The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission met on Saturday 3 June 2023.

Present were Bishop Paul Bird, Dr Susan Crowe (Executive Member), Anthea Hinchey (Chair), Jillian Hogbin, Tanya Kehoe, Sr. Helen Nolen, Jim Ryan and Sue Searls.

Apologies were received from Felicity Liston and Michael Ryan (St Vincent de Paul Representative).

Bishop Paul welcomed Tanya to the Commission.

Prayer and formation was led by Ms. Jeanette Morris. Jeanette is an Indigenous woman working for the Catholic Education Office in this Diocese. She spoke on the issues of the upcoming Referendum on the Indigenous Voice to Parliament. She invited us to reflect on the progress in understanding of Indigenous issues that has taken place in the last fifty or so years. She then invited us to walk with her in understanding what the Referendum hopes to achieve in giving that Voice. She invited us to look at both sides of the issue and understand that this is a vital step forward for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Once this is put in the Constitution, Treaty can be achieved.

Two references for us to read are *The Voice to Parliament Handbook* by Thomas Mayo & Kerry O'Brien; *An Indigenous Voice to Parliament* by Fr Frank Brennan.

We went on to discuss the coming release of the Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement for 2023-24: *Listen Learn Love: Embracing the call for the voice, truth telling and treaty* and how we can best release this in the Diocese.

Jillian discussed how the Laudato Si' Action Plan for Parishes was being implemented in two parishes across the Diocese as well as a planned program for Parishes to publish highlighting how parishioners can do simple things each week to make a difference.

The Commission revisited a brochure published a few years ago that listed some of the social justice organisations in our community that people could get involved in. This will be republished in a more user-friendly manner with a Diocesan-wide focus.