholic Religious Australia, as one of their first responses to the Royal Commission (Recommendation 16.7) initiated a review of governance in the Australian Church. This resulted in a report *Light from the Southern Cross* which was a comprehensive analysis of the situation of the Church in Australia, the areas of governance that require reform and renewal. It considered the failures identified by the Royal Commission but extended these beyond the focus of child sexual abuse to the systemic failures of governance across a wide spectrum of Church activities. For the purposes of this Report the most telling note is the finding that “*the failure to utilise the knowledge, skill and expertise of lay women and men has also been a significant contributor to poor past governance practices.*” (Reference?)

Following from the *Light from the Southern Cross* Report, the Australian Bishops Conference made a response to the Report, as did our own Archdiocese. Each of these:

- outlined good governance as a key objective of all levels of the Church;
- acknowledged the need to improve governance processes;
- identified areas that would require decisions to be made at the level of the Universal Church (especially around changes to Canon Law), the national Church (to be addressed at the Plenary Council) and, those areas requiring decisions at the level of dioceses (termed “particular law” and able to be made by Bishops, especially through Diocesan Synods).

#### c. Gleeson Report

The Australian Bishops Conference commissioned a report by historian Damien Gleeson on the history of Diocesan Pastoral Councils in Australia. These have had a varied history that are reflective of the size, distribution and resources available to particular dioceses as particular points of time.

It is important to note that the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn was an early adopter of diocesan pastoral councils a mere seven months after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council.

Across Australia DPCs have waxed and waned in some dioceses with varied success; in others there have never been such entities. In the planning phase for the Plenary Council, it was recognised that since there were only nine DPCs currently in operation, drawing participants from DPCs, as required in Canon Law, could not take place.

Gleeson examines the operations of some DPCs and reasons for their relative success or decline. He notes that some DPCs lost energy and focus over time but that the canonical requirement that they cease to exist when a Bishop dies or retires was a significant negative factor affecting their impact.

What does appear to be central to the success or otherwise of a DPC is both the strong support of the bishop and a closely defined work flow or purpose. This reflects the canonical requirement that DPCs investigate, consider, and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese (CIC 511).

The root of such success also suggests another reason why DPCs seem to have a limited life span: the close definition of work and purpose may mean that they do not evolve over time. In periods of ecclesial and social stability, the needs are seen as stable and the practical conclusions may be enduring. Given that it does seem we are in a change of era where change is the constant, a well-functioning DPC should have significant work over a number of years.

#### d. The Plenary Council

Since the turn of the millennium the Australian Bishops have been thinking about celebrating a Plenary Council. As with all such councils, it is born of identified need (c. 439 §1) and is, at least at some level, peculiar to the national context of the place and time in which it is celebrated (cc. 439, 441). Despite the Second Vatican Council's call for these ancient institutions to "flourish with new vigour," (CD n. 36) this is one of a very few such councils celebrated since Vatican II and under the prescripts of the 1983 Code of Canon Law; it is the first of the third millennium and of the Franciscan pontificate. For these reasons, it has greater universal interest than any of its Australian precursors.

The Australian Church has celebrated seven provincial and plenary councils: 1844, 1869 (provincial councils but for the whole Australian Church), 1885, 1895, 1905, 1937 (plenary councils) and in 1907 a provincial council for the Province of Melbourne. The first of these was the first public Catholic "synod" celebrated in the British Empire since the Reformation! Of the six previous national councils, three were held on the initiative of Australian bishops (1844, 1895, 1905) and the other three at the direction of the Holy See. These Councils dealt with governance issues, administration of sacraments – including mixed marriages – and Catholic Education. It is arguable that they established the parameters for the success of the Australian Church for the century and a half that followed the first.

The Fifth Plenary Council of Australia has had a four year gestation. It was announced in 2018 – almost in the immediate aftermath of the final report of the Royal Commission; 2018 and 2019 was the initial preparatory, Australia wide consultation called the *Listening and Dialogue Phase* followed by the *Listening and Discernment Phase*. The first of these steps was

extremely broad based on the question, *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* 220 000 people took part in small groups or as individuals resulting in over 17 800 submissions!

The first Assembly was held in October 2021 and the second in July 2022. A set of themes was derived from the Listening phases and discussed in groups by the members of the Plenary Council at the first assembly. Further refinement and consideration of specific propositions took place at the second Assembly. These deliberations resulted in the following items of particular law and recommendations being sent to the Vatican for the *recognitio* or further deliberation.

- Endorsement and welcome of the Uluru statement of the Heart
- Development of options for the liturgically and cultural ATSI symbols and rituals in Catholic liturgical contexts, including a local translation of liturgical texts
- Encouragement of *Laudato Si'* Action plans for all dioceses, parishes and church entities
- Being a missionary Church; meeting people where they are by development of resources, formation and education programs, dialogue and merciful responses to the needs of our society.
- Ensuring that women's voices are heard, considered and valued and that they are appropriately represented in decision-making structures across the Church.
- Mandating regular diocesan synods, diocesan pastoral councils and parish pastoral councils
- A renewed focus, energy and intent of adult faith formation.

e. Year of Synodality

In April 2021 Pope Francis announced that the next General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops would be "For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission." In some ways mirroring the processes adopted for the Australian Plenary Council, a world-wide consultation phase was undertaken in 2022, to be followed by a series of regional, national and international consideration of the plans for the Synod and leading up to the Synod in 2023.

Overall, the Pope had adopted a journey metaphor, expressing a fundamental feature of synodality: let us walk together as a Church with the Holy Spirit. It recognises that the reality of being Church today is one of journey, of walking together.

Linked to this Synod and as a segue from the Plenary Council, Archbishop Prowse intends to celebrate a "Year of Walking Together" from August 2022 – August 2023. This year will not seek to have major initiatives, apart from the foundation of a Diocesan Pastoral Council, but will be a year in which we invite each other to recognise, participate and share in the events, activities and lives of each other across the Archdiocese.

**Definition of a Diocesan Pastoral Council**

A fundamental right of all the Christian faithful is to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires (CIC 212 §2). Further, according to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the



Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons (CIC 212 §3).

One mechanism through which the faithful of a particular Church (diocese) can do this is through a diocesan pastoral council. The Second Vatican Council promoted the idea of diocesan pastoral councils in its decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops:

*It is greatly desired that in each diocese a pastoral commission will be established over which the diocesan bishop himself will preside and in which specially chosen clergy, religious and lay people will participate. The duty of this commission will be to investigate and weigh pastoral undertakings and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them (CD n. 27)*

As with many of the teachings of the Council from this significant insight in 1965, there has been a long evolution in thinking about diocesan pastoral councils. Some bishops, such as Archbishop O'Brien immediately formed one after the conclusion of the Council; other dioceses have never had such an entity. As noted by Gleeson, where they have existed their tasks, tenure and nature have varied considerably.

In 2009 Pope Benedict required the personal ordinariates for former Anglicans to have pastoral councils: "In order to provide for the consultation of the faithful, a pastoral council is to be constituted in the ordinariates." (*Anligcanorum coetibus* 2009, Article X. §4.).

The current Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church states that,

*In every diocese and to the extent that pastoral circumstances suggest it, a pastoral council is to be constituted which under the authority of the bishop investigates, considers, and proposes practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese (CIC 511).*

A diocesan pastoral council is to reflect the entire makeup of the people of God within the diocese, reflecting their different areas, social conditions and professions, as well as different ministries within the diocese (cf CIC 512).

It is noted in Canon 514 that a diocesan pastoral council possesses a consultative vote. This term has to be understood in its canonical context. Bishops are leaders of dioceses but they also serve a legal function. They are the canonical representative of the diocese, meaning that they are the responsible officer for the diocese. They are to hear, that is listen to and attend to all the faithful who make their needs known to the bishop (CIC 212 §2), the presbyteral council – which is also essentially a consultative body (CIC 500 §2) and the pastoral council. The bishop is, in the end, responsible for the well-being and good of the diocese and, hence, is the responsible decision-maker. The bishop is not an autocrat but a pastor.

Each diocesan pastoral council must have its own statutes that determine its operation, scope and authority. It must meet at least annually.

## CHAPTER TWO: OUR LEGACY

### Current Advisory Bodies

A Diocesan Bishop, or in the case of an Archdiocese, an Archbishop, has all ordinary, proper, and immediate power which is required for the exercise of his pastoral function (CIC 361 §1). As with all the baptised, the Archbishop exercises his various responsibilities in three dimensions: priestly or sanctifying; prophetic or teaching; and, service or governing. To effectively exercise his ministry canon law provides a range of instruments and channels.

Chief among the means available to assist a diocesan bishop is a Diocesan Synod. This is the most formal gathering of a diocese to assist the bishop in his service of the diocese (Instruction on Diocesan Synods, 1997, n. 2). Canon 465 indicates that all discussion at a diocesan synod is to be free and the Instruction on Diocesan Synods teaches that the Bishop, having “having heard the members of the Synod, his will be the duty of discernment of the various opinions expressed, he will scrutinize everything and retain what is good... seeking to discern the will of the Spirit ... and not the imposition of an arbitrary will.”

The bishop is also assisted in the daily responsibilities of his ministry through the diocesan curia, in our Archdiocese called the Archbishop’s Office of Evangelisation, people appointed to specific tasks to ensure that the diocese functions effectively. Included in the diocesan curia are the Vicar General(s), Episcopal Vicars, the Diocesan Financial Administrator and the Chancellor; other roles and duties may be assigned according to the need of the diocese from time to time.

The Archbishop has a range of other formal bodies that must exist to assist in his ministry of service: the Council of Priests (CIC 495), Consultors (CIC 502) and the Archdiocesan Finance Council (CIC 492). Additionally, the bishop may constitute a Diocesan Pastoral Council (CIC 511). In recent times the workings of these bodies and their intersections are recognised as part of our common journey or walking together, which Pope Francis has reminded us is the synodal way of being Church.

The Council of Priests consists of appointed members, some who are *ex officio* by virtue of the office they hold (for example Vicars General, Episcopal and Forane – Deans) and members elected by the clergy of the Archdiocese. This latter group must be around half the membership. The Council must represent the prebyterium of the diocese taking into account various regions and ministries. The bishop must hear its views in matters of greater importance and in some instances, required by law, must obtain its consent. From within the Council the bishop appoints the College of Consultors. The Council and College advise the bishop on the care and administration of the diocese. When a diocese is vacant, the College of Consultors continues and has a range of set functions under Canon Law.

The Archdiocesan Finance Council consists of the bishop or his delegate and members of the faithful who are experts in finance and civil law. This body advises the Archbishop on budgetary matters, asset management, and future financial trends; specifically it is to determine the annual budget of the diocese (CIC 494 §3); and, to assist the bishop in the appointment of the Finance Officer (CIC 494 §1).

Each of the bodies *required* by Canon Law is evidently valuable to the proper administration of the Archdiocese as well as its primary mission of evangelisation. A diocesan pastoral council would make a significant contribution also as envisaged by Canon Law. In

particular, it would enable the bishop to hear more broadly from members of parish communities and ministries as well as from their juridic representatives. In this manner the bishop can better enable the synodality implied in Canon 212 §2 and §3:

§2. The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the Church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.

§3. According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.

We acknowledge that the Archbishop has also established other mechanisms to provide assistance and advice in specific areas of the Archdiocese's evangelising mission: including, the Catholic Education Commission, the Marymead Catholic Care Board, the Women's Taskforce, and the Caring for Creation Movement. Each of these bodies is essentially lay led and comprised predominantly of lay people. However, they do not have a formal connection to parishes in terms of mission and purpose. The concerns of parishes will be necessarily different – and not heard in any other forum.

A Diocesan Pastoral Council would and should provide that opportunity for the voices of the parishes, and therefore the laity, to reach the ears of the Archbishop. Perhaps just as importantly, the views of the laity would also reach his advisors. A Diocesan Pastoral Council would add to the synodal expression of the Archdiocese.

However, an Archdiocese is more than the sum of its parts and a DPC has traditionally consisted of a weighted representation favouring the laity but also including a significant number of clergy and religious, as well as leaders of Catholic entities such as Education, Health and Social Services.

### **The Archdiocesan Pastoral Councils of the Past**

The Archdiocese has a proud and unique history of consultation through a DPC - with Archbishop Eris O'Brien (1953-1966) creating the first Council in 1966. Archbishops Clancy, Carroll and Coleridge each re-formed a Diocesan Pastoral Council with varied levels of enthusiasm. However, at the time of Archbishop Coleridge's transfer, the Council, as then constructed, had lost momentum and enthusiasm had waned considerably.

#### ***The O'Brien Council***

The Archives of the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese reveal that while the other Australian Bishops held off, Archbishop O'Brien returned from Vatican II determined to consult his people more broadly and formally. The very first Archdiocesan Pastoral Council met on 11 October 1966. While the Archbishop had initially wanted a body with as wide a membership as possible, his concerns over its need to be manageable finally reduced the number of members to 24: eight clergy, eight religious and eight laity. The Archbishop, his secretary, the assistant bishop, and the vicar-general rounded it out to 28. Archbishop O'Brien believed that laity representation fell to the formal bodies of the church such as the Catholic Women's League, the Saint Vincent de Paul, the Legion of Mary, the Knights of the

Southern Cross, the Youth Clubs and the School Auxiliaries. There was no specific representation of the parish laity at that time.

Archbishop O'Brien revealed his rationale for a Council as inspired by the writings of Pope Paul VI, which still rings true today:

“The scope of the Pastoral Council embraces all those things which have a bearing on pastoral work, to investigate them. To weigh them carefully and to formulate practical conclusions about them so that the life and activity of the People of God, may be more solidly based in the Gospels....” (*Ecclesiae Sanctae*, Chap 1, n. 16 1; 6 August 1966).

Archbishop O'Brien also pointed to inspiration from the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church:

“The whole Church, strengthened by each of its members can more effectively fulfil its mission for the life of the world.” (L.G. Chap 4, n. 34).

The scope of the first meetings, initially held annually, covered the Liturgical, the Spiritual, Financial, Civic and Ecumenical, Catholic Societies and Bodies, and “other parish affairs”. It was at that first meeting in 1966 that the Council decided that every parish should have a Parish Pastoral Council consisting of between 15 and 25 people with membership by free election by all parishioners over 18 – a decision given the force of law at the 1989 Synod.

### *The Clancy Council*

The Diocesan Pastoral Council disappeared under Archbishop Cahill (1967 – 1978) and was reinstated by Archbishop Clancy (1978-1983) with its first meeting on 17 November 1979 with 25 members and an executive of six to keep things happening between meetings. By 1981, it had 30 members with the ongoing support of an Executive predominately comprising nominees from the Council and supported by the Archbishop's Secretary.

It was at this time that representation shifted to a parish focus with the Deaneries having two – four representatives based on their population. This introduced 12 parish representatives directly on the Council, along with two priests, one Brother and one Sister, two young people and one each from the Knights, the Catholic Women's League, the Catholic Education Commission and the St Vincent de Paul.

It developed position papers on education, acolytes, unemployment, evangelisation, nominal Catholics, and family planning; all of which flowed into the 1981 Diocesan Assembly of 200 members, overwhelming from parishes.

### *The Carroll Council*

Archbishop Francis Carroll (1983-2006) was an enthusiastic supporter of the DPC, holding its inaugural meeting in 1985. At its October 1986 meeting he advised that:

“the Council is an important means of mobilising the whole strength of the Archdiocesan Church. This strength comes from the Holy Spirit but depends for its main expression on the faith, hope, love, gifts of the Spirit, prayer, compassion and unique talents of every man, woman and child”.

Fewtrell describes the lengths Archbishop Carroll went to in his attempt to consult widely and involve the whole Archdiocese in the decisions around the size and composition of a DPC in the Archdiocese:

“He consulted widely to identify the needs of the Church in Canberra-Goulburn and announced an Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly would be held in May 1984 to consider the matter. Questionnaires were sent to all parishes and organisations in the Archdiocese. The survey results helped frame the agenda for the one-day session, which was attended by 770 people from throughout the Archdiocese. It was the start of a journey of engagement, sharing, discernment and hope, in which the Archbishop sought to bring life and consultative expression to the shared baptismal responsibilities of the region’s Catholics.”

(Fewtrell, Background Paper for Concerned Catholics Canberra-Goulburn; Diocesan Pastoral Councils”, p. 2).

At the 1985 inaugural meeting the Archbishop commented that “we are not a diocesan parliament with the power to legislate or make binding decisions” but that he sought the DPC’s advice on a broad range of matters, including the real life situation of people, all aspects of the life and work of the church, resources, needs and priorities, and broad pastoral objectives.

At that first meeting in 1985, there were 12 parish/deanery representatives, two religious sisters, three independent catholic schools, the ANU, CCAE and Signadou, one young person, representatives from the German, Italian and Polish communities and one Archbishop appointment, along with the ex officio appointments of the Archbishop, and the two vicars-general.

By 1996, the Council had swollen to 129 ‘delegates’ meeting twice yearly with a Secretariat of 14 who really moved things along. The composition of the Secretariat signalled where the power lay: the Archbishop’s secretary, 1 clergy, 1 religious, six elected from the Council, and four nominations of the Archbishop.

The Carroll Council was ambitious, holding annual conferences on topics such as ‘Evangelisation: The Pastoral Future of the Archdiocese’ (1995). In the published report of this conference, the last word on Pastoral Councils goes to Archbishop Carroll:

“The Diocesan Pastoral Council as I see it has shown itself to have three basic values:

1. it is a form of adult Christian Catholic formation;
2. it has a very specific purpose in the life of the Church, and
3. it is meant to give, with the Bishop, pastoral advice, and also provide pastoral leadership in the life of the Church.
  - Where is the Church going?
  - What are its pastoral priorities?

It must lead to ACTION”.

(Evangelisation: The Pastoral Future of the Archdiocese, published proceedings of Conference held 14-15 October 1995, Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn, pp 2-3).

Terry Fewtrell comments that: “During the term of Archbishop Carroll (1983 – 2006), the structure and work of the DPC was large and ambitious - its output significant in terms of

relevance and quality. There was enthusiastic and supportive engagement by the Catholic community.” (Fewtrell, *ibid*, pp 1).

The ambitions of the Council led to a period of extraordinary engagement across the Archdiocese that resulted in a catalogue of issue-focussed meetings/reports, 3 Diocesan Assemblies and 2 Diocesan Synods. (Fewtrell p. 3).

Archbishop Carroll held two popular, successful synods under the auspices of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, one in 1989 and another in 2004. These may have been the greatest legacies of the Carroll Council.

By the first Synod in 1989 however, the influence of the DPC seemed to be waning because the Archbishop agreed to establish a Pastoral Planning Committee, additional to the DPC, to prepare a mission statement, facilitate the implementation of Synod decisions, decide goals and advise on strategies etc.... (Synod Report 1989-90).

With the benefit of hindsight, it is reasonable to ask: “what was the DPC doing?”

Similarly, in 2004, the Archbishop’s report of the 2004 Synod indicates that the DPC had fallen away, although he intended to revive it. Archbishop Carroll had some criticism of the DPC, along the lines of workability versus representation. His big, representative body was important and valuable but it did not get things done and he recommended that if they stuck with such a large body, that it would need a strong, active executive committee to steer the ship and actually do some work. (Diocesan Synod 2004, “Called to be One in Christ Jesus”, Archbishop F Carroll, 15 August, 2004, p.p. 86)

Archival records indicate that the Council of 2005 remained relevant to the Church’s role in the world by focussing on outreach, adult faith formation, women and money.

### ***The Coleridge Council***

Archdiocesan Archives do not hold much material on the DPC under Archbishop Mark Coleridge (2006 – 2012) who established his DPC in 2007, consisting of around 20 members. Fewtrell reports that “while meeting twice in 2007, (it) appeared not to have been continually active. In April 2011 † Coleridge announced the formation of a reconstituted DPC, which seemingly had a further reduced membership of around 15. This DPC lapsed on his appointment as Archbishop of Brisbane.” (Fewtrell p. 3).

By 2007, under Archbishop Coleridge, it concerned itself with familiar questions: the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese, effective use of assets and property, strategic planning for the Archdiocese, finance, the needs of different parishes, and young people.

### **Lessons Learned**

Our Archbishops were reluctant to establish yet another body which was meeting for the sake of it, ineffective, unwieldy, or did not flow back to the parishes.

Most Archbishops reached similar conclusions about having a body which was small but effective. In later years when representation became a much higher priority, they switched to larger DPCs, which more fairly represented the parishes and other bodies of the Archdiocese, but relied on working secretariats to get things accomplished. The larger bodies were considered clumsy and less effective.

In fact, Archbishop Carroll has cogently argued against large, unwieldy Councils. It was his lived experience of a DPC and the Working Party has given significant weight to his opinion.

“But somehow you have got to have an organisation...that enables us to remain representative and yet sharply enough focused to actually get things done and to monitor how things are being done and keep working on the continuing agenda.....Probably we even need a smaller group at the heart of it that will really be able to do a lot more things”. (Diocesan Synod 2004; *ibid*, pp 86).

Each Archbishop responded to the times in which he found himself and the evolving nature of representation and delegation.

It is encouraging that they had a shared hope for their Councils, best expressed by Archbishop Carroll in 1986: “If the Council develops and functions as I hope, it will be a great spiritual force and have considerable moral authority”. (DPC Minutes of 19-20 April 1986).

The nineteen-eighties were a different milieu to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. But the Council of the 1980s was focused on faith and practice, marriage, aboriginal equality, and Christianity “as an option”. All topics we would recognise. Similarly, in the 1990s, the focus shifted to reconciliation with our indigenous sisters and brothers, the common wealth – common good axis, families, the nature of pastoral ministry, rural Australia and evangelisation. By the 2000s the Council was concerned with the Church in the world, adult faith formation, women, young people, assets and finance.

Floating through the reports of each Council era was mounting concern about declining numbers attending Mass.

This is not at all surprising as these issues are central to the missionary nature of the Church – across the world, let alone in our Archdiocese. The consistency of the concerns and agendas over time is a confirmation that a Council has the insight and inspiration of the Holy Spirit to identify the most profound pastoral issues of the Church. It also indicates that these concerns are broadly consistent over time and require ongoing attention.

Observers may be tempted to say that the Councils have been an abject failure as none of the seminal issues identified have been ‘fixed’. A DPC is not a magic wand to solve the challenges the Church has faced in the last 60 years or into the future. On the other hand, no one can say that things might not have been worse if not for the spotlight, energy and effort of the Councils of the time.

For example, the Councils of the 80s and 90s were big, ambitious endeavours which valued broad representation and a multiplicity of voices. There were two significant Diocesan Synods and a flowering of programs for adult faith formation, liturgy committees, music groups, youth groups, community outreach, and social justice programs.

There were no formal evaluations of the Councils conducted and no records in the archives of any informal assessments other than those of Archbishop Carroll referred to above. Anecdotally however, those who ‘were there at the time’ have told us that it was an exciting experience of energy, agency and confidence. So many gifts of the laity and religious sisters were nurtured and applied to new ideas and programs. Who remembers the youth Masses? Vibrancy, experiment and joy were by-words of the times.

It is tempting to conclude that there was a causal relationship between these developments and the DPCs. That may be. But it might also be true that these developments were simply correlated with changing times, especially the reality that capable, well-educated and energetic religious sisters were looking for and crafting a new mission for themselves in the church.

Nevertheless, the witnesses report that the laity were energised, active and more involved. They were claiming their Church as People of God.

Another practical lesson of that time is reported to be the hiatus between the experience of parishioners as Council representatives and the benefits derived from that in their parishes. As there were very few, if any, Parish Pastoral Councils the parish representatives were elected from the general parish body and they had no avenue for reporting back to their parishes and sharing all they had discovered and learned.

The conclusion is that to improve communication and effectiveness there needs to be a direct link between parishes and Diocesan Pastoral Councils; most effectively by allocating at least one parish seat to the Chair of its Parish Pastoral Council.

This Archdiocese is rural and urban, wide flung and closely knit. There will not be many models of consultation which are likely to work. However, the pandemic taught us that we are adaptive and resilient – and that there are many ways to use new technologies to keep connected.



## CHAPTER THREE: WHO ARE WE IN 2022?

### Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese – Snapshot over Time

	1968	1994	2021
Catholics in pop (%)	36	30	20
Catholics attending Mass (%)		18	8-10
Parishes	53	60	51
Diocesan Priests	109	65 (active)	40 diocesan + 7 Clerical Religious – in ministry within the Archdiocese (active) 20 (retired)
Permanent Deacons			9
Religious Sisters	527	211	77
Religious brothers	118	28	4
Lay teachers	20	544	1853 (headcount) + 560 (casual headcount)
Pastoral Associates	0	17	2
Ave age of priests		56	50 (active diocesan priests only)
Catholics per priest	779	2340	3976
Health and Aged Care Facilities			14
Schools and Early Learning Centres			56

Sources: Evangelisation: The Challenge Report of DPC Conference 1995, Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese; and Archdiocesan Administrative Data; ABS Census 2021

The National Centre for Pastoral Research (NCPR) produces statistical data for each diocese based on the Australian Census.

Using the 2016 Census, the NCPR produced the following snapshot of the Canberra-Goulburn diocese in 2016:

Total Population: 655,891

Catholic Population:	155,088 (23.6%)
Catholic Population per cent:	(23.6%)
Median age of Catholics:	40 years
Total Catholic Families:	60,223
15,148 Catholics live alone (%)	10.2
26,287 Catholics were born overseas (%)	16.6
2,004 Catholics do not speak English well (%)	1.3
8,197 Catholics need assistance with core activities (%)	5.3
4,092 Indigenous Catholics (%)	2.6

Source: National Catholic Census Project 1991-2016 pp 2-5

The stark rural – urban distribution of the Archdiocese is not reflected in this big-picture snapshot and there are also many variations across the urban parishes. For example, the NCPR identifies the top five birthplaces of Catholics in the Archdiocese as being the Philippines, United Kingdom, Italy, Croatia and India (ibid, pp 17). But at the same time, in Gungahlin, the biggest parish in the Archdiocese, overseas born Catholics were predominately from China, and India.

Similarly, we would expect the age distribution to vary along urban-rural lines with a higher proportion of older Catholics to be found in rural parishes. While the entire Catholic population is aging, the drift of young people to the city will make this aging more pronounced in the country.

Younger parishes, like Gungahlin, have a higher proportion of young families and the parishes’ response is to pivot more towards their needs for childcare, early education and Catholic schooling.

Another revealing snapshot of the Catholic population is reflected in the following NCPR historical table:

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Diocese 1996</u>	<u>Diocese 2001</u>	<u>Diocese 2006</u>	<u>Diocese 2011</u>	<u>Diocese 2016</u>
Catholic pop	157,284	160,195	160,206	163,247	155,088
Caths					
aged 0-14(%)	25.3	24.1	21.9	20.9	20.0
Caths					
aged 65+ (%)	8.9	10.4	12.2	13.8	16.9
Caths					
born in					
NESC(%)	12.3	11.7	11.3	12.0	13.4
Catholic					
Families	53,206	56,713	59,815	61,955	60,223

Catholics					
living alone	11,345	13,048	13,747	14,893	15,155
Caths owning					
Home Or					
buying (%)	67.8	69.8	72.3	72.2	72.6

Source: National Catholic Census Project 1991-2016 pp 3

When the growth in the whole Australian and Archdiocesan populations is considered over this same twenty years, the accelerating drop in the numbers of people identifying as Catholic becomes clear.

In terms of City versus country, the 2016 census indicated that there were 79,566 Catholics in Canberra, representing 23% of the population. This leaves 31,433 Catholics distributed over the vast kilometres of the rural section of the Archdiocese.

The 2021 Census affirmed this population distribution while also confirming the decline in those who identify as Catholic.

Observations from the 2021 Census:

The Archdiocese:

- Grew by 75,545 or 11.5 per cent in total population between 2016 and 2021; now at 731,436
- Almost all of this growth was in urban areas, representing 69 per cent of the population in the Archdiocese.
- While there may have been some rural drift/tree-changers during the pandemic, especially in the Eastern Deanery on the South Coast, the rural areas of the Archdiocese, at 228,391 people, only represent 31 per cent of the Archdiocese.
- For those who identified as Catholics, the changes were a little different.
- In 2016, Catholics represented 23 per cent of the population and by 2021 this had dropped to 21.8 per cent – a little better than the national trend of 20 per cent.
- In 2016, Catholics had 23 per cent of the urban population; by 2021 this proportion had dropped to 21.4 per cent. Similarly, by 2021 Catholics represented 22.6 per cent of the rural population of the Archdiocese.

The Deaneries:

A map and full parish list of the Deaneries can be found in *Chapter Five*, page: 32

- There are wide variations in the total and Catholic populations across the Deaneries.
- The most populous is the Northern Deanery at 311,630 people, including the largest urban and rural parishes, Gungahlin with 87,656 and Goulburn with 40,168. North

Belconnen is also in the mix with 28,024 people. The distribution of parishes is relatively even between those which are urban or rural but the big numbers are urban. Catholics represent 19% of the population in this Deanery, below the national average. This could be the result of changes in the biggest parishes having a disproportionate impact. For example, while Gungahlin Parish, the biggest in the Archdiocese grew by 16,800, the number of Catholics only increased by a negligible 525, bringing the proportion of Catholics down from 22% to 18%. The Gungahlin region is renowned for its broad multicultural character, possibly reducing the Catholic representation as it has rapidly expanded.

- The Southern Deanery, grouped to the south of the Archdiocese, and including Cooma and Jindabyne in the rural areas but also the urban parishes of Cathedral, South Tuggeranong, South Woden and Weston Creek, which together hold the biggest proportion of its total population of 282,544 people, 24.7%, or 69,869 of whom identify as Catholic. Queanbeyan has been counted as an urban parish for this breakdown. South Tuggeranong is the second biggest parish in the Archdiocese at 62,152 people, of whom 14,838 or 23.8 % are Catholic. This is considerably higher than the norm of 21.8% for the Archdiocese and 20% for the nation. One reason for this may be the strong English rather than Asian background of its residents.
- The smallest deanery, but the most coherent, is the Eastern Deanery on the south coast, consisting of just six key parishes: Batemans Bay, Bega, Cobargo, Moruya, Narooma and Pambula and their smaller surrounding towns and villages. With a population of 76,671 it is a rural population which dramatically swells in holiday periods. The 13,127 Catholics in the deanery are the very minimum the deanery serves over the year. Numbers of Mass attendees can swell by over 100 per cent in the summer period.
- The Western Deanery is a completely rural Deanery to the west of the Archdiocese consisting of long standing country towns including: Adelong, Boorowa, Cootamundra, Grenfell, Gundagai, Lake Cargelligo, Temora, Tumut, West Wyalong, and Young. Historically, Catholics have been well represented in these towns and throughout the region. This continues in the 2021 Census with 27% or 16,526 Catholics in a population of 60,600.
- The ethnic background of the Archdiocese is very Caucasian and where ethnic pockets develop, usually from South Asia or China, they still only represent about 5 per cent of the population at most.

## **B: Data from Census 2021**

<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>POPULATION 2021</b>	<b>IDENTIFY CATHOLIC 2021</b>
<b>NORTHERN DEANERY</b>	<b>311,630</b>	<b>59,601 (19%)</b>
Urban	252,116	44,371 (17.5%)
Rural	59,116	15,230 (25.7%)
<b>SOUTHERN DEANERY</b>	<b>282,544</b>	<b>69,869 (24.7%)</b>
Urban	249,540	62,990 (25%)
Rural	33,004	6,879 (20.8%)
<b>EASTERN DEANERY</b>	<b>76,671</b>	<b>13,127 (17%)</b>
All Rural		
<b>WESTERN DEANERY</b>	<b>60,600</b>	<b>16,526 (27%)</b>
All Rural		
<b>TOTAL URBAN</b>	<b>501,656</b>	<b>107,361 (21.4%)</b>
<b>TOTAL RURAL</b>	<b>228,391 (45%)</b>	<b>51,762 (22.6%)</b>
<b>ARCHDIOCESE</b>	<b>731,436</b>	<b>159,123 (21.8%)</b>

## CHAPTER FOUR: PASTORAL NEEDS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE

When appointing the Working Party the Archbishop asked it take into account the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese. The Working Party has taken this to mean: *will the Archdiocese materially and pastorally benefit from a Diocesan Pastoral Council? Are there particular issues he needs to take into account to ensure its effectiveness?*

Chapter Three gave us a clear picture of where we are statistically, in terms of population, priests, Mass attendance, schools and parishes. It projected the likely situations for most parishes to 2050 and compared that with other trends. The likely pastoral needs of the Archdiocese are a more complex matter. Will we continue to worship in the same way? Will the rules change? What will be the impact of our changing cultural face? Will any young people still belong? In what manner will our diocesan church “read the signs of the times”?

The impact of huge national and international events such as geo-political conflicts, which might involve Australia, and the rolling momentum of climate change and global warming will inevitably hi-jack long term trends in the Church and in society. The social impact and dislocation of just these two exogenous factors make it difficult to accurately predict what the Archdiocese will need, pastorally, in the coming years.

How the Church responds to the wider world is dependent on decisions made at the highest level as well as in the hearts and minds of every parishioner. As Pope Francis has reminded us in order to be a Church of mercy that responds to need within a paradigm of integral ecology, believers will need to become more synodal – deeply listening to each other as we walk together in our vocation to proclaim Jesus.

Chapter Three drew the picture of an aging population, in need of more aged care services. It told of increasingly uncertain shelter for so many people and the enormous need for affordable housing and supported accommodation. How will the Archdiocese respond? How will it use its people, its assets and its experience to alleviate suffering and meet the needs of the aged and the homeless?

Families are under stress, especially in the area of childcare, a necessary service which allows both parents to participate in the workforce. Its lack of availability and high cost exclude so many parents from returning to work. What other supports can the Archdiocese offer to families in need?

The stress on mental health and wellbeing is at epidemic levels in our community and current services are being over-run. How should the Church respond? What ‘field hospital’ can it meaningfully construct and offer to our communities?

Inevitably these questions lead to a theological discussion about the impact of the way we live in our relationship with God. The Church’s view is that to reach out to those in need is to be the Good Samaritan, to act just as Jesus would have done. In so doing the People of God are living their faith and acting as beacons of evangelisation: the driving purpose of the Church.

Decisions about the trends and issues arising as described in Chapter Three and the burning desire to reach out to others, to meet them where they are in their lives are inevitably

stripped down to one crucial issue: financial and human resources. How do we generate our income and how do we spend it? Are our assets working for us and for best outcomes for those in need? How can our schools, churches and presbyteries become more flexible and multiuser friendly? If fewer and fewer people attend Mass in the future, where will the money come from? Even today a major challenge is finding the volunteers needed to run programs and keep things running smoothly. Our society is time-poor and feeling considerable conflict over how we spend our time.

These are all questions which the Archbishop must contend with daily and on which a Diocesan Pastoral Council can make a material impact.

The Working Party cannot fully identify the current and future pastoral needs of the Archdiocese but a representative Council, with access to the right skills and resources, can do as Canon Law outlines; it can investigate them, weigh them carefully and form practical conclusions about them. It can gather data and intelligence from all corners of the Archdiocese, it can consult with people across the Archdiocese and it can base its conclusions on the practical, day to day life experience of its broad range of members.

### **Recommendations**

The Working Party believes, therefore, that the Council can be of great assistance to the Archbishop in listening to the needs of the people throughout the Archdiocese, being their voice, and feeding this knowledge into the established trends emerging across time and region. It is apparent that it must also have access to the range of theological, cultural, financial and policy building skills necessary for it to reach valid conclusions.

Consequently, the Working Party believes that an effective Council should have strong representation from all areas of the Archdiocese, giving particular emphasis to the parishes and local knowledge. Where needful skills do not emerge from the membership, it must be able to second those skills as necessary.

#### **1. Membership**

The Working Party believes that the voice of the Archdiocese is best heard through as broad a representation as possible. Pastoral needs are best expressed by those desiring them, which means that representation should strongly favour the parishes. Other essential parts of the Archdiocese, for example, the clergy and Catholic Education have other avenues through which to advise the Archbishop; the parishes do not.

Within the parish and DPC environment there are two groups which require equitable and specific representation on the Council: women and First Nations people. The Working Party believes that there are a plethora of pastoral issues relating to women with which the Church constantly wrestles. Gender equity in membership is, of course, essential but most of the women members will be speaking for their parishes or their own Catholic entities and not for or about the range of issues confronting the women of the Church. This justifies a separate seat for the Archdiocesan Women's Taskforce.

Similarly, no one else can speak for our First Nations sisters and brothers and they must have their own seat at the table.

#### **2. Task – investigation and practical options:**

A strong task focus is necessary for the Council to be productive and prevent it deteriorating into a talkfest.

The Working Party believes that one effective way to keep the Council “on task” and producing “practical conclusions” which can be implemented across the Archdiocese, may be to make it responsible for the development of a draft **Synodal Evangelisation Plan** for the Archdiocese. However, since this would be a decision for the DPC itself, it is proposed that the initial tasks of the DPC would be to work on the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary Council and to plan for the forthcoming Diocesan Synod which has been proposed by the Plenary Council. A Diocesan Pastoral Council, if formed in 2023, can both undertake its investigative function and engage in the preparatory work for a Synod in 2025.

Implementation of the decrees of the Plenary Council and the 2023 Synod will place the DPC in an advantageous position to assist and advise the Archbishop on the most effective strategies for the future. The preparation and drafting of a Synodal Evangelisation Plan would capture the vision of the Council and the forthcoming Synod and identify the ways to practically apply it within the Archdiocese. Such a plan could be submitted to the full Archdiocesan Synod before being commended to the Archbishop. To be effective and useful to the Archbishop a Synodal Evangelisation Plan would:

1. Identify and describe the core mission of the Church in the Archdiocese – Evangelisation – and articulate what this means for parishes, schools, clergy, families and individuals;
2. Describe current trends and set goals which can be set and measured.
3. Clearly state the priorities of the Missionary task. For example, in 2022 – 2027 a high priority would be to support and assist the implementation of the Uluru Statement and Voices for the Heart. Other priorities would include the implementation of the *Laudato Si'* – Caring for Creation goals, responding to the challenges of catholic education and those for young families, structural change in aged care and meeting the needs of those living with mental illness.
4. Identify the resources required to achieve the priorities and their budgetary implications.
5. Consider and recommend the construction, sale, or re-purposing of the Church’s physical assets to achieve the Archdiocese’s goals.
6. Recommend on the appropriateness of the Archdiocesan structure for the achievement of its goal and priorities.

The Working Party is of the view that such an approach would also mitigate against the disconnection from the Council evident in the 1989 and 2004 Synods. Additionally, the work of implementing the decisions of the Plenary Council and particular law emanating from the Synod would have sustained focus and direct connection to parishes and ministries if the Diocesan Pastoral Council was heavily involved.

### 3. Communication:

A clear and transparent process for communicating outcomes to parishioners is essential.

Early Diocesan Pastoral Councils in this Archdiocese rarely linked back directly to the Parishes. They were based more on representation by Church entities, such as Catholic



Women's League and the Knights of the Southern Cross. Later versions had representatives from parishes but they were not specifically from any parish body. Consequently, there was no established channel for the member to take back to their parish all that they had learned and contributed to the Diocesan Pastoral Council. This kept the Council remote from the parishes and peripheral to their communities.

1. As part of its statutes, a Diocesan Pastoral Council of 2023 should ensure its members report back to their parish communities. Each member could make a written report to the Chair of their efforts to communicate the work of the Council to their parish or organisation.
2. The Council itself should publish an annual report to parishes, schools and Catholic entities covering its activities and summarising its recommendations to the Archbishop.

#### 4. Resources

The key resource a DPC brings together is the human attributes and skills of its members. However, to effectively investigate the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese and to propose practical solutions, the DPC will need access to information regarding the tangible resources available and an analytical capacity to consider options.

A strong, effective DPC for the Archdiocese will require a broad understanding of the financial resources available now and projected into the future; for this reason, the Working Party believes that the membership on council of the Chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council will be important to that understanding.

## CHAPTER FIVE: OPTIONS

### DESIGN OPTIONS FOR A DIOCESEAN PASTORAL COUNCIL IN 2023

Canon 511 states “In every diocese and to the extent that pastoral circumstances suggest it, a pastoral council is to be constituted, which under the authority of the bishop investigates, considers and proposes conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese.”

Pope Paul VI provided details about the diocesan pastoral council in *Ecclesiae sanctae*, (6 August 1966):

“16. S1: It is the function of the pastoral council to investigate all things pertaining to pastoral activities, to weigh them carefully, and to set forth practical conclusions concerning them so as to promote conformity of the life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel.

16. S2: The pastoral council, which has a consultative vote only, can be set up in various ways.

16. S3: Clerics, religious and laity specially chosen by the bishop take part in a pastoral council.

It is worthy of note that the vision of Pope Paul VI extended to a nationally coordinated set of diocesan pastoral councils, akin to a National Pastoral Council:

17. s1: Let the bishops also see to it that all diocesan councils are coordinated in the most suitable way by means of an accurate indication of competence, mutual participation of members in joint or successive sessions, and other ways.”

What does all this law making mean for the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn as it pursues its mission of bringing the gospel to all people?

A number of church documents which followed from Pope Paul VI’s instructions discussed the composition of bodies such as the Diocesan Pastoral Council. One of the clearest set of guidelines was contained in a 1973 circular letter from the Sacred Congregation of the Clergy to the world’s bishops concerning pastoral councils, *Omnes Christifideles*.

Renken notes that “It explained that members of the pastoral council should represent a witness or sign of the entire diocese; members should be so selected that the faithful of the entire diocese is represented ‘taking into consideration the different regions, social conditions, and professions, as well as the parts which individual associations have in the apostolate, especially those who possess noteworthy prestige and prudence; it is appropriate to appoint laity and clergy chosen for offices exercised throughout the diocese; all must be in full communion with the Church. (n. 7)” ( J. A. Renken; *Particular Churches: Their internal ordering*” Commentary on Canons 460-472, St Paul University, Ottawa 2011 pp. 163).

The key word emerging from this background is *representative*. This imperative clearly drove the choices about size and personnel in previous iterations of the Council in the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese, leading to as few as 23 and as many as 129.

The key criteria to consider when designing a model for a DPC for the Archdiocese must take into consideration the guidelines above and the changed nature of the background and skills of today's People of God. However, it is equally important to ensure that the body is effective. At first glance these two goals can be in conflict and previous Archbishops resolved this by having working secretariats to implement or act on decisions made by the full Council.

Another primary consideration is equity: of gender and geography, age and ethnic background.

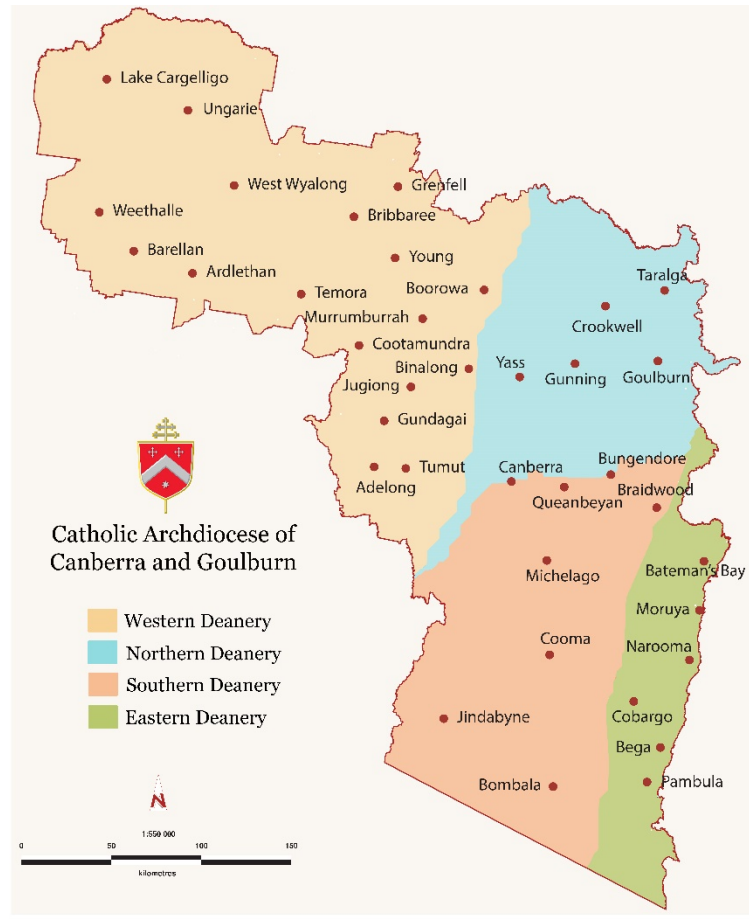
These considerations have led the Working Party to devise a number of options for the Archbishop and the Archdiocese to consider. Inevitably, the preferred model is a hybrid of the best parts of each option.

In summary, these models have been proposed against the following criteria for a Diocesan Pastoral Council:

- it is capable of enhancing the church's mission;
- it is capable of being truly synodal;
- it is functional and capable of offering workable advice;
- it is representative of the broad Archdiocese, especially the parishes;
- it gives balanced representation to our rural parishes/deaneries and
- it is gender balanced.

#### **Parish Distribution across Deaneries:**

The 51 parishes of the Archdiocese are distributed geographically across four deaneries:



Northern: Braidwood, Campbell, Central Canberra, Charnwood, Crookwell, Grenfell, Goulburn, Gungahlin, Gunning, Kippax, North Belconnen, O'Connor, South Belconnen, Taralga, Watson, Yass

Eastern: Batemans Bay, Bega, Cobargo, Moruya, Narooma, Pambula

Southern: Bombala, Bungendore, Cathedral, Cooma, Jindabyne, Kambah, Michelago, Narrabundah, North Woden, Queanbeyan, South Tuggeranong, South Woden, Wanniasa, Weston Creek/South Molonglo

Western: Adelong, Ardlethan, Barellan, Boorowa, Cootamundra, Grenfell, Gundagai, Jugiong, Lake Cargelligo, Murrumburrah, Temora Mission, Tumut, Ungarie, West Wyalong, Young Mission

There are 15 parishes in each of the Northern, Southern and Western Deaneries and only 6 in the Eastern deanery. All parishes in the Eastern and Western Deaneries are rural (21 in total) with 6 of the 15 Northern and 5 of the 15 Southern deaneries also being rural. Contrary to population distribution across the Archdiocese, there are 32 rural parishes and only 19 urban ones. This in itself presents equity challenges when considering models for a Diocesan Pastoral Council.

### **Option One: Maximal Representation 160 (80 if halved)**

- Two delegates from each parish, (102)
- Appointments from parishes be the Chair of the PPC and one other nominated by the PPC or elected by the parish, and one must be a woman
- All parish priests (33)
- Ten delegates from Catholic Education, two from central office, eight school principals (two per deanery) (10)
- Two delegates from Catholic entities such as MarymeadCatholicCare, St Vincent de Paul, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, Women's Taskforce (8)
- One each from Religious sisters and brothers congregations represented in the Archdiocese. (4)
- Ex officio members to include Vicars-General and the Chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council (3)
- The Chancellor and Financial Administrator would attend as advisors rather than members.

Major Strength: Widely representative of the Archdiocese; capable of diversity, inclusion and a broad range of skills.

Major Weakness: very unwieldy and difficult to manage. It would require a strong (and expensive) administrative team to support it. This model resembles a Synod which, while necessary at intervals, is not useful as a body to develop advice and implement change and development on an ongoing basis.

This model would become more viable and be considerably easier to manage if the numbers were halved across the board (80). However this would have some impact on equity and diversity.

While such a body is certainly capable of enhancing the Church's mission, it would not be able to meet more than twice a year, it would be slow to respond to emerging issues and would likely have to handle a very long agenda at each meeting. This is unlikely to be welcomed or comfortable for participants. It would be capable of offering workable advice – although it might take quite some time to formulate it. It would not have balanced representation of the parishes because of the strong numerical cluster of rural parishes which would dominate the numbers of laity and clergy.

### **Option Two: Representative and workable (41)**

- Appoint the Chair of every PPC – from one half of the total number of parishes (25)
- Appointment would be by alpha name or ballot, thence in rotation. There are currently 32 rural parishes and missions and 19 urban parishes.
- Council of Priests would elect two of their number (2)
- Entities such as MarymeadCatholicCare, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, St Vincent de Paul, Women's Taskforce would have one representative each (4)
- Catholic Education would have three representatives – one from central office and one from a rural parish and the third from a city school (3)

- Religious congregations, excluding clerical religious, would have one representative – up to four (4)
- There would be ex officio appointments for the Vicars-General and the chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council (3)
- The Chancellor and the Financial Administrator would attend as advisors rather than members.

Major strength: Simple and straight forward with a direct connection to parishes. All parishes would be represented over time. Encourages parishes to form PPCs. Brings the Council down to a size that, with secretarial support, would be manageable and potentially more effective than the larger model.

Major weakness: Inequitable. Difficult if not impossible to attain gender equality and contains an inherent country bias – which is completely counter to our population dispersal. If selection is by ballot, which is the fairest way to do it, it is likely to throw up significant under or over representation across urban and rural areas. It would also prove difficult to gather the full range of necessary skills and experience with such a model.

### **Option Three: A Broader Representation (35)**

- Eight members in total drawn from the Chairs and members of PPCs of the four Deaneries. (Two members per Deanery). Selection of representatives could be two from one parish PPC, with the parish selected by ballot, or two PPC chairs from two parishes, each selected by ballot. (8)
- Eight people drawn from a self-nomination process from across the Archdiocese, based on an advertised set of skills, qualifications and interests – in gender and geographical balance. These eight representatives could be individual parishioners, or drawn from ministries within the Archdiocese; that is, they could be from movements, entities or ministries. A clear list of selection criteria and processes for selection would be essential to underpin this option (8)
- Eight nominated by Archbishop. This selection would take place after the selection of the parish and self-nominated groups and would allow the Archbishop to invite those with particular skills and experience which had not emerged from the process thus far. (8)
- One each from MarymeadCatholicCare, St Vincent de Paul, Women’s Taskforce, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and Catholic Education. (5)
- Two members of the Council of Priests (2)
- One representative of religious congregations. (1)
- Ex officio members would be the Vicars-General and the Chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council (3)
- The Chancellor and the Finance Administrator would attend as advisors rather than members.

Major Strength: Visible equity between deaneries is appealing and would encourage the establishment of PPCs across the Archdiocese. It offers significant flexibility to ensure that the Council has the right mix of skills and experiences to fulfil its mission. This model also reflects the variety of interests and energies across the Archdiocese. It allows for the appointment of valuable voices which might not otherwise be selected, such as:

- people living with disabilities,
- youth and young families
- the elderly
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, or
- people who represent reform movements and
- those advocating the care for creation within the church.

Major Weakness: In actuality, given the obvious disparity in population, the urban parishes are significantly underrepresented and the small Eastern Deanery, over-represented. Also, as there are more than two parishes in each deanery, questions of selection arise.

Most importantly, this model, while enhancing flexibility, downgrades the representation of the parishes to a minority influence. Those who nominate in the 'Archdiocesan' category will not be representing the parishes, they will be individuals, not necessarily accountable to or reporting to a parish community. Gender and geographical equity would be extremely difficult to encourage.

The eight appointments by the Archbishop would attract some attention and would need to be managed completely transparently to ensure that selections are justified on the grounds of the potential contribution each person would make to the Council.

It may be advisable to collapse the Archdiocesan wide nominations category and the Archbishop's select appointments into the one, flexible category.

#### **Option 4: Representative, Fair, Workable (27)**

##### **Based on the four deaneries.**

- Twelve parish representatives - drawn from the four Deaneries (see page 32 for Deanery composition). (12)
- Two representatives would be from the Eastern and Western Deaneries, and four from Northern and Southern Deaneries, with the stipulation that at least two from these latter deaneries reside in Canberra.
- All representatives must be members of PPCs with preference for the Chairs
- At least half of the representatives from each deanery must also be female.
- Deaneries can choose their own selection process but ballot would be preferred. It is suggested that the various PPCs within Deaneries could meet (virtually) to determine representation and for communication purposes.
- Appointments other than PPC chairs in each deanery to be by election or PPC nomination.
- Two representatives elected by the Council of Priests. (2)
- One representative from Marymead Catholic Care, St Vincent de Paul, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and Women's Taskforce (4)
- Two from Catholic Education, one urban and one rural. (2).

- Up to four from Religious congregations. (4)
- Ex officio membership would include the Vicars-General and the Chair of the Archdiocesan Finance Council (3)
- The Chancellor and the Financial Administrator would attend as advisors rather than members.

Major Strength: Seen to be open and fair and strongly based around parishes. Could be considered to be geographically fair given the population of city parishes and distribution across deaneries. A smaller council could have greater potential to develop into a strong, cohesive team more easily manageable and workable over time.

Major weakness: More complex, less democratic than full representation. Significantly less than half the members will come from parishes, which is not desirable from a representative perspective. Continuity over time may prove difficult to manage. The major risk with this model is effective communication; that is: that the pathways for reporting and implementation back to parishes are not clear for those parishes without current representation.

This model, which closely resembles the smaller historical models, relies on the Deaneries for its equity and fairness. It takes into account the disadvantages of distance, faced by all the rural parishes, and counteracts this by providing for at least 6 of the 11 parish delegates. A Council based on this model is capable of enhancing the Church's mission, it is functional and can offer workable advice.

The inherent problems with communication with parishes could be addressed by requiring the chairs of all PPCs in each Deanery to meet regularly within their deaneries. This would ensure a two-way flow of information and advice between those on the DPC and those who are not.

### **Hybrid models:**

Each model has strengths and weaknesses which can be mixed and matched across each one in an attempt to build the perfect model. Any number of combinations could prove effective. The Working Party encourages readers to speculate on a mixed and matched set of components which best meets the criteria for the DPC.

At this stage, prior to community consultations, the Working Party favours the fairness, equity, and representativeness of **Option 4 above**, based around the Deaneries, combined with the flexibility and broad catchment of adding **up to eight** Archdiocesan selections, based on self-nominations across the Archdiocese - appointed with a clear and transparent selection criteria and process.

While this might initially be surprising, the Working Party has considered the recent experience of the Plenary Council which recognised that while it had many delegate members, it still needed specialists to advise it as well. A category of advisors, 'periti', was invited to attend to ensure that those with special knowledge, skill or experience were available to the attendees.

The lesson is learned in providing for flexibility by introducing Archbishop's appointments through self-nomination. Again, to repeat the observation, this flexibility allows for the



appointment of valuable voices which might not otherwise be selected, with particular focus on:

- People living with disabilities,
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders,
- youth and young families
- the elderly
- people who represent reform movements, and
- those advocating the care for creation within the church.

**Summary Recommendation:**

The Working Party recommends a Diocesan Pastoral Council of the following design:

- Twelve parish representatives: four each from the Northern and Southern deaneries and two each from the Eastern and Western deaneries
- All representatives from each deanery will be members of their PPCs, preferably their Chairs and at least half will be female.
- Half of Northern and Southern Deanery representatives will reside in Canberra.
- Two elected from Council of Priests
- Four from Catholic entities: one each from Catholic Care, St Vincent de Paul, Aboriginal Catholic Ministry and the Women’s Taskforce
- Four from Religious Congregations
- Two from Catholic Education; one urban, one rural
- **Up to** Eight Archdiocesan self-nominations as described above
- Ex officio appointments of two Vicars-General and the Archdiocesan Finance Council
- The Financial Administrator and Chancellor to attend as advisors rather than members.

**Total: Maximum of 35**

**TABLE OF POTENTIAL OPTIONS FOR A DIOCESAN PASTORAL COUNCIL**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Parish</b>	<b>Deanery</b>	<b>Priests</b>	<b>CE</b>	<b>Cath Orgs</b>	<b>Rel Cong</b>	<b>Ex Officio</b>	<b>Self Nom</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>One</b>	102		33	10	8	4	3		<b>160</b>
<b>Two</b>	25		2	3	4	4	3		<b>41</b>
<b>Three</b>		8	2	1	4	1	3	8 + 8	<b>35</b>
<b>Four</b>		12	2	2	4	4	3		<b>27</b>
<b>Preferred Option</b>		12	2	2	4	4	3	8	<b>35</b>

## CHAPTER SIX – MAKING IT WORK

### What would the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Do?

“An Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will help fulfill the spirit of synodality, by enriching, focusing and making more meaningful, dialogue on pastoral matters throughout the Archdiocese. It will enable Archdiocesan leaders to gain new insights and identify new opportunities by stimulating robust, high-quality conversations informed by pastoral realities.” (Andrew Phelan; Archdiocese Of Canberra-Goulburn, Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Charter; 2021, pp. 1)

Archival research and initial consultations have led the Working Party to the belief that a Diocesan Pastoral Council will only be worthwhile if it is broadly recognised as doing a real job of work which significantly enhances the mission of the Church.

### Draft Terms of reference

“The plan found in the Gospel...must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community” (*Novo Millennio Inuente, 2001*).

The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council will be the peak advisory body to the Archbishop on the direction and formation of pastoral life in the Archdiocese. Its **purpose** is to investigate, consider and propose practical strategies concerning the pastoral works of the Archdiocese.

The Working Party recommends the following terms of reference:

1. Identify and monitor the pastoral needs of the Archdiocese.
2. Support and advise the Archbishop on matters he puts before it and on those matters brought forward by delegates. This support and advice will focus the pastoral direction and priorities for the archdiocese, identifying the needs and necessary plans for the future.
3. Advise the Archbishop on the implementation of the decisions of the Plenary Council and their implementation in the Archdiocese, in conjunction, where necessary, by particular law emanating from a Diocesan Synod.
4. Advise the Archbishop on the implementation of the recommendations of the Light from the Southern Cross and the Archdiocesan Response.
5. If appropriate, advise the Archbishop on the implementation of decisions of the 2023 Rome Synod.
6. Provide an effective forum for parishes through-out the Archdiocese to listen to one another and to learn from each other about issues, problems and solutions concerning pastoral affairs.
7. As necessary, refer issues of concern to appropriate bodies for consideration; for example, the Council of Priests or the Archdiocesan Finance Council.

8. Advise and assist the Archbishop to conduct Archdiocesan Synods at regular intervals and to guide the implementation of their recommendations.
9. Over time, assist in the preparation and guide the implementation of a rolling 5-10 year Archdiocesan Pastoral Evangelisation Plan, once considered and endorsed by the relevant Archdiocesan Synods.

### General Operating Principles and Processes of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council

A flourishing Diocesan Pastoral Council requires the support of the laity across the Archdiocese and in every parish. It needs to be visible, with open communication; it must report back regularly to the parishes and to other entities represented and it must welcome comment and feedback at every opportunity. Its operating principles must be open and transparent.

The Working Party proposes that:

1. The Council meet at least twice per year. The meeting timetable will be set annually in advance and publicised, together with timeframes for proposing agenda items and providing papers.
2. The Archbishop may refer pastoral matters for the consideration of the Council at any time.
3. Members, Parish Pastoral Councils and other constituent groups may propose agenda items in accordance with advertised timeframes. Members should consult widely on proposed agenda items.
4. The Members will elect the Chair from among themselves. While maintaining the confidence of the Members, the Chair will hold the position for a term of 12 months, which may be renewed.
5. Members will elect an Executive of the DPC comprising the Chair and a further 3 or 4 members (ensuring Deanery balance) to work with the Archbishop between meetings.
6. Members will not be remunerated, but country members will be reimbursed reasonable travel and accommodation expenses to participate in Council activities.
7. The Chair will settle the agenda for each meeting, having regard to the role of the Council, in consultation with Members and the Archbishop.
8. Meetings may be held using virtual technology, or face-to-face, or a hybrid of each but initially, the Council should endeavour to hold face-to-face meetings.
9. Meetings should be conducted without undue formality in a way that ensures that Members are able to participate meaningfully and frankly in a true spirit of synodality.
10. Attendance at meetings should generally be limited to Members and others invited to attend or participate, but the proceedings and outcomes of meetings will be formally reported to the Archbishop and publicised in a timely and accessible manner.
11. The Council may establish sub-committees on themes or tasks to further the fulfilment of its role. Such sub-committees will operate on terms determined by the Council and may include non-Members.

12. The Council should publicise its role and adopt an ongoing outreach strategy. Its Members should actively participate in other Archdiocesan consultative, parish and community activities and be available to speak about the work of the Council at Masses and forums.
13. The Council will be provided by the Chancery with such administrative support and facilities as it may reasonably need to properly fulfil its role. This should include facilitation of publication and communication channels, including the use of social media to enhance community awareness of the Council's role and activities.
14. The Council will publish an annual report covering its priorities, agendas, activities, concerns and advice to the Archbishop.<sup>1</sup>

Even with an excellent communication strategy, a body such as this can still become bogged down in the talk unless it has clear terms of reference and an achievable timetable.

The Working Party recommends that the Archbishop announce his intent to celebrate a Diocesan synod within 3 years. Further that he ask the Council to provide advice about the agenda and conduct of the Synod. In line with the recommendations of the Plenary Council, it is proposed that further Diocesan Synods be celebrated at five year intervals.

### Archbishop's Priorities

The Council would further benefit by receiving the Archbishop's key priorities each year and ensuring that they are at the forefront of its considerations.

### Evaluation

Opinions about the value of a Diocesan Pastoral Council vary with each interested party or 'stakeholder'. Some just see it as an extra layer of bureaucracy, others see it as an added burden. Many laity, however, see it as an opportunity to be heard and to genuinely contribute their skills and energy to the Church. But almost all are uncertain if it is genuinely possible to establish a representative Council which can do good work.

Anecdotal and archival reports certainly indicate that past attempts proved to be a flowering of lay involvement and a genuine development of new ideas, liturgies, programs and involvement. But there was no formal evaluation of the previous Councils to confirm this assertion.

Consequently, the Working Party recommends that a comprehensive evaluation strategy be developed within the first two years of the life of the Council and that it be undertaken by an independent group of specialists at arm's length every five years. This does not replace the obligation of the Council to prepare and publish its own annual report.

### Administration

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<sup>1</sup> The Working Party is grateful for the input of Mr Andrew Phelan of Campbell Parish and Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn which have been used to develop these operating principles.

A great deal of excellent work for the Church is conducted on a voluntary basis. That is the nature of servant leadership. Those who are appointed to the Council will undoubtedly be offering up a lot of their personal time and energy. But an adequate per diem payment is needed to cover the costs of travel and accommodation; especially as the historical trend has been to hold the Council meetings over a full weekend.

The other key message from previous Councils was the need for an active Executive if the full Council is large, or an equally active secretariat, if the Council is smaller, as recommended by the Working Party. A great deal of research, consultation and even travel will be necessary for the Council to investigate needs and to develop coherent and workable, practical solutions. It should be recognised that resources must be made available for that.

The Working Party notes that the Archdiocese will need to appoint staff who will conduct research, prepare Council papers, assist the Chair as necessary and support the work of the Council and Executive, including in the implementation of its media strategy and communications. In addition the Working Party notes that the Council will require a budget for travel and accommodation.

#### Membership Formation and Training

People contribute the most when they understand the mission and they can apply their skills and energy to the best of their ability. The Church needs to assist the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council to understand the Archdiocese, to perceive the needs of its people and to judge the best ways of proceeding. There are skills in team building, synodality, respect and discernment which will need to be built amongst the members of the Council. The Archbishop will receive qualitatively better advice if the Archdiocese runs a rolling formation program for the membership. The skills and resources for this are already in the administration and only need to be prioritised for the Council.

The Working Party recommends that the Archdiocese provide an on-going formation program for the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.