

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

ARCHDIOCESE of CANBERRA & GOULBURN

In 1862 part of the southern region of the Archdiocese of Sydney was excised to erect the Diocese of Goulburn. In 1887 part of the western region of the Goulburn Diocese, together with parts of the Armidale and Bathurst Dioceses, were excised to establish the Diocese of Wilcannia, and in 1917 a further section of the Goulburn Diocese was excised to erect the Diocese of Wagga Wagga. In 1948 the name of the diocese was changed to Archdiocese of Canberra (and Goulburn) and at the same time elevated to Archdiocese. In 2006 the name was again changed to Archdiocese of Canberra – Goulburn. Since 2010 it has been referred to as Canberra & Goulburn. It is not the Metropolitan See of an ecclesiastical province and has no suffragan dioceses. However, for certain purposes the Archdiocese is considered to be in the Province of Sydney. Its current geographical area is 85,576 sq. km.¹

Demographics: At the 2016 Census 655,897 persons lived in the diocese, with 155,088 (23.6%) self-identifying as Catholic. Since the 2001 Census (551,144 and 160,347 (29.1%)), the general population has increased by 19.0% while the Catholic population has decreased by 3.3% (-5,529). Catholic numbers peaked at 163,052 in 2011. In 2016 the diocese ranked 9th in Australia's Catholic population with a median age of 40 years. Australia is the birthplace of 81.3% of all Catholics, including 4,092 Indigenous Australians (2.6% of all Catholics), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (2.3%), UK excluding Nth Ireland (1.7%), Italy (1.4%), Croatia/Former Yugoslavia (1.1%), India (0.9%), and New Zealand and Germany (each 0.6%). The male: female ratio among Catholics is 91:100.

Bishop: The bishop is Christopher Prowse, born in Australia in 1953, ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1980, and ordained a bishop in 2003. He previously served as Auxiliary Bishop of the Melbourne Archdiocese (2003-2009) and Bishop of the Sale Diocese (2009-13). He was installed as the Archbishop of Canberra & Goulburn (the 11th bishop of the diocese) in 2013. He prepared his most recent *Quinquennial Report* for his June 2019 *ad limina* visit, but has not made it public.

Structure and Governance: At end-2020 the diocese had 56 parishes organised into 4 geographical deaneries. It has a Diocesan Finance Council, Council of Priests, Marriage Tribunal, Social Justice Commission and Commission for Women. A Diocesan Pastoral Council previously existed, but the current bishop has not established his own.² Six diocesan synods were convened by earlier bishops - in 1871, 1885, 1888, 1949, 1989 and 2004 – but none recently. The Archdiocesan Assembly 'Embrace' was held in 2015.

Priests and Deacons: At end-2020 there were 94 priests, including the bishop, living in or associated with the diocese: 75 diocesan and 19 religious. Of these, 46 (including the archbishop) were active in parish ministry, 13 were full or part-time chaplains to ethnic communities, hospitals, university or schools, 27 (including 2 bishops) were living in retirement, 3 were working outside the diocese (1 in Sydney Seminary), and 1 was on Eremital Apostolate. At 29 August 2021 there were 46 priests (including the bishop) actively ministering in parishes: 33 diocesan and 13 religious. Of these 21 were Australian-born and 25 overseas-born (8 in India, 4 in Philippines, 3 in Nigeria, 2 each in Vietnam, Singapore, and Samoa, 1 in Korea and 4 elsewhere). The diocese has 8 permanent deacons with most working in parish ministry. There has been a significant turnover of priests in parish ministry in the last 10 years, mainly due to retirements, transfers of religious priests, and overseas-sourced priests returning home. Four Australian-born diocesan priests in parish ministry were ordained in 1980 or prior and will retire over the next 10 years, so an increased reliance on priests from overseas can be expected. The diocese currently has 3 diocesan seminarians preparing for priesthood. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are an estimated 3,371 Catholics per priest. The diocese has 8 permanent deacons who mostly work in the parishes. Two are retired.

Lay ministers and officials: Fifteen lay persons currently hold responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 7 men and 8 women. In the parishes, 1 religious brother ministers as a pastoral coordinator and 1 religious sister

¹ This data is from the NCPR's 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). The land size is slightly larger than Austria (83,871 sq. Km.) and slightly smaller than Azerbaijan (86,600 sq. Km.).

² At a recent meeting organised by the Women's Taskforce, Archbishop Prowse indicated some openness to a Diocesan Pastoral Council: [Listening key for Plenary Council members - Catholic Voice](#)

as a pastoral associate. In the last 20 years the number of religious sisters in the diocese has decreased by 37.2% (from 183 to 115) and religious brothers by 76.2% (from 21 to 5). At present, across Australia, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in ministry.³

Mass attendance and liturgy: In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 20,844 (13.0% of all Catholics), but in 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 16,156 (10.4%) – a significant decrease in numbers (-4,658) and percentage (-22.4%). Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an average 375 regular Mass attenders.

Seminary and Seminarians: The diocese currently has 3 seminarians preparing for ordination to the diocesan priesthood with their formation taking place at the Good Shepherd Seminary in Sydney. A priest of the diocese is the Spiritual Director there. The diocese has a Vocations Directorate.

Pastoral ministries: The diocese has an Office for Evangelisation which includes the offices of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Marriage, Family and Relationships, and Youth and Young Adults. Youth ministry has been particularly difficult during COVID-19 with formation taking place online. Most pastoral ministry takes place in the 56 parishes of the diocese and its Catholic schools. The diocese has a Parish Pastoral Support Team which provides support, services and resources to parishes with policies and strategies to improve communication between parishes, delivery of quality sacramental preparation programs, better assistance to catechumens through the RCIA, liturgical practices, lay ecclesial formation, pastoral leadership, and event organisation. In 2019 the Canberra and Goulburn Women’s Taskforce (ACGWT) was established to support and promote women in the local church through formation, connection and advocacy.⁴ The diocese does not have a diocesan pastoral council, but at a recent meeting with Plenary Council members the Archbishop indicated some openness to one.⁵

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith: The diocese does not have a special office, council or commission for ecumenical or inter-faith dialogue or activities, but the Archbishop holds an annual luncheon for Christian ministers and other occasional ecumenical functions. In 2018 the diocese hosted a Pastoral Visit from the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

Plenary Council: A total of 30,895 persons – 269 as individuals (49% women and 48% men) and 30,626 in 91 groups – responded to the Plenary Council’s Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the top 10 priority issues for the Council as: greater Inclusion of all; fighting for human rights issues; greater focus on Jesus Christ; better faith formation; a greater role for women; the ordination of women; greater involvement of the laity; greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments; outreach to youth; and sharing the faith with others.⁶ Four persons were selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, and 6 persons have been called from the diocese to participate in the Council sessions: the Bishop, Vicar General, Episcopal Vicar, and 2 lay persons (Miss Brigid Cooney, and Emeritus Professor John Warhurst).⁷ Recently a series of deanery consultations were held to discuss the Plenary Council document *Continuing the Journey* and the Archbishop published a Pastoral Letter on ‘Synodality’.⁸

Education: At end-2020 the diocese had 60 Catholic schools: 43 primary, 10 secondary and 7 combined. Together they educate 25,048 students: 13,761 primary and 11,287 secondary. Among the students in 2019 were 733 Indigenous students and 3,974 with disabilities. Of the Catholic children of primary school age in 2016, 55.4% attended Catholic primary schools, while 53.6% of those of secondary school age attended Catholic secondary schools.⁹ In 2019 a total of 1,439 full-time equivalent teachers and 406 full-time equivalent support staff were employed by the schools. The diocese also operates 7 early learning centres. Among the 67

³ 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>

⁴ <https://womenstaskforceacg.org/>

⁵ [Listening key for Plenary Council members - Catholic Voice](#)

⁶ <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Diocesan-Final-Report-Phase-1-Canberra-Goulburn.pdf>

⁷ Two other Plenary Council Members, Mrs Sally FitzGerald NATSICC and Mr Francis Sullivan CSSA, reside in the diocese, but have been called to represent their respective organisations, not the diocese.

⁸ [Archbishop Prowse Pastoral Letter: Breathe in Breathe out - Catholic Voice](#)

⁹ https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Canberra & Goulburn_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf

lay school principals and directors of early learning centres, 43 are women (64.2%). The Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office administers the delivery of Catholic education within its early learning centres, primary and secondary schools and colleges to provide an inclusive and welcoming community as well as leadership, support and services. Its Director is directly responsible to the Bishop through the Catholic Education Commission which advises the Archbishop on the evangelising thrust of the schools, religious education, strategic planning and resourcing. The Dominican Fathers operate the John XXIII College, a tertiary residential college affiliated with the Australian National University.

Catholic Schools New South Wales Ltd (CSNSW) is the approved System Authority which coordinates and represents Catholic education in NSW and the ACT at a state level. The 11 Bishop Ordinaries of NSW are its members. However, each bishop has responsibility for the Catholic School Agency (CSA) in his own diocese. The CSNSW Board receives and distributes government funding to diocesan Catholic schools for their day-to-day operations and capital works, ensures schools and agencies are government-compliant, provides policy advice and direction, reports to the Bishops, fosters resource collaboration and efficiency, and promotes and advocates 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 *2020 Financial Statement of the Catholic Schools System of the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn* shows annual income of \$304.9 million, government grants of \$283.8 million, total net assets of \$466 million, and \$196.7 million on deposit with the diocesan Catholic Development Fund.¹⁰

Health and Welfare Services: CatholicCare (formerly CentaCare established in 1957) is the diocese's principal social welfare agency providing care and assistance to families, children and individuals regardless of their religion. It seeks to empower service users and promote inclusive communities that work for the common good. Its services are focused on youth, mental health, homelessness, family support, disability, alcohol and drug abuse, aged care, counselling, and housing. Its Reconciliation Action Plan is designed to ensure its services and workplaces are culturally safe and competent for Indigenous persons. In 2019-2020 it had 320 staff and volunteers and supported some 10,000 individuals and families, including 649 aged and over 300 young persons.¹¹ Its *2020 Financial Report* available on the ACNC website shows income of \$24.7 million, including government grants of \$7.4 million and net assets of \$5.3 million at 30 June 2020.¹² St Vincent de Paul Society and Marymead (an entity of the Archdiocese with 5 offices which provides services for children and families) also provide welfare services in the diocese. On 25 July 2021 CatholicCare and Marymead announced that they will merge to become Marymead CatholicCare Canberra and Goulburn.¹³ Catholics in the diocese aged 65 yrs and over were 8.9% of all Catholics in 1996, but in 2016 constituted 16.9% of all Catholics. Home care services for aged persons are provided by CatholicCare, while Calvary (Little Company of Mary Health Care) provides a variety of residential aged care facilities and operates 3 hospitals and a hospice in Canberra.

Finances: The diocese is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn. As a 'Basic Religious Charity' it is not required to answer the financial questions in the Annual Information Statement, submit annual financial reports, or comply with any Governance Standards, but some crude financial information is provided showing annual income of \$11.8 million and expenses of \$11.1 million.¹⁴ The diocese has its own Catholic Development Fund and its *2019 Annual Financial Report* published on the ACNC website shows it holds over \$335 million in deposits with net assets of \$16.6 million.¹⁵

¹⁰ [Pm-Finance-20210608102859 \(windows.net\)](#)

¹¹ [CatholicCare-Annual-Report-2019-2020.pdf \(cg.org.au\)](#)

¹² [5a8843db-39af-e811-a960-000d3ad24282-6e51d504-7a8c-44ab-9fdf-c203f4775cdc-Financial Report-fecc3cbd-c174-eb11-a812-000d3acb5335-CatholicCare Financial Statements 2019-2020.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

¹³ [CatholicCare and Marymead to join forces | The RiotACT \(the-riotact.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [Trustees Of The Roman Catholic Church For The Archdiocese Of Canberra & Goulburn As Trustees For The Chancery Office | Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission \(acnc.gov.au\)](#)

¹⁵ [125e80a7-38af-e811-a960-000d3ad24282-092a342d-ae02-49d3-895d-503e497fa33a-Financial Report-0a76cac1-e1d6-ea11-a813-000d3ad1cf4f-200226 CDF 2019 AnnualFinancialStatementSigned Final.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

Communications: The diocese has a website which was updated in 2020. It also publishes an official free print and online monthly magazine titled *Catholic Voice* containing local, national and international news.¹⁶ It recently started a daily and weekly online e-news service called *Daily Voice: The Voice for Good*.¹⁷ A Catholic Bookshop, close to the Cathedral, has operated since 1992. It does not publish a diocesan annual report.

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the Canberra & Goulburn Archdiocese as a significant setting of abuse. The Commission's June 2017 statistical report records the diocese as having the 8th highest percentage of alleged priest abusers (8.4%), taking into account the duration of ministry.¹⁸ Its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report notes 73 claims made against the diocese with 13 payments made for a total of \$1.82 million (average \$140,000 per payment).¹⁹ The Marist Brothers College at Pearce, a school within the diocese, was also a significant site of abuse (63 claims). Following the Royal Commission a whole-of diocese structure, called The Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding (IPSS), was established in 2016 to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults, to handle complaints, and to provide support to victims/survivors. The IPSS is overseen by a designated manager. The diocese has a Child Protection Code of Conduct (updated 2020) which all diocesan employees and volunteers much adhere to. While the diocese currently follows the *Towards Healing* protocol, during 2021 it will transition to the new National Response Protocol adopted by the ACBC in November 2020.²⁰ The diocese, with 118 other diocesan entities, is a registered participant in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.²¹

Table 1: Statistical data for Canberra & Goulburn Archdiocese: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2020 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2020	2021 at 13 July	Change 2001 to 2020
Total Population (at Census)	551,144	564,231	605,791	655,897			+ 19.0%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	160,347 (29.1%)	160,082 (28.4%)	163,052 (26.9%)	155,088 (23.6%)			-5,259* -3.3%*
Number of Parishes	59	55	55	55	56	56	-5.1%
Diocesan priests	89	96	77	54	75	75	-15.7%
Religious priests	27	26	40	19	19	19	-29.6
Total Priests	116	122	117	73	94	94	-19.0%
Priests in active parish ministry			47 (40.2%)		46 (48.9%)	46 (48.9%)	-2.1%**
- Australian-born			37 (78.7%)		21 (45.7%)	21 (45.7%)	-45.9%**
- Overseas-born			10 (21.3%)		25 (45.7%)	25 (53.5%)	+130%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			31 (56.4%)		25 (49.0%)	24 (54.3%)	-22.6%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			3,479		3,370 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	3	4	7	9	8	8	+53.3%
Religious Sisters	183	161	144	104	115	115	-37.2%
Religious Brothers	21	17	16	5	5	5	-76.2%
Diocesan Seminarians	4	3	44?	5	3	3	-25%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		Yes	No	No	No	No	
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1989	2004	2004	2004	2004	2004 (2015)	
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					No	No	
Catholic schools	59	58	58	57	59	60	No change
Students in Catholic schools	24,106	24,814	24,196	24,777	24,535	25,048	+1.8%
Hospitals	4	4	4	4	4	4	No change
Aged residential accommodation	10	5	10	10	10	8	No change
Regular Mass attenders (% of all Catholics)		20,814 (13.0%)	17,327 (10.6%)	16,156 (10.4%)			-4,658*** -22.4%***

¹⁶ [Catholic Voice | Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn ; Current Edition - Catholic Voice](#)

¹⁷ The former journal *Light* was replaced in 1988. The e-news is here: <https://mailchi.mp/4a6707db359e/edition-93-october-8-5096844>

¹⁸ 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>

¹⁹ 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>

²⁰ [file \(catholic.org.au\)](https://www.catholic.org.au)

²¹ <https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?>

Sources: *Official Catholic Directory* for 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/13, 2016/17, 2020/21, 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 from 2001-2016; ** 2011 to 2021; *** Change from 2006 to 2016

Sources:

Canberra & Goulburn diocesan website: <http://www.cgatholic.org.au>

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[https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Canberra & Goulburn 2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Canberra%20&%20Goulburn%202016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf)

ACBC, NCPR, *Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue A Report to the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn*, Canberra, January 2020.

[https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Diocesan-Final-Report-Phase-1-Canberra & Goulburn.pdf](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Diocesan-Final-Report-Phase-1-Canberra%20&%20Goulburn.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 (September 2021)

Note: This draft profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Archbishop Prowse 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 from the Archbishop.