

On Saturday 18 November 2017, nine members of the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission met with Bishop Paul Bird. The Chairman, Tony Haintz, welcomed Joanne Rix to her first meeting as a member of the Commission and welcomed Rachel Smith as executive officer of the Commission.

The meeting began with a formation activity from the Social Justice professional development for teachers that has been designed by members of the Commission to awaken a greater understanding of the social justice teachings of the Catholic Church. This professional development has been approved by the Religious Education Centre and Catholic Education Office and will be available to schools around the diocese next year under the title: *Social Justice: Everyone's Business*. The session provoked deep discussion and response.

2018 has been declared the Year of Youth. About 120 youth from the Ballarat Diocese will be attending the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Sydney this December. The Commission will develop a flier that will outline opportunities for youth to be engaged in social justice activities in the Diocese.

The Commission discussed the Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement 2017–2018 *Everybody's Business: Developing an inclusive and sustainable economy*, released in September. The discussion centred on how this can provide challenge and invite response through the Diocese in the coming year. Prayers of the Faithful based on the material in the statement have been prepared for use in the diocese and will be circulated shortly.

The Commission is looking at developing a Social Justice Noticeboard on the Diocesan webpage where issues and events throughout the Diocese can be promoted.

Currently on the website you can access: Family Matters Forum Website Resource: 2017familymatters.weebly.com/. Fr Frank Brennan's *Family Matters: Strengthening Respectful Relationships* opening address can be viewed there. The site also contains information about forum workshops (Tuning in to Kids, Keeping the focus on children in blended families, Having the suicide conversation and Family violence) and Prayers.

The Commission reminds the Diocese of the wonderful resource Vinnies is for people in need at Christmas.