

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



**Ballarat Diocese
Social Justice Commission**

**Report of Meeting
Saturday, 8th February, 2020**

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission met in Ballarat on Saturday 8 February 2020.

Present were Anthea Hinchey (chair), Bishop Paul Bird, Stacey Atkins, Sue Searls, Tony Fitzgerald, Noel Gregory. Felicity Liston and Executive Secretary: Dr Rachel Smith

Apologies were received by Jo Rix, Sr. Helen Nolen, Jim Ryan and Andrew O'Flynn

Felicity prepared and led prayer based on her experience at Catholic Youth Conference in Perth last year. The Commission were led outside to pray, sing and reflect in the beauty of the natural world. Felicity then shared her experiences of being one of 6,000 young people from all over Australia participating in faith development relevant to their age and interests.

The Commission planned their focus for the year.

The Commission endorsed the Palm Sunday March for Justice for Refugees which will be held in Melbourne.

Rachel reminded us that there are probably 30, 000 people in Australia who are slaves – they are severely underpaid, living in appalling conditions, working extreme hours and totally disempowered. Around the world modern slavery is a hidden but very real issue. We can act on this in a number of ways when we are shopping. We need to check that products are ethically sourced. The Commission is promoting the use of ethically sourced tea and coffee in Catholic schools, ethically sourced cleaning products, and ethically sourced clothing. The Commission was informed that the Government has developed legislation requiring audits of major companies in regard to employment and sourcing of raw materials.

The Commission were informed of the regular e-publication of Social Justice Trends <https://socialjustice.catholic.org.au/newsletter/> which sends out a monthly newsletter by email subscription.

It is hoped that there will be a forum this year on the topic of Climate Change and what we can do to make a difference. Later in the year the Commission will launch the annual Catholic Bishops' Social Justice Statement which will focus on the issue of mental health.