

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

DIOCESE of MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

The Diocese of Maitland was established in 1847 with territory excised from the Archdiocese of Sydney. In 1995 the name of the diocese was changed to Maitland-Newcastle. Its current land area is 32,016 sq. km.¹ 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 706,928 persons resided in the diocese, with 154,475 self-identifying as Catholic (21.9% of total). Since the 2001 Census (603,483 and 147,708 (25.5%)), the general population has increased by 17.1% while the Catholic population has increased by 4.6% (+6,767). Catholic numbers peaked at 159,045 in 2011. In 2016 the diocese ranked 10th in Catholic numbers but 20th in the proportion of Catholics in the general population. The median age of Catholics was 41, an increase of 3 years since 2011. Australia is the birthplace of 88.1% of all Catholics, including 7,244 Indigenous Australians (4.7% of total Catholics), while the largest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines and UK excluding Nth Ireland (each 1.5%), Italy (0.8%), New Zealand (0.7%), and Ireland and Germany (each 0.6%).

Bishop: The bishop is William Wright, born in the USA in 1952, ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Sydney in 1977, and ordained a bishop in 2011. He was installed as the 8th Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle in 2011. He prepared his 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 38 parishes organised into 10 Regions and 4 deaneries. It is one of just 8 dioceses with 30-60 parishes. Just 5 parishes now have a single full-time resident priest. In the others, individual priests or several priests reside together to serve two or more parishes. The diocese has a Diocesan Finance Council, a Council of Priests, Diocesan Consultors, a Diocesan Pastoral Council (Council for Mission), an Ecumenical and Interfaith Council, Liturgy Council, Social Justice Council, Council for Ministry with Young People, and Adult Faith Formation Council. The Diocesan Leadership Group includes the Directors of CatholicCare, Catholic Schools, Pastoral Ministries, Safeguarding, and Shared Services. Four diocesan synods have been convened - in 1873, 1949, 1951, and 1992-93 – as well as many deanery, regional and diocesan assemblies, the latter in 1995, 1997, 2000, 2004-05, 2007, and 2010. A Diocesan Pastoral Plan was developed at the 1992 Synod. A 5th Diocesan Synod, with 300 members and observers, began in 2019 and its 3 sessions are scheduled to conclude in November 2021. It is discerning 'Five Foundations' for the diocese's future spiritual framework: Identity and Community, Worship and Prayer, Formation and Education, Mission and Outreach, and Leadership and Structure. Its 2nd Session in May 2021 adopted 'Statements of Intent' and its 3rd Session in November 2021 will vote on 'Proposals for Action'.

Priests and Deacons: At end-2020 the diocese had 59 priests, including the bishop: 48 diocesan and 11 religious. Of these, 33 were actively engaged in parish ministry, 1 was the

¹ This data is from the NCPR's 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). The land area is slight larger than Belgium (30,528 sq. Km.) and slightly smaller than Moldova (33,846 sq. Km.).

Chancellor, 8 were chaplains, 1 was lecturing in the USA, 17 were living in retirement (including the former bishop), 2 were without appointment, and 1 was resident elsewhere. At 24 June 2021 the diocesan website listed 32 priests in parish ministry, including the bishop: 24 diocesan and 8 religious. Of these 15 were Australian-born and 17 (53.1%) overseas-born (7 in India, 4 in Nigeria, 3 in Vietnam, and 1 each in Philippines, Sri Lanka, and USA). Two Australian-born diocesan priests (plus the Bishop) 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. At end-2020, 2 diocesan seminarians were in formation. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are currently an estimated 4,827 Catholics per priest. The diocese has a Vocations Office, a Clergy Life and Ministry Team and a Clergy Support Foundation. At end-2020 there were 11 permanent deacons in the diocese with 5 ministering in parishes, 3 as chaplains, 2 retired, and 2 listed as supplementary.²

Lay ministers and officials: At end-2019 18 laypersons held responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 9 men and 9 women. In the parishes 14 laypersons were ministering as pastoral leaders (9) and pastoral associates (5): 3 men, 7 women, and 4 religious sisters. Two religious sisters and 2 lay women also ministered as chaplains in social services, hospitals and the port. Since its establishment the diocese has been served by many religious congregations. Currently, 11 congregations of religious sisters have 152 members in the diocese and 2 congregations of religious brothers have 4 members. The combined numbers of these religious peaked at 659 in 1964, but since 2001 religious sister numbers have decreased from 248 to 152 (- 38.7%), while religious brothers have decreased from 12 to 4 (- 66.7%). At present, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in Australia.³

Mass attendance and liturgy: In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 15,642 (10.2%). In 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 10,465 (6.8%) – down 33.1%. Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an estimated average 327 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. At end-2020 the diocese had 2 seminarians in formation. The most recent ordinations to the priesthood were in 2020 (1) and 2019 (2). Two were Australian-born.

² *Official Directory* gives 11, but this figure could not be verified with other data.

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>

Pastoral ministries: The Diocesan Vision Statement is 'To live the joy of the Gospel and share it with the world'. Its Pastoral Plan is based on the teaching and vision of Vatican II.⁴ The Diocesan Pastoral Support Unit (DPSU) supports the parishes with their pastoral planning, the Diocesan Pastoral Council and other diocesan councils, the various chaplaincies, and other ministries and apostolic groups. It is led by the Director of Pastoral Ministries who works closely with the Bishop. While most of the diocese's pastoral care takes place in the parishes, there are a range of other pastoral ministries, including the Aboriginal Ministry and the Development and Relief Agency (DARA) which supports the homeless, refugees and asylum seekers.⁵

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith: The Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Council works according to guidelines based on Vatican II ecclesiology and recent decrees and studies. It promotes and strengthens ecumenical and interfaith attitudes within the diocese, facilitates initiatives at parish and regional levels, and advises the bishop. In 2008 the Catholic Bishops of Maitland-Newcastle and Broken Bay and the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle signed a public Covenant pledging their Churches to pray, minister and worship together where possible. The agreement, renewed annually, provides for annual Episcopal dialogue, Joint Clergy Days, Services of Reconciliation, exchanges of pulpits, and twice-yearly meetings of their Ecumenical Commissions. In 2012, the three bishops agreed to sponsor Pastoral Care Workers and School Chaplains in schools throughout the Central Coast, Hunter and Northern Regions to offer pastoral care, general spiritual guidance and social and emotional support under the provisions of the National Schools Chaplaincy and Student Welfare Program.

Plenary Council: A total of 2,418 persons – 242 as individuals (56% women and 36% men) and 2,176 in 184 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; fighting for human rights issues; placing greater focus on Jesus Christ; greater trust, faith and hope in God; greater role for women; greater leadership from bishops; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; the ordination of women; listening to each other more; and outreach to youth. Three persons from the diocese were selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, and 4 persons have been called to participate as Members of the Council: the Bishop, Vicar General and 2 lay persons (Dr Helen Maria Belcher and Ms Bernadette Frances Gibson).

Education: At end-2020 the diocese had 58 Catholic schools: 44 primary, 11 secondary, 1 combined and 2 special. They educated 19,818 students: 11,216 primary and 8,601 secondary.⁶ Of these 734 primary and 515 secondary students (6.4%) were Indigenous. The diocese employs 1,369 full-time equivalent teachers and 405 FTE support staff and half of all school principals are women. There are also 8 Early Learning Centres operated by St Nicholas Early Education. Of all Catholic children of primary school age, less than half attend Catholic schools: 47.0% attending primary schools and 45.7% attending secondary schools.⁷ There is no Catholic tertiary institution within the diocese.

⁴ [Diocesan Pastoral Plan \(DPP\)](#)

⁵ [pastoralwork_lr.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

⁶ https://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/media/49763/cso_annual_report_2019.pdf

⁷ ACBC, NCP, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle*, Canberra, September 2019, Table 5

Catholic Schools New South Wales Ltd (CSNSW) coordinates and represents Catholic education in NSW and the ACT at a state level and is recognised by governments as the NSW Catholic school system and as the representative body for NSW Catholic schools. The CSNSW Board receives and distributes government funding to diocesan Catholic schools for their day-to-day operations and capital works and ensures that schools and agencies are government-compliant. It also provides policy advice and direction, reports to the Bishops, fosters resource collaboration and efficiency, and promotes and advocates 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. In his own diocese, each bishop is responsible for the Catholic School Agency (CSA) and individual dioceses allocate the funds on their own needs-based model to individual schools. The Maitland-Newcastle *Catholic Schools Office (CSO) 2019 Annual Report* shows income of \$334.1 million with \$271.5 million from government grants, and total equity of \$379.6 million. Expenditure on completed and planned capital works totalled \$176.5 million, with a significant portion provided as loans from the diocesan Catholic Development Fund. The CSO focused on 6 key areas in 2019: Program of Faith Formation, Staffing models, Successful Foundations (Early Learning), ASPIRE (Performing Arts), Gifted Education, and Leadership Coaching. It also made a special effort to ensure the wellbeing of school principals and their formation as Faith Leaders, completed an independent review of Aboriginal Education in the diocese, and hosted a special conference on this area.

Health and Welfare Services: CatholicCare Social Services Hunter-Manning is the diocese's principal provider of support services to families and the needy. Its programs include out-of-home care, supported housing, family, mental health and job counselling, adoption advice, food aid, and migrant, family and disability services. The *2020 Annual Financial Report* shows income of \$22.5 million - with 88.1% coming from government grants - and net assets of \$2.7 million. The Development and Relief Agency (DARA) also provides food aid to the homeless and support and language services to refugee and asylum seekers through its Refugee Hub, much of it by volunteers. Almost all of its income in 2020 (\$330,000) was sourced from government grants. Mercy Services also provides a wide range of services including community nursing, dementia monitoring, domestic and food services, transport, foster grandparents, McAuley parenting and alcohol and drug services, an elderly citizens and day centres, and personal care. Other welfare services are provided by St Vincent de Paul Society and Natural Fertility Services. The public Calvary Mater Hospital Newcastle offers cancer, palliative, mental health and intensive care services, as well as emergency treatment. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of Catholics aged 65 yrs and over in the diocese in the past 20 years - from 12.2% in 1996 to 18.4% in 2016 - and both Calvary Retirement Communities and Mercy Services offer accommodation for aged persons at 5 facilities within the diocese.

Finances: The diocese does not publish an annual financial report. It is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. 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 2020 financial reports of DARA (government grants of \$356,000) and the Clergy Support Foundation (net assets of

\$296,293) are published. The diocese has its own Catholic Development Fund which provides finance and credit for diocesan capital and other works and also provides a financial return to the diocese. The CDF 2020 Annual Financial Report shows it had net assets of \$25.1 million and distributed a \$4.7 million return to the diocese. All loans were to diocesan related entities with about half allocated to educational projects.

Communications: The diocese has a website and an official diocesan magazine *Aurora* which publishes community news and Catholic perspectives on current affairs. Some 50,000 copies are circulated as a 24-page lift-out magazine in six regional Nine Entertainment publications. It also has a Facebook page, Youtube channel, Twitter and Instagram accounts, and a diocesan App. Online it publishes *mnews.today* which contains news on Catholic schools, liturgy, Faith Matters, Social Services, Youth, Early Education, as well as The Doohan Discourse and Tuesdays with Teresa. The diocese does not publish an annual report. There are published diocesan policies on Social Media⁸ and Access to the Diocesan Archives.⁹

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission identified the diocese as a significant setting of abuse and conducted a special inquiry (Case Study 43) into the response of Catholic Church authorities in the Maitland-Newcastle region to allegations of child sexual abuse by clergy and religious. Its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report found that 7.9% of priests of the diocese were alleged perpetrators, that 158 claims had been made against the diocese, and that 128 payments had been made for a total of \$26,581,845 (average \$207,671 per payment).¹⁰ In 2012 the NSW Government set up a Special Commission of Inquiry into matters relating to the police investigation of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the diocese (Cunneen Inquiry) which reported in 2014.¹¹ Since the Royal Commission the diocese has made an absolute commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults, particularly those in its parishes, schools, and community services, and has an enduring commitment to support those affected by child sexual abuse. In 2016 a Diocesan Protection and Safety Council was established to provide independent advice to the Bishop on issues related to better protection, support and rebuilding trust. It has 3 Standing Committees focused on healing practices, resolving claims and oversight of the Office of Safeguarding. Its current policy documents include Reporting Concerns for Children¹², Zimmerman Services Investigations¹³, Diocesan Code of Conduct¹⁴ and the Safeguarding Framework Policy, to be implemented from mid-2021. During 2021 the diocese will transition from the current *Towards Healing* reporting protocol to the new *National Response Protocol*.¹⁵ The Diocese, along with a total of 264 diocesan entities, is a registered participant in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.¹⁶

⁸ [dio-social-media-policy-2013.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

⁹ [APPLICATION FOR ACCESS TO ARCHIVES \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

¹⁰ 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>

¹¹ [Using the draft template \(Heading 1 style\) \(nsw.gov.au\)](#)

¹² [Reporting Concerns for Children Policy](#) (Updated March, 2021)

¹³ [Zimmerman Services Investigations Policy](#) (Updated 2016)

¹⁴ [Diocesan Code of Conduct](#) (Updated 2020)

¹⁵ [file \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

¹⁶ [Search for institutions that have joined the Scheme | National Redress Scheme](#)

Table 1: Statistical data for Maitland-Newcastle Diocese: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, 2019, 2020 and 2021

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2019	2021 At 24 June	Change 2001 to 2019
Total Population (at Census)	603,483	634,657	666,292	706,928			+17.1%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	147,708 (24.5%)	153,744 (24.2%)	159,045 (23.9%)	154,475 (21.9%)			+6767* +4.6%
Number of Parishes	50	43	42	39	38	38	-24%
Diocesan priests	75	63	52	45	47		-37.3%
Religious priests	18	9	5	8	8		-55.6%
Total Priests	93	72	57	53	55		-40.9%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			34 (59.6%)		35 (63.6%)	32	-5.9%**
- Australian-born			27 (79.4%)		17 (48.6%)	15 (46.9%)	-44.4%**
- Overseas-born			7 (20.6%)		18 (51.4%)	17 (53.1%)	+142.9%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			8 (19.0%)		10 (26.3%)	14 (36.8%)	+75%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			4,678		4,414 (est).	4,827 (est)	
Permanent deacons	2	3	8	9	11		+450%
Religious Sisters	248	237	202	177	152		-38.7%
Religious Brothers	12	6	4	4	4		-66.7%
Diocesan Seminarians	2	2	1	2	4		+100%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1992-93 2000	1992-93 2004-05	1992-93 2010	1992-93 2010	2019-21 2010	2019-21 2010	
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place	Yes						
Catholic schools	57	54	54	54	58		+1.8%
Students in Catholic schools	17,151	17,181	17,631	18,786	19,559		+14.0%
Hospitals	1	1	1	1	1		No change
Aged care accommodation facilities	11	12	11	15	19		+72.7%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		15,642 (10.2%)	12,774 (8.0%)	10,465 (6.8%)			-5,177*** (-33.1%)

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, 2010 and 2020; 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 2021; *** Change from 2006 to 2016

Sources:

Maitland-Newcastle diocesan website: <http://www.mn.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 Maitland-Newcastle*, Canberra, September 2019. https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Maitland-Newcastle_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf

ACBC, NCPR, *Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue A Report to the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle*, 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 (August 2021)

Note: The draft profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Bishop Wright 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 some amendments and these have been incorporated in the text.