



Looking Forward
Pastoral Planning
in the Catholic Diocese
of Ballarat



2019-2021

May 2019



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May 12, 2019

Dear People of the Diocese,

In February 2014, we published a booklet called “Looking Forward: A resource for pastoral planning in the Diocese of Ballarat”. The booklet included reflections on our mission as a Catholic community, data about the diocese at that time and ideas for future developments.

Over the past four years, there have been numerous “Looking Forward” meetings in various regions of the diocese, bringing together people from different parishes to share their thoughts on how to foster the many ministries serving the people of their district.

Through these meetings and through other discussions over these years, we have come to see new ways in which we can work together. In some cases, this has involved sharing of personnel and material resources across a number of parishes. In some cases, several parishes have come together to form a new parish unit, while still nurturing the life of the local communities that are now part of a larger parish.

This new edition of “Looking Forward” gathers some of the fruits of these years, with principles to guide our pastoral planning, some more recent data about the diocese and some proposals as to how parishes might be grouped together in ministry over the next few years.

I hope this new edition promotes further reflection and conversation to benefit our local communities and our diocese as a whole.

May we continue to support one another on our pilgrim way, with confidence in Christ who walks with us on our journey.

God bless you all.

Paul Bird CSsR

Bishop of Ballarat

The Diocese of Ballarat

Mission

The Diocese of Ballarat, through the work of all its people:

- ❖ gathers the people of God in worship through its parishes and within its boundaries
- ❖ gives witness to the teachings of Jesus
- ❖ proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- ❖ reflects the sacramentality of all things, especially by the giving and receiving of the Sacraments of our faith
- ❖ catechises the faithful and those new to faith
- ❖ oversees the teaching of children in its schools through the work of the Ballarat Catholic Education Office
- ❖ serves those in need especially through the diocesan agency Centacare
- ❖ advocates for social justice
- ❖ communicates with the faithful and the wider community and takes part in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue
- ❖ enables the work of many groups, commissions and agencies connected to the diocese through a common faith in Jesus Christ and commitment to his mission
- ❖ administers the temporal goods of the diocese with care and integrity
- ❖ evangelises and reaches out towards those who are searching for meaning and faith

Pastoral Planning in the Diocese of Ballarat

Precepts to underpin decision-making

- a. The documents of the Second Vatican Council provide direction and inspiration, including the recognition of the active role of laity,¹ with all baptised sharing in the priesthood of Christ.² Pope Francis' exhortation, "The Joy of the Gospel" (*Evangelii Gaudium*) also provides guidance and insight into our current challenges.
- b. The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is a commitment by and priority for the whole community.
- c. Leadership and ministry in parish life is undertaken by both lay and ordained, employed and volunteer. This sharing is to be encouraged.
- d. The sharing of resources, personnel and programs is beneficial on both an economic and a practical level.
- e. Ongoing formation is an integral part of pastoral planning. In particular, formation should be available for both lay workers and priests. Training that is specifically targeted to needed skills should especially be encouraged and enabled.
- f. Catholics from diverse cultural backgrounds are increasingly part of our diocesan faith community. This is an important consideration in planning and pastoral responses.
- g. Youth and young adults are a key part of our community. Pastoral planning strategies should aim to engage with them, nurture their faith, and integrate them into diocesan life.
- h. Changes in population are an important consideration. Resources, including personnel, should be allocated in areas of population density and in areas that are growing, to fully resource and sustain Catholic Christian faith, including through evangelization.
- i. As in many other places, the number of priests available for deployment in the diocese is diminishing, a pattern that is not easily changed, and therefore planning should be done on the basis of fewer available priests.

¹ Vatican II, *The Church*, nn. 30-32, *The Church in the Modern World*, n. 43.

Also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #910.

² Vatican II, *The Church*, n. 10. Also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1141.

- j. The people of the diocese, through prayer and personal encouragement, continue to seek to foster vocations to the ministerial priesthood from parish communities throughout the diocese. While recognising the special challenges involved, the diocese is also open to welcoming priests from overseas.
- k. Equally, the people of the diocese pray for and encourage those choosing vocations in lay ministry, the teaching and caring professions, marriage, and the family and single life.
- l. The celebration of the Eucharist is central and normative in the Ballarat diocese. As well, the Ballarat diocese has been one of the pioneers in Australia of the lay-led Sunday Assembly of Word and Communion. The place of these assemblies in the life of the diocese is acknowledged and valued.
- m. The stewardship of and care for the environment should be considered in all planning and decision making.³
- n. Catholic faith has a continuing rich tradition in the ways faith can be expressed. It may be experienced through formal and informal prayer and through nature, art, human relationships, and service to others.
- o. Planned changes should have significant benefits for many, now or in the future, and serve the common good.
- p. When change is introduced, both information and time are needed for change to be understood and implemented.
- q. Pastoral planning should acknowledge the principle of subsidiarity: governing authorities should support local communities, always with a view to the common good.⁴ The initiative, freedom, and responsibility of local communities must not be supplanted.⁵
- r. When pastoral planning decisions are being considered, the financial realities and financial implications should always be evaluated.
- s. Efficient use of technology, especially communication technology, is a vital part of effective pastoral connection and growth.
- t. Pastoral planning should include evangelisation (connecting with people and sharing the good news of Christ).

³ see Pope Francis, "On Care for Our Common Home" (*Laudato Si'*)

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1883.

⁵ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* #186

What we can do now to prepare well for the future

- ❖ Actively seek and welcome newcomers. Encourage occasional visitors to return. Have information packs available in the church.
- ❖ Evangelise – this is sharing the good news of Christian faith. Talk to others about why your Catholic Christian faith is important to you.
- ❖ Take opportunities to promote your parish activities in your local areas.
- ❖ Encourage lay participation in the various ministries in your parish. Organise training if needed. Encourage school parents to be involved.
- ❖ Seek more opportunities for combined parish/school gatherings and events.
- ❖ Talk about money. Acknowledge financial realities and the need for all to contribute. Advise 'occasional Catholics' how they may contribute to enable the church to continue being there.
- ❖ Continue to promote your church and parish as one that prioritises the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- ❖ Get to know the different aspects of your faith community: worship, prayer, outreach, social justice, scripture reflection, and other groups and expressions of faith. Acknowledge and connect with each other as a strong community in Christ.

Resources :

More *Looking Forward* information and resources can be found on the Diocesan website:

www.ballarat.catholic.org.au *Looking Forward*

The Diocese of Ballarat

Summary of data to inform Pastoral Planning

The most recent Australian Census figures (2016) show a fall from 25% to 22.6% in the number of people in Ballarat Diocese identifying as Catholics in the optional census question. This translates as 6,347 fewer Catholics in the diocese.

In a total population within the area of the Ballarat Diocese of 422,845 there are now 95,688 people identifying as Catholic. (2016 Census)⁶.

The 2018 Ballarat Diocese Mass Count figures (as counted in parishes) show a total of 8,481 people attending weekend Masses (per weekend). This is 8.8% of those identifying as Catholic on the 2016 Census. Comparing the Mass Count figures of 2018 with those from 5 years earlier, there is a drop of 14% (from nearly 10,000 people in 2013 to under eight and a half thousand now).

Over the next five years, a more significant decline in Mass attendance is anticipated when the current older demographic of Mass attendees will be significantly fewer. This cohort is much larger than other age groups and so the loss will be very noticeable. There is also a trend of disaffiliation across most age groups under 60, so it appears the decline in numbers will strongly continue. Unlike some other dioceses, new immigration is only making a small impact in this diocese.

Many people speak of fewer priests. However, this diocese is facing a more significant shortage of people than it does of priests. Not only is the number of lay people regularly connected to parishes declining, but those with time and ability to undertake lay ministry at Mass and in other areas of parish support is also significantly dwindling.

⁶ Data from the 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics Census, configured for the diocese by the National Centre for Pastoral Research, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

Looking Forward

Pastoral Plan 2019-2021

This plan has grown out of the *Looking Forward* gatherings and discussions since the *Looking Forward 2014 Resource* document. It includes feedback from priests and parishioners about the drafts of the plan shared during 2018 and includes most recent data.

Several components underpin this document:

1. The importance of local church communities, served by both lay and priestly ministries.
2. The continuing development of Ministry Districts in the Diocese.
3. The need to amalgamate parishes in order to make them more efficient and lessen the workload of parish administration on priests in particular.

A Parish is an organisational division within a diocese. Each parish, regardless of size, continues to be legally required to undertake and complete all the financial, compliance, insurance, and licensing obligations of being a parish.

Amalgamating two or more parishes into one parish is an effective way to reduce the administrative workload, to save money by minimising duplication, and to make the parish more sustainable. This document indicates the way forward, with proposed parish amalgamations and also development of Ministry Districts.

Church communities within parishes will continue to be a key part of faith life in the diocese. They will continue to need the ministry of lay people and priests.

The ongoing decline in Mass attendance numbers is expected to continue in most parishes. This has a direct impact on income and therefore on the parish's (and the diocesan) ability to support priests.

Ministry District is a term that applies to two or more parishes within a particular geographical area where the priests and parishioners have established a sharing of resources, working in collaboration to further the mission of the Church. Parishes in the Ministry District might aim to share an employee (eg. Finance Officer, Sacramental Coordinator, or Youth Ministry Worker).

This plan presumes a retirement age of 75 for priests. It does not include retired priests in the data of priests in parishes. However it

is acknowledged that many retired priests continue to offer valuable service to the diocese by celebrating Masses and providing pastoral care in a variety of circumstances.

In 2019, our priest numbers have been boosted by the short-term deployment of five newly ordained priests from the Redemptorist Congregation. Their contribution to parish life is much appreciated, however they are not included in the priest numbers in this document, which indicates those priests who are appointed to parishes as Parish Priest, Assistant Priest, or Visiting Priest.

This plan acknowledges that many parishes have diminishing numbers of people attending and contributing in lay ministry roles at Mass and in other areas, as well as financially. The increase in the cost of running a parish, together with decreasing income, mean that many parishes are no longer sustainable as parishes. Formal amalgamation with one or more other parishes means that many expenses are shared, including the costs of employing staff, and of supporting the priest(s).

Smaller parish incomes also reduce the diocesan income that in part relies on parish levies. These reduced incomes mean that the number of priests able to be supported in the diocese is now fewer than in the past. The diocese is currently sponsoring three seminarians.

Making larger, stronger parishes by joining together one or more smaller parishes with a larger parish will enable more effective deployment of priests. In coming years there will be fewer priests with the experience to actively lead a parish. It is envisaged that, in order to care for the whole parish, the new and larger parishes will each have a parish priest and one or more less experienced priests as assistant priests or priests in residence. Each parish will also have one or more lay employees who have appropriate training and experience to provide pastoral care and services.

The following charts indicate Ministry Districts and recommended Parish amalgamations over the next 2 years, as well as giving data on numbers of priests, people, Masses per weekend, and churches per parish. There are currently 30 priests in parish ministry, 41 parishes, eight and a half thousand people attending Mass, an average of 94 masses per weekend, and a total of 112 churches.

Parishes and church communities are asked to consider what steps they might take to achieve the goals set out in the following plan.

Northern Parishes

Priest numbers do not include retired priests supplying or in residence but do include Parish Priests, Administrators and Assistant Priests.

Two priests are expected to retire in this time frame & one priest retires May 2019. Two experienced parish priests from the Oblates of St Joseph are expected to work in the diocese during this time frame.

Ministry District *	Parishes of:	Goal by end of 2021 (or before)
Sunraysia	Mildura Red Cliffs Merbein Ouyen	Amalgamate to become one parish. (These parishes already share a Parish Priest) Also work with Robinvale as part of Sunraysia Ministry District
	Robinvale	Works with Mildura parishes in Sunraysia Ministry District
Wimmera-Mallee	Northeast Mallee {formerly Swan Hill, Sea Lake, & north part of Quambatook}	Now Holy Family Parish, Northeast Mallee, established 1 July 2018 Continue to develop new parish and also Ministry District
	East Wimmera {formerly Birchip Donald Charlton St Arnaud, Wycheproof, & south part of Quambatook}	Mary Glowrey Parish, East Wimmera, established 1 July 2018 Continue to develop new parish and also Ministry District
West Wimmera	Horsham Nhill	Horsham, Nhill, Warracknabeal, and Hopetoun amalgamate into one parish.
	Warracknabeal Hopetoun	Horsham, Nhill, Warracknabeal, and Hopetoun amalgamate into one parish.

* Here and in the following pages, in some instances the names of Ministry Districts are yet to be finalised.

Northern Parishes continued

1/m = 1 per month

Masses by regular visiting priests are counted in parish where they are celebrated.

The number of churches is a total for each grouping.

Expected priest deployment end 2021	Priests December 2018	Mass Count 2018	2018 Masses (weekend)	Number of churches May 2019
2 priests	2	715 88 62 42	6 +5/m	9
1 priest	1	203	3	2
1 priest	1	290 32 18	3 +3/m	7
2 priests	2*	34 63 76 57 22 8	5 +3/m	9
2 priests	1	424 24	5	6
	1	28 34	3	5

*One of these priests regularly celebrates some Masses in Northeast Mallee

Central Parishes

Priest numbers do not include retired priests supplying or in residence but do include Parish Priests, Administrators and Assistant Priests.

Two priests are expected to retire in this time frame & one priest retires May 2019. Two experienced parish priests from the Oblates of St Joseph are expected to work in the diocese during this time frame.

Ministry District	Parishes of:	Goal by end of 2021 (or before)
Pyrenees	Ararat Stawell	Develop Ministry District. Prepare for becoming one Parish (Ararat/Stawell)
	Maryborough	Develop Ministry District
Greater Ballarat	Cathedral Linton Beaufort	These 3 become one parish. Continue to develop Ministry District
	Sebastopol Redan	These 2 become one parish Continue to develop Ministry District
	Wendouree Ballarat North	These 2 become one parish Continue to develop Ministry District
	Ballarat East	Continues as one parish Continue to develop Ministry District
Eastern	Daylesford Creswick	Develop Ministry District. Explore amalgamation of parishes within Ministry District
	Gordon	Develop Ministry District. Explore amalgamation of parishes within Ministry District
	Bungaree	Develop Ministry District. Explore amalgamation of parishes within Ministry District

Central Parishes continued

1/m = 1 per month

*Masses by regular visiting priests are counted in parish where they are celebrated.
The number of churches is a total for each grouping.*

Expected priest deployment end 2021	Priests December 2018	Mass Count 2018	2018 Masses (weekend)	Number of churches May 2019
2 priests	2	183	3	2
		290	2	2
1 priest	1	166	3	6
3 priests	3*	1188 75 27	7 +2/m	6
1 priest	1	123 165	3 +1/m	3
1 priest	1	221 288	6	5
1 priest	1	398	3	2
2 priests for Ministry District (1 is part-time)	1	79 74	2	2
	Shared with Daylesford & Bungaree	131	2	3
	1 (part-time)	48	1	3

* Cathedral Parish usually provides a supply priest to Cororooke and (numbers not indicated in this chart) a priest for Syro Malabar Masses including in Mildura (1/m).

Southern Parishes

Priest numbers do not include retired priests supplying or in residence but do include Parish Priests, Administrators and Assistant Priests.

Two priests are expected to retire in this time frame & one priest retires May 2019. Two experienced parish priests from the Oblates of St Joseph are expected to work in the diocese during this time.

Ministry District	Parishes of:	Goal by end of 2021 (or before)
South-western	Western Border {formerly Hamilton, Casterton ,Coleraine Edenhope, Harrow }	St Mary MacKillop Parish, Western Border established 1 July 2018 Continue to develop new parish & also ongoing Ministry District
	Portland	Continue developing ongoing Ministry District
Southeast Coast	Colac Cororooke	Become one parish Develop Ministry District
	Apollo Bay	Develop Ministry District
Greater Warrnambool	Warrnambool West Dennington	Develop Ministry District and explore amalgamation options within Ministry District
	Warrnambool	Develop Ministry District and explore amalgamation options within Ministry District
	Warrnambool East	Develop Ministry District and explore amalgamation options within Ministry District
	Port Fairy Koroit	Develop Ministry District and explore amalgamation options within Ministry District
Hampden	Terang Mortlake	Terang and Mortlake become one parish Further develop Ministry District
	Camperdown Timboon	Camperdown and Timboon become one parish Further develop Ministry District

Southern Parishes continued

1/m = 1 per month

Masses by regular visiting priests are counted in parish where they are celebrated.

The number of churches is a total for each grouping.

Expected priest deployment end 2021	Priests December 2018	Mass Count 2018	2018 Masses weekend	Number of churches May 2019
2 priests	2	270 53 21 30 34	7	12
1 priest	1	188	3	3
1 priest (and a supply)	1 (and a supply)	414 32	3 +2/m 4/m	3 2
1 priest	1	83	3 +1/m	3
3 priests across Ministry District	1	242	2	2
	1	479	3 +2/m	2
	1	436	2 +2/m	2
	1	77 92	2	2
1 priest	1	234 57	3	3
1 priest	1	166 40	3	6

Prayer in time of change

Loving God,
we thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ
who showed us the way, the truth and the life.
As we continue our journey as people of faith
help us to be people of wisdom and courage.
During these times of change,
show us the way to strengthen our communities,
to share the joy of your love
and to see Christ in all people.
We make our prayer through Jesus,
our saviour and brother.
Amen.



Looking Forward: "Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem." Luke 9:50

Cover photo: Water is a symbol of baptism and of refreshment, of sustaining life, and of hope and faith. It is also a precious part of God's world.

"We breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."

Pope Francis, "On Care for Our Common Home" (*Laudato Si'*)

*This document has been prepared
by the Diocesan Pastoral Services Consultant
in consultation with Bishop Paul Bird and the Bishop's Advisory Council
drawing on feedback and insights from
the clergy, religious, staff and people of the Diocese of Ballarat
and the National Centre for Pastoral Research.*

Ballarat, May 2019.

www.ballarat.catholic.org.au Looking Forward