

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



**Ballarat Diocese
Social Justice Commission**

Report of Meeting

Saturday, 11 November 2023

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission met on Saturday 11 November 2023.

Present were Anthea Hinchey (Chair), Bishop Paul Bird, Sue Searls, Dr Susan Crowe, Jillian Hogbin, Jim Ryan, Michael Ryan, and Sarah Page (Social Justice Educator for Catholic Education)

Apologies were received from Tanya Kehoe, Sr. Helen Nolen

On 4 October, the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis published an apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum* (Praise God). This encyclical was the foundation of the reflection and prayer lead by Dr Susan Crowe. In this encyclical Pope Francis summarises developments in the world's temperature path. He is careful not to link particular weather events to global warming but suggests that the general trend is undeniable. He expresses fear of what will happen if we reach 1.5 degrees or 2 degrees of warming.

Pope Francis points to the development of technologies that can eliminate human beings on a vast scale. The development of technology has not been accompanied by a corresponding development of human responsibility, values and conscience. He directly appeals to Governments to use their authority to meet real goals and act in a responsible manner to bring about change.

The Commission discussed the Ballarat Diocesan launch of the Australian Bishops Social Justice Statement for 2023-24. It was pleasing to see the number of Parishes who showed Bishop Paul's introduction of the Statement and the Acknowledgement of Country and Prayer at the end of Mass. Issues of timing the release of the Statement were discussed and that there was some confusion between the launch of the Statement and the announcement of the Referendum as both highlighted responses to First Nations people's issues.

The Commission continued its self-reflection after defining its Vision and Mission by clarifying the means to achieve these. A clarification that will direct the future pathway of the Commission.