

LOOKING FORWARD UPDATE

Looking Forward, the Ballarat Diocese pastoral planning process, is continuing in 2016. During the last two years *Looking Forward* held Gatherings that brought groups of parishes together in eight different centres around the diocese. These Gatherings were a mix of information sharing and reflections with a focus on preparing for the future. In 2014 all parishioners were invited. In 2015 the participants were from parish and school leadership groups. Attendance numbers were very good in both years with people from parishes across the diocese sharing their stories and situations. Many commented how good it was to be inspired by what others were doing, and also to realize how much common ground there was.

Once again in 2016, Fr Justin Driscoll, Vicar-General, and Amanda Smith, Pastoral Services Consultant, are travelling around the Diocese convening *Looking Forward* sessions. This time, the meetings will be held in parishes to discuss local parish issues. The Catholic school communities are, of course included. The first meetings have already happened in a number of parishes in the Northern Zone with several more parishes currently scheduled in that area. Further parish meetings are planned for October and parish priests and parishioners will be contacted about them shortly. It won't be possible to visit every parish this year so more meetings will be held next year. At the meetings already held, parishioners were very receptive and actively engaged in discussions about the strengths of and challenges for their parish. Good ideas or strategies were raised and these will be followed up. Many thanks to all who have participated so far.

Amanda Smith 5337 7125

