

## KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

### DIOCESE of ARMIDALE

The Diocese of Armidale was established in 1862 with territory excised from the Archdiocese of Sydney, but its first bishop was not appointed until 1869 and installed in 1871. In 1887 all of its coastal area (33,635 sq. Km.) was excised to establish the Diocese of Grafton (renamed Lismore in 1900) and part of its western territory was excised for the establishment of the Diocese of Wilcannia (renamed Wilcannia-Forbes in 1917). To compensate, it was given a small section of the northern part of the Maitland Diocese. Its current land area is 113,667 sq. Km.<sup>1</sup> It is one of 9 suffragan dioceses of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Sydney and the 10 dioceses form the ecclesiastical Province of Sydney.

**Demographics:** At the 2016 Census 184,223 persons resided in the diocese, with 42,490 self-identified Catholics (22.1% of total). Since the 2001 Census (176,592 and 45,062 (25.5%)), the general population has increased by 4.3% while the Catholic population has decreased by 5.7% (-2,572). Catholic numbers peaked at 45,295 in 1996. In 2016 the diocese had the 14th highest proportion of Catholics in its general population and ranked 24<sup>th</sup> in Australia's Catholic population with the median age of Catholics at 39 years. Australia is the birthplace of 91.3% of all Catholics, including 4,292 Indigenous Australians (10.1% of all Catholics), while the only large groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (1.8%) and UK excluding Nth Ireland (0.7%).

**Bishop:** The bishop is Michael Kennedy, born in Australia in 1968, ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wagga Wagga in 1999, and ordained a bishop in 2012. He was installed as the 10<sup>th</sup> bishop of Armidale in 2012. He prepared his recent *Quinquennial Report* for his June 2019 *ad limina* visit, but has not made it public.

**Structure and Governance:** At 12 March 2021 the diocese had 24 parishes organised into 3 deaneries. It is one of 17 dioceses with less than 30 parishes. Seventeen parishes had at least one priest in full-time residence, while 7 neighbouring parishes shared a priest. The diocese has a Chancellor (a lay woman), a Diocesan Finance Council and Financial Administrator, a College of Consultors, and a Council of Priests. It does not have a Diocesan Pastoral Council. Three diocesan synods have been convened in the past - in 1873, 1949, and 1951 – but no diocesan assembly or synod has been convened since then. The diocese does not have a vision statement or pastoral plan, but diocesan policy is to encourage all parishes to have a parish pastoral council. All board members of the Diocesan Finance Council, Armidale Catholic Schools Council, Armidale Diocesan Investment Group, Centacare New England North West, and Saint Albert's College are appointed on skills-based criteria following formal recruitment and selection processes. These professional boards provide governance to the relevant agency, agency heads are accountable to them, and they also provide support, advice and guidance to the Bishop to ensure that each work of the Church in the diocese fulfils its role in building the Kingdom of God.

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<sup>1</sup> This data is from the NCP's 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). The land area is slight larger than Honduras (112,492 sq. Km.).

**Priests and Deacons:** The 2020/21 *Official Directory* listed 46 priests, including the bishop, in the diocese at end-2019: 40 diocesan and 6 religious. Of these, 24 were actively engaged in parish ministry, 2 were chaplains, 1 was working outside the diocese, and 14 were living in retirement, including the former bishop who has since died. At 10 February 2021 the diocesan website listed 22 priests active in parish ministry, including the bishop: 16 diocesan and 6 religious. Of these 8 (36.4%) were Australian-born and 14 overseas-born (5 in Philippines, 4 each in India and Nigeria, and 1 in Ghana). Three Australian-born diocesan priests were ordained prior to 1980 and, as these will retire in the near future, there is likely to be an increased reliance on priests born outside Australia. In 2019 there were 3 diocesan seminarians (2 born in Africa) in formation. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are currently an estimated 1,931 Catholics per priest. The diocese has offices for Vocations and Clergy Life Ministry. In March 2021 there were 2 permanent deacons in the diocese, 1 ministering in a parish and the other coordinating a special Religious Education program for children in state schools.

**Lay ministers and officials:** The 2020/21 *Official Directory* lists 6 lay persons holding responsible positions in the diocesan curia - 3 men and 3 women – and 2 religious sisters ministering as pastoral assistants in parishes. Since the diocese's establishment, at least 9 male and female lay religious congregations have ministered in it. Their numbers peaked at around 251 in 1953, but since 2001 the number of religious sisters has decreased from 58 to 18 (- 69%), while religious brothers have decreased from 6 to 0. At present, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

**Mass attendance and liturgy:** In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 5,184 (11.7%). In 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 3,875 (9.1%) – down 25.3%. Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an average 176 regular Mass attenders.

**Seminary and Seminarians:** The Seminary of the Good Shepherd in Sydney, established in 1996, offers a formation program for candidates for the diocesan priesthood to all dioceses in NSW. It continues the tradition of the earlier seminary, St Patrick's College, at Manly. Academic studies are undertaken at the Catholic Institute of Sydney. However, for many years the Armidale diocesan seminarians have been sent for their formation to the Wagga Wagga diocesan seminary, Vianney College. Currently, 2 diocesan seminarians are in formation: 1 at Vianney College and the other at the Beda College in Rome. The most recent ordinations of 2 Nigerian-born seminarians were in 2015 and 2016.

**Pastoral ministries:** Much of the pastoral care in the diocese takes place in the parishes, but the diocese also has a Ministry to Migrants and seeks justice and harmony with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through educational processes. The Catholic schools in the diocese focus strongly on the holistic learning and developmental needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, emphasising reconciliation, cultural identity, and education, using learning programs and experiences based on culturally inclusive pedagogy. Aboriginal cultural education and experiences are provided for all staff and students to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. A

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<sup>2</sup> A 2015 study of 93 religious congregations of men and women, with a total membership of 4,427, representing 64 per cent of all religious in Australia, found that only 4% of the women and 11% of the men in the participating congregations were aged under 45 years at the time of the survey. <https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CVMA-Report-Final-report-Feb-2018.pdf>

special Religious Education program for children in state schools is carried out by parish-based volunteers and coordinated by a permanent deacon.

**Ecumenism and Inter-Faith:** The Diocesan Commission for Ecumenism is currently inactive.

**Plenary Council:** A total of 4,978 persons – 68 as individuals (56% women and 34% men) and 4,910 in 31 groups – responded to the Plenary Council’s Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the 10 priority issues for the Council as: greater Inclusion of all; ending LGBTIQ discrimination; modernizing church teachings; placing greater focus on Jesus Christ; greater trust, faith and hope in God; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; ordination of women; Inclusion of divorced & remarried; greater attention to music; ending clericalism; greater involvement of laity; and outreach to youth. No one from the diocese was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 4 persons have been called to participate in the Council sessions: the bishop, the vicar general and 2 lay persons (Mr Karl Schmude and Mrs Alison Hamilton).

**Education:** The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) of the diocese administers 24 schools - 19 primary, 2 central and 3 secondary - which educate 5,980 students: 3,960 primary and 2,020 secondary. Of all Catholic children of primary school age, less than half attend Catholic schools: 48.9% attend primary schools and 33.9% attend secondary schools.<sup>3</sup> The CSO, with staff of some 50 persons, provides educational, financial, administrative and other support to the schools. Its Director is directly responsible to the Bishop through the Armidale Catholic Schools Council which advises the Bishop on organising, co-ordinating, developing, supporting and determining broad lines of policy for Catholic school education in the diocese. It is a skills-based Council. The *2018 Annual Report* shows the CSO has 3 key Teams: System Performance, Leadership & Management, and System Development, with the emphasis on school improvement.<sup>4</sup> In 2017 Catholic Schools New South Wales Ltd (CSNSW) replaced the former Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) to coordinate and represent Catholic education in NSW and the ACT at a state level. The 11 Bishop Ordinaries of NSW are its members. While each Bishop has responsibility for the Catholic School Agency (CSA) in his diocese, collectively these agencies are recognised by governments as the NSW Catholic school system and as the representative body for NSW Catholic schools. The CSNSW Board is responsible for receiving and distributing government funding to diocesan Catholic schools for their day-to-day operations and capital works. It must also ensure that schools and agencies are government-compliant, provide policy advice and direction, report to the Bishops, foster resource collaboration and efficiency, and promote and advocate for Catholic education in NSW. In 2020 the NSW Catholic school system received \$2.8 billion in lump sum grants from State and federal governments which CSNSW allocated to the 11 dioceses according to a transparent and publicly available ‘needs-based’ model. The separate dioceses allocate the funds on their own “needs-based” model to individual schools. The *2019 Financial Report* of the Armidale CSO shows total revenue of \$111 million, including government grants of \$94.7 million.<sup>5</sup> Of 25 school principals in 2019, 17 were women (68%). The Armidale Diocesan Investment Group (similar to the Catholic Development Funds in other dioceses) provides loans to many of the diocese’s schools. The

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<sup>3</sup> ACBC, NCP, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Armidale*, Canberra, September 2019. Cf. Table 5

<sup>4</sup> <https://arm.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2018-Annual-Report-Catholic-Schools-Office-Diocese-of-Armidale-1.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [1b22d63e-38af-e811-a960-000d3ad24282-720b403a-befe-4dd9-a1dd-180956a9f154-Financial-Report-b3799b5e-5b72-eb11-a812-000d3acba220-13854\\_1.pdf \(windows.net\)](https://arm.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/1b22d63e-38af-e811-a960-000d3ad24282-720b403a-befe-4dd9-a1dd-180956a9f154-Financial-Report-b3799b5e-5b72-eb11-a812-000d3acba220-13854_1.pdf)

diocese has a residential college, St Albert's, situated on the campus of the University of New England.

**Health and Welfare Services:** Centacare New England North West, established in 2001 and with more than 150 staff operating in 9 regional centres, is the principal social services agency of the diocese. It offers local wellbeing and support services to the entire community, regardless of religion, circumstance, ethnicity, gender or ability, including counselling and psychological support, mediation, support for young people, information and education around mental health and family relationships, case work support for individuals and families, a help service for problem gamblers and their families, carers counselling, disability support services, and corporate/HR psychology and employee assistance. Its *2020 Financial Report* published on the ACNC website shows annual income of \$19.0 million, Commonwealth and State government grants of \$12.5 million, and net assets of \$4.7 million.<sup>6</sup> Responsible Parenthood provides family services and the St Vincent de Paul Society, with 29 Conferences, has been particularly active in providing drought relief to farmers, Aboriginal communities and 'Track travellers'<sup>7</sup>. A significant increase in the proportion of Catholics aged 65 yrs and over in the diocese in the past 20 years - from 10.4% in 1996 to 17.3% in 2016 – has not resulted in a major increase in accommodation facilities. The sole nursing home, Nazareth House for the Aged, is owned and operated by Nazareth Care.

**Finances:** The diocese does not publish an annual financial report. However, it is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Armidale and as a 'Basic Religious Charity' the diocese is not required to answer the financial questions in the Annual Information Statement, submit annual financial reports, or comply with any Governance Standards. However, the financial reports of Centacare NENW (for 2020) and the CSO (for 2019) are published (see above). Since 1974 the diocese has also operated the Armidale Diocesan Investment Group (ADIG), a fund similar to the Catholic Development Funds operating in many other dioceses, but with a more diversified investment approach. Its asset holdings have grown through joint ventures with the Bathurst and Wilcannia-Forbes dioceses, allowing it to provide low-cost loans to Catholic religious, social welfare, educational and pastoral services in all three dioceses. ADIG currently holds assets of \$334 million and retained profits of \$35.9 million. ADIG, through an annual distribution to the diocese, also financially supports the diocese's catechetical work in state schools, its Safeguarding Office, clergy and seminarian education, diocesan administration and operational costs, mission and evangelisation, and the Armidale Clergy Fund. ADIG also provides an annual direct distribution to parishes which in 2018/19 totalled \$2.2 million.<sup>8</sup>

**Communications:** The diocese has a website, Facebook page and Youtube channel. Until recently, the diocese also published the official diocesan bi-monthly print and online magazine *Catholic Viewpoint* (print circulation of 6,200) containing diocesan, national and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/3897eedc-2daf-e811-a95e-000d3ad24c60-c3128907-98f8-4d33-9a05-8aa8405aa6a1-Financial%20Report-c48ed7ef-d261-eb11-a812-000d3a6a4d58-Group.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/About/Our\\_Structure/Councils - Regional Central and State or Territory/NSW/Lismore TEST/](https://www.vinnies.org.au/page/About/Our_Structure/Councils_-_Regional_Central_and_State_or_Territory/NSW/Lismore_TEST/)

<sup>8</sup> [About Us – ADIG](#)

international church news and a regular message from the Bishop. However, due to distribution difficulties during the COVID-19 pandemic, all publication has been suspended, but is likely to resume as an online publication. One of the priests of the diocese also produces frequent podcasts on his *buzzsprout* blog.<sup>9</sup> The diocese does not publish an annual report.

**Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse:** The Royal Commission did not identify the diocese as a significant setting of abuse, but its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report noted 11 claims made against the diocese, with 7 payments made for a total of \$672,700 (average \$96,100 per payment).<sup>10</sup> The diocese has wholly committed itself to ensuring the safety, well-being, and dignity of all children and vulnerable adults, and acknowledges its important legal, moral and spiritual responsibility to create a safe and nurturing environment. The Chancellor acts in the capacity of the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager and a Professional Standards Advisory Panel acts in the *Towards Healing* Consultative Panel role as well as providing advice in relation to allegations, professional standards, clergy wellbeing and ongoing formation. One focus of the diocese is on providing Child Safe Parish communities. During 2021 the diocese will transition from the current *Towards Healing* reporting protocol to the new *National Response Protocol*.<sup>11</sup> A total of 91 diocesan entities are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 1: Statistical data for Armidale Diocese: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2019 and 2021**

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2019	2021 At 10 February	Change 2001 to 2019
Total Population (at Census)	176,592	175,835	178,302	184,223			+4.3%
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	45,062 (25.5%)	44,266 (25.2%)	44,222 (24.8%)	42,490 (23.1%)			-2,572 -5.7%
Number of Parishes	27	25	25	25	25	24	-7.4%
Diocesan priests	38	32	31	33	40		+5.3%
Religious priests	3	5	4	4	6		+100%
Total Priests	41	37	35	37	46		+12.2%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			25 (71.4%)		24 (52.2%)	22	-4%**
- Australian-born			20 (80%)		9 (37.5%)	8 (36.4%)	-55%**
- Overseas-born			5 (20%)		15 (62.5%)	14 (63.6%)	+200%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			17 (68%)		10 (41.7%)	17 (70.8%)	-41.2%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			1,768		1,770 (est.)	1,931 (est.)	
Permanent deacons	0	1	1	2	2		+200%
Religious Sisters	58	45	28	19	18		-69%

<sup>9</sup> <https://pwchandler.buzzsprout.com>

<sup>10</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Analysis of Claims of Child Sexual Abuse Made with Respect to Catholic Church Institutions*, June 2017. <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> [file \(catholic.org.au\)](http://catholic.org.au)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=catholic+diocese+of+armidale](https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?search_api_views_fulltext=catholic+diocese+of+armidale)

Religious Brothers	6	3	2	0	0		-600%
Diocesan Seminarians	3	4	2	0	3		No change
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		No	No	No	No		
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1951	1951	1951	1951	1951		
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					No		
Catholic schools	26	25	24	24	24		-7.7%
Students in Catholic schools	5,715	5,932	5,571	5,953	5,980		+4.6%
Hospitals	0	0	0	0	0		No change
Aged care accommodation facilities	2	2	1	1	1		-50%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		5,184 (11.7%)	4,389 (9.9%)	3,875 (9.1%)			-1,309*** (-25.3%)***

Sources: *Official Catholic Directory* for 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/13, 2016/17, 2020/21. Data is accurate at 31 December of the previous year, namely, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2019; diocesan website; ACBC, PRO, *Mass Attendance in Australia*, September 2008; ACBC, PRO, *Mass Attendance in Australia: A Critical Moment*, December 2013; ACBC, NCPR, 2016 *National Count of Attendance – National Summary*, Pastoral Research Online, Edition 44, April 2019. Notes: \* Change from 2001-2016; \*\* 2011 to 2019; \*\*\* Change from 2006 to 2016

#### Sources:

Armidale diocesan website: <http://www.armidale.catholic.org.au>

*The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2020-2021* (data is accurate at 31 December 2019)

ACBC, NCPR, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Armidale*, Canberra, September 2019. [https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Armidale\\_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Armidale_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf)

ACBC, NCPR, *Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue A Report to the Diocese of Armidale*, Canberra, January 2020. <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Diocesan-Final-Report-Phase-1-Armidale.pdf>

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Proportion of Priests and non-ordained religious subject to a claim of child sexual abuse, 1950-2020*, June 2017 (revised version) :

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CARC.0050.025.0283.pdf>

Charities Commission: <https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/topic-guides/basic-religious-charities>

2020 Annual Progress Report on Implementation of the Recommendations from the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: [FINAL Catholic Church Annual Report to NOCS.pdf - Google Drive](#)

Text and table prepared by Peter J Wilkinson (March 2021)

Note: The draft profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Bishop Kennedy with an invitation to correct any errors and to provide advice on any recent changes made or future plans being contemplated in relation to the recommendations in *The Light from the Southern Cross*. A response was received with suggested amendments and these have been incorporated in the text.