



5 June 2015

Looking Forward 2015

The *Looking Forward* process continues throughout the Diocese of Ballarat in 2015. As an ongoing process which the Bishop's Advisory Council commenced in 2013 in collaboration with the Diocesan Consultors and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, *Looking Forward* is the name of a process that seeks to build on each of the previous stages. Of itself *Looking Forward* is not a plan and certainly not a pastoral plan. It does however look to the future, and it does seek to engage us in planning and action, which is why the 2014 *Looking Forward* Resource Document presented both information on the current reality and the steps that parishes might take now to prepare well for the future.

The Parish self-appraisal was the first stage in the process of engaging parishes. This was followed by a series of gatherings around the Diocese held in Ararat, Ballarat East, Colac, Hamilton, Horsham, Mildura, Swan Hill and Warrnambool. Throughout the Diocese 575 people attended one of these gatherings (and \$2,500 was contributed to the Caritas Syria Appeal). In considering "What can we do now to prepare well for the future," the strategy of continuous improvement and targeted goals in the areas of Evangelisation and Improvement were outlined. At each of the *Looking Forward* gatherings last year each parish was invited to consider what goals they could identify and work towards in the coming year in the areas of both Evangelisation and Improvement. As the *Looking Forward* gatherings were being held last year, the Diocesan Foundation sponsored 42 people from 17 different parishes to attend the *Proclaim* Conference in Sydney. Bishop Paul and four others from our Diocese also attended. Many *Proclaim* participants have contributed to their parish discussions and planning of Evangelisation and Continuous improvement goals.

The 2015 *Looking Forward* gatherings around the Diocese will take up where the 2014 gatherings concluded. In July, August and September 2015, eight *Looking Forward* gatherings will be facilitated by the Diocese. The gatherings will be held at Ararat, Warrnambool, Hamilton, Horsham, Wendouree, Colac, Birchip and Swan Hill. The Sunraysia Parishes (Mildura, Merbein, Red Cliffs and Robinvale) will hold an Evangelisation Conference in July as an initiative following the 2014 *Looking Forward* gathering.

The 2015 *Looking Forward* gatherings will provide opportunities for parishes to share their progress and initiatives in response to the *Looking Forward* Gatherings of 2014. While the 2014 gatherings were significantly led with input, the 2015 *Looking Forward* gatherings will be more workshop style. Parish Pastoral Councils, Leadership Teams, Coordinating groups are now asked to prepare to report on their progress. The Parish self-appraisals identified that 42 parishes have a leadership group while 8 do not. Parishes that do not have a Pastoral Council or Leadership Team may consider establishing a *Looking Forward* group to prepare for and attend the gathering.

To assist preparation, a 'focus sheet' will be circulated to parishes shortly. In the meantime, please review and discuss the 2014 *Looking Forward Resource Document for Pastoral Planning* as well as your Parish Self-Appraisal. The 2014 *Looking Forward* document and other resources including material presented at the 2014 Gatherings continue to be available on the Diocesan website. New information is also being prepared for the 2015 Gatherings.

The 2015 Gatherings will be held at 7.00pm in the following places:

- Warrnambool Tuesday 28 July
- Ararat Tuesday 4 August
- Hamilton Tuesday 11 August
- Horsham Tuesday 18 August
- Colac Tuesday 25 August
- Wendouree Tuesday 1 September
- Birchip Tuesday 8 September
- Swan Hill Tuesday 15 September

Attendance at the Gatherings is not limited to leadership groups. Other parishioners including school staff and parents are welcome to attend.

We will be present at each of the above gatherings to facilitate. Please contact us for any further information and with any questions you have. Amanda is available at your invitation to assist you and your parish and to visit in preparation for the 2015 *Looking Forward* gatherings.

Sincerely,



Fr Justin Driscoll, Vicar-General



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