

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

DIOCESE of BROOME

Territory excised from the Diocese of Perth in 1887 was originally established as the Vicariate Apostolic of Kimberley in WA. The Vicariate lost part of its territory in 1910 to the Mission *sui juris* of Drysdale River (renamed Kalumburu in 1971) and in 1959 was renamed the Vicariate Apostolic of Kimberleys in WA. In 1966 the Vicariate became the Diocese of Broome and the Kalumburu Mission was returned to the diocese in 1980. Its geographical area is 773,000 sq. km.¹ The Broome Diocese is one of 4 dioceses making up the ecclesiastical Province of Perth and a suffragan diocese of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Perth.

Demographics: At the 2016 Census 35,478 persons lived in the diocese, with 8,480 self-identifying as Catholic (23.9% of total). Since the 2006 Census (29,984 and 8,291 (27.7%)) the general population has increased by 18.3% and the Catholic population by 2.3% with the median age of Catholics at 32 years. Australia is the birthplace of 87% of Catholics, including 5,014 indigenous (59% of all Catholics), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (2.9%), UK excluding Nth Ireland (1.4%), New Zealand (1.2%) and India (0.7%).

Bishop: The bishop is Christopher Saunders, born in Australia in 1950, ordained a priest for the Diocese of Broome in 1976, and ordained a bishop in 1996. He is the 2nd bishop of the diocese and the 8th since the original vicariate was erected. On 10 March 2020 the Metropolitan Archbishop of Perth, Timothy Costelloe SDB, announced that the Holy See had appointed Emeritus Bishop Peter Ingham as Apostolic Visitor to investigate Bishop Saunders' management of the diocese, Bishop Saunders had stood down from his administrative duties, and Mgr Paul Boyers had been appointed to act as Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese.² At the same time it was reported that allegations of sexual misconduct has been made against the Bishop and the WA Police were investigating. In November 2020 the Holy See gave Bishop Saunders 6-months sabbatical leave to be spent outside his diocese³ and in his absence the Vicar General would administer the diocese. In May 2021 the WA Police and Prosecutor announced that they would not be filing criminal charges.⁴ On 28 August 2021 Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Saunders and appointed Geraldton Bishop Morrissey as Apostolic Administrator.⁵ Bishop Saunders' most recent *Quinquennial Report*, prepared for his June 2019 *ad limina* visit, has not been made public.

Structure and Governance: At end-2020 the diocese had 9 parishes (8 in 2001), the fewest of any territorial diocese. Seven had a full-time resident priest (77.8%), while 2 shared a priest. The diocese has a Diocesan Finance Council, Council of Priests, and Offices for Pastoral Formation, Kimberley WYD and Youth, and Justice, Ecology and Peace. There has been no Diocesan Pastoral Council in the past 20 years and no bishop has ever convened a diocesan synod or a diocesan assembly. The diocese has a Mission Statement but no

¹ Its land size is greater than Mexico (758,449 sq. km.)

² [Communique-Re-Diocese-of-Broome-10-March-2020-1-2.pdf \(broomedioecese.org\)](#)

³ [Bishop of Broome Christopher Saunders to leave diocese for six months amid police and Vatican investigations - ABC News](#)

⁴ [CathNews - Police will not charge Broome bishop](#)

⁵ [17 March 2008 \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

pastoral plan. At 29 June 2021 the diocese had 10 parishes with 8 having a resident priest (80%).

Priests and Deacons: At end-2020 the diocese had 11 priests, including the bishop, residing in or belonging to the diocese⁶: 10 diocesan and 1 religious. Seven priests were ministering in parishes, 1 administered, 1 was retired, 1 worked outside the diocese, and the Bishop was in stand-down. At 29 August 2021, 7 priests were ministering in parishes, all born overseas: 2 in India, 4 in Kenya, and 1 each in Colombia and Guatemala. Two were priests of the Neocatechumenal Way. There has been a massive turnover of priests in the diocese in the last 10 years. The diocese has no permanent deacons and no diocesan seminarians.

Lay ministers and officials: At June 2021 there were 2 religious brothers and 10 religious sisters ministering in the diocese. They were members of the Christian Brothers, Sisters of St John of God, Sisters of St Joseph, Sisters of Mercy, and the Assumption Sisters of Eldoret. Two Assumption Sisters arrived from Africa in 2018 to operate the St Vincent Pallotti Centre and other ministries. At 29 June 2021 there were 5 religious brothers and 11 religious sisters ministering in the diocese, with one sister working in parish ministry. Three lay women and 1 lay man hold responsible positions in the diocesan curia.

Mass attendance: In 2006 an average 830 Catholics attended Mass regularly (10%), while in 2016 the average was 694 (8.2%) - down 16.4%. On average each priest in parish ministry in 2019 served 77 regular Mass attenders.

Seminary and Seminarians: The Regional Seminary of the St Charles Borromeo in Perth serves the diocese, but currently it has not seminarian in formation.

Pastoral ministries: Most pastoral ministry takes place in the parishes and the diocese has a Pastoral Formation Office, Youth Office, and the Warmum Retreat Centre. It does not have a diocesan pastoral council or pastoral plan. For several years there have been annual leaders meetings bringing together clergy, pastoral and ministry leaders, and Catholic educators. The Sisters of St John of God maintain a Heritage Centre with pictorial and other records enabling Indigenous persons to access some of their personal history.

Plenary Council: A total of 291 persons from the diocese – 47 as individuals (77% women and 15 Aboriginal) and 244 in 18 groups – responded to the Plenary Council’s Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the priority issues for the Council as: greater inclusion of all; fighting for human rights issues; better faith formation; care for neighbour; better attention to cultural aspects of liturgy; greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments; ordination of women; inclusion of the divorced and remarried; ending clericalism; greater involvement of the laity; stronger parish communities; and modernising church teachings. Noone from Broome was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 4 persons have been called to participate in the Council sessions: the Vicar General and 3 lay persons (Ms Erica Bernard, Mrs Mary O’Reeri, and Mr Aidan Mitchell).

Education: At end-2020 the diocese had 13 Catholic schools: 5 primary, 1 secondary and 7 combined. They had 1,302 students: 955 primary and 347 secondary. Of all Catholic children of school age in 2016, 44.4% attended Catholic primary schools and 35.6% attended Catholic

⁶ The data table in the 2020/21 *Official Directory* gives a figure of 7 (6 diocesan and 1 religious). The detail in the main entry indicates this is incorrect. The Diocese of Broome did not respond to the survey for the governance report, *The Light from the Southern Cross*.

secondary schools.⁷ In 2020 the Catholic Education Office of Western Australia (CEOWA) transitioned to a company structure. Catholic Education Western Australia Ltd (CEWA) is now the coordinating body for Catholic education in the WA. It fosters the continuous development and improvement of Catholic schools in WA, and acts on behalf of the Catholic community for the benefit of all Catholic school-aged children, be they in Catholic schools or not. The Catholic Education Commission WA governs the CEWA system and has responsibility for providing leadership, directing the development of learning communities according to the *Bishops' Mandate*, developing, promulgating and evaluating school policy and programs, and providing responsible governance.⁸ Total income for all Catholic systemic schools in WA in 2019 was \$1.16 billion, with \$889.6 in recurrent and capital grants from government.⁹ The finances for individual dioceses are not available. All WA dioceses collaborated to produce CEWA's *Strategic Directions 2019-2021, Commitment Statement on Child Safety and Child Safe Framework*. An Aboriginal Families as First Educator's (AFaFE) program has operated mainly in the Kimberley schools since 2015. Ten of 13 school principals are women. The University of Notre Dame has a campus in Broome, with a woman as Head of Campus.

Health and welfare Services: The diocese's main agency for providing welfare and social support services across the region is Centacare Kimberley. It employs staff from various language groups to empower Indigenous peoples to maintain and develop their cultural heritage and history and create their own life choices. Support services are offered for homelessness and tenancy, reintegration for prisoners,¹⁰ families, transitional housing, short stay accommodation, and emergency relief.¹¹ Mercy Care offers 2 Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation (ASSA) facilities at Broome and Derby with Indigenous Support Workers affordable, safe and secure units. It is an Aboriginal specific service and 4,474 guests were accommodated during the year. The St Vincent Pallotti Centre also offers welfare services and the Sisters of St Joseph operate a Family Support Centre at Halls Creek. Broome is the only diocese where there are less Catholics aged 65 years and over in 2016 (5.8%) than there were in 1996 (6.5%). There are no Catholic aged care accommodation facilities in the diocese.

Finances: The diocese does not publish an annual report or provide any public financial accounting. It is listed on the Charities Commission register as The Roman Catholic Bishop of Broome, along with 11 other associated charities (mostly parishes). As a Basic Religious Charity it is not required to submit an annual financial report, or comply with any Governance Standards. The *2019-2020 Centacare Kimberley Annual Report* showed income of \$5.54 million with almost all received from government grants. Net assets at end-year were \$1.8 million.¹²

⁷ ACBC, NCPR, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Broome*, Canberra, September 2019.

https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Broome_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf

⁸ CEWA Ltd incorporates the operations of 147 Diocesan schools, CEOWA, Catholic Schools (WA) Long Service Leave Fund, Catholic Schools (WA) Co-responsibility Building Fund, Teacher Housing and the Catholic Education Commission of WA Trustees Inc (Block Grant Authority). Its 2019 Annual Report noted the Broome Diocese as having 12 schools with 1,638 students: https://www.cewa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AnnualReport2019_SpreadsWeb_LR.pdf

⁹ [AnnualReport2019_SpreadsWeb_LR.pdf \(cewa.edu.au\)](https://www.cewa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/AnnualReport2019_SpreadsWeb_LR.pdf)

¹⁰ Centacare supported 307 active clients with reintegration during 2019-20. [0017_Centacare_Annual-Report_A4_3.pdf](https://www.centacarekimberley.org.au/0017_Centacare_Annual-Report_A4_3.pdf) ([centacarekimberley.org.au](https://www.centacarekimberley.org.au))

¹¹ [Centacare Kimberley Association Inc | Working together to create life choices](https://www.centacarekimberley.org.au/0017_Centacare_Annual-Report_A4_3.pdf)

¹² [0017_Centacare_Annual-Report_A4_3.pdf \(centacarekimberley.org.au\)](https://www.centacarekimberley.org.au/0017_Centacare_Annual-Report_A4_3.pdf)

Communications: The diocese has an official website and publishes a bi-monthly magazine titled *Kimberley Profile*. Each edition contains a message from the bishop and mostly local news. The most recent edition is October 2019.

Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission’s statistical report does not include the diocese as a significant setting of abuse, and its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report indicates there were less than 5 claims made against the diocese.¹³ The diocese is fully committed to the safety and well-being of children, youth and vulnerable people in its parishes and schools and aims to raise awareness of its collective responsibility to safeguard and promote their welfare. It has a Safeguarding Program and response framework focused on the prevention of abuse and harm and employs a Safeguarding Co-ordinator, but does not have a dedicated safeguarding council or committee. A Safeguarding Handbook, dated 2020, is published on the diocesan website.¹⁴ The diocese, with 23 other diocesan entities, is a registered participant in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited. On 2 June 2021 the *Children and Community Services Amendment Bill 2021* was introduced in the Legislative Assembly of the WA Parliament. It proposes the introduction of mandatory reporting for ministers of religion, including information gained in a religious confession.¹⁵

Table 1: Statistical data for Broome Diocese: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2020 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2020	2021 at 29 August	Change 2001 to 2020
Total Population (at Census)	41,381	29,984	36,266	35,478			+18.3%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (%)	10,976 (26.5%)	8,291 (27.7%)	9,790 (27%)	8,480 (23.9%)			+2.3%*
Number of Parishes	8	9	9	9	9	9	+12.5%
Diocesan priests	6	7	6	13	10	9	No change
Religious priests	5	4	3	7	1	1	-80%
Total Priests	11	11	9	20	11	10	-36.4%
Priests in active parish ministry			9		7 (63.6%)	7 (70.0%)	No change
- Australian-born			4		0	0	-400%**
- Overseas-born			5		7 (100%)	7 (100%)	+40%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			6 (66.7%)		6 (66.6%)	6 (66.6%)	No change**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			1088		1211 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	0	0	0	0	0		No change
Religious Sisters	38	33	18	12	10	10	-73.7%
Religious Brothers	8	7	6	6	2	2	-75%
Diocesan Seminarians	0	2	1	0	0	0	No change
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation	No	No	No	No	No		No change
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	Never	No change
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					No		
Catholic schools	14	13	13	12	13		-7.1%

¹³ <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf>

¹⁴ [Safeguarding-Handbook.pdf \(broomecatholic.org\)](https://www.broomecatholic.org.au/Safeguarding-Handbook.pdf)

¹⁵ <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/children-and-community-services-amendment-bill-2021>

Students in Catholic schools	1,706	1,662	1,540	1,343	1,302		-23.7%
Hospitals	0	2	0	0	0		
Nursing & Convalescence Homes	0	0	0	0	0		
Regular Mass attenders (% of all Catholics)	n/a	830 (10.0%)	724 (7.4%)	694 (8.2%)			-16.4%***

Sources: *Official Catholic Directory* for 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/13, 2016/17, 2020/21 and 2021/22. Data is accurate at 31 December of the previous year, namely, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2019 and 2020; 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 2001 -2016; ** Change from 2011 to 2019; *** Change from 2006 to 2016

Sources:

Broome Diocese website: <http://broomedioocese.org/>

Bishop Saunders: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-16/catholic-church-investigation-broome-bishop-christopher-saunders/12249322>

Kimberley Community Profile: <http://broomedioocese.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/KCP-2018-04.pdf>
The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia, 2020-2021 and 2010-2011 (data is accurate at 31 December of previous year)

ACBC, NCPR, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Broome*, Canberra, September 2019. https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Broome_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf

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

WA Catholic Education Commission: <https://www.cewa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/AnnualReport2018-0.46-web.pdf> The Annual Report does not provide diocesan data

Plenary Council: <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/?s=delegates>

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

WA Parliament and Amendment Bill 2019:

<https://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/Parliament/Bills.nsf/9d63bceb9046863d48256abd0016d5dc/b283f888c69dac85482584c0001481aa?OpenDocument>

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

Note: The draft profile of the Diocese was forwarded to the Vicar General, Mgr Paul Boyers, 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 several corrections, updates and additions and these have all been incorporated in the revised text and table.