

# KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

## DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA

The Diocese of Parramatta was established in 1986 when the Archdiocese of Sydney was divided into 3 dioceses: Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay. The diocese, located in the Western part of Sydney, has a land area of 9,773 sq. km.<sup>1</sup> It is one of 9 suffragan dioceses of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Sydney and the 10 dioceses together form the ecclesiastical Province of Sydney.

**Demographics:** At the 2016 Census 1,155,462 persons resided in the diocese, with 322,677 self-identifying as Catholic (27.9% of total). Since the 2001 Census (920,228 and 307,292 (33.4%)), the general population has increased by 25.6% while the Catholic population has increased by just 5.0% (+15,386). Catholic numbers were the highest ever in 2011, but since 2001 have decreased as a proportion of the total population by 5.5%. In 2016 the diocese ranked 5th in Catholic population with the median age at 37 years. Australia is the birthplace of just 68.0% of all Catholics, including 6,703 Indigenous Australians (2.1% of all Catholics), while the largest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (8.0%), Lebanon (2.5%), Malta (1.8%), Italy, UK excluding Nth Ireland and India (each 1.5%), Croatia/Formal Yugoslavia (1.1%), New Zealand (1.0%), Sri Lanka and Ireland (each 0.8%), Central America and Other Oceania (each 0.7%), and Korea (0.6%). The ratio of male to female Catholics was 92.7:100.<sup>2</sup>

**Bishop:** The present Bishop is Vincent Long Van Nguyen, born in Vietnam in 1961, ordained a priest for the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in 1989, and ordained a bishop in 2011. He served as an auxiliary bishop of the Melbourne Archdiocese from 2011 to 2016 and was installed as the 4<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Parramatta in 2016. He prepared a *Quinquennial Report* for his June 2019 *ad limina* visit, but has not made it public.

**Structure and Governance:** At end-2020 the diocese had 46 parishes organised into 6 deaneries. It is one of just 9 dioceses with 40 or more parishes. At end-2020 there were 41 parishes with a full-time resident priest (87.2%) while 6 shared a priest. The Diocese has two Vicars General, one of whom also serves as a Moderator of the Curia. The Diocese also has a Chief of Operations & Finance (Diocesan Financial Administrator). The diocese has Chancellors for Ministries (a religious sister) and for Administration (a priest), 4 Episcopal Vicars (for Clergy, Education & Formation, Social Welfare, and Migrant Chaplains), and 2 Vicars for Consecrated Life and Communications (both lay religious). The diocese has a Diocesan Finance Council, Council of Priests, College of Consultors & Trustees, a Diocesan Centre for Ministries, a Marriage Tribunal, and Offices for Safeguarding, for Communications, and for Worship. A Diocesan Pastoral Council was established in 2017 and a new group of members met in November 2020 with their commissioning in May 2021.<sup>3</sup> Since January 2021 the Pastoral Planning Office has conducted formation and training programs for diocesan, deanery and parish pastoral council members around the theme 'Serving Christ's Mission'.<sup>4</sup> No bishop has convened a diocesan synod since the diocese was established in 1986, but Diocesan Consultations were held in 2011-2013, a Diocesan Forum with the theme 'Go out into the Deep' was held in 2019, with others planned for 2020-21 and a Diocesan Assembly to be held in 2022.<sup>5</sup> Diocesan policy is to encourage all parishes to have a parish pastoral council. At the Bishop's request a detailed review of the diocese's governance was commenced in 2020 and its report completed in February 2021. The report's overarching assessment of the diocese's ecclesial and civil governance practice was generally excellent, notwithstanding its recommendations for some improvements.<sup>6</sup>

**Priests and Deacons:** At end-2020 there were 114 priests - including the bishop - residing in or belonging to the diocese: 65 diocesan and 49 religious. Of these, 78 (including the bishop) were actively engaged in parish ministry, 30 were full or part-time chaplains, 1 was the seminary rector, 4 were working in other dioceses, and 15 were living in retirement (including the former bishop). At 25 July 2021 the diocesan website listed 77 priests active in parish ministry, including the bishop: 40 diocesan and 37 religious. Of these just 24 (31.2%) were Australian-born and 52 overseas-born (9 each in India and Philippines, 5 in Vietnam, 4 each in Poland and

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<sup>1</sup> This is the area calculated by the 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). It is slightly larger than Cyprus (9,251 sq. Km.) and slightly smaller than Lebanon (10,452 sq. Km.).

<sup>2</sup> [Parramatta 2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Advisory Councils | Diocese of Parramatta \(parracatholic.org\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Search Results for "diocesan pastoral plan" | Diocese of Parramatta \(parracatholic.org\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Background Paper A4.indd \(parracatholic.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Microsoft Word - FINAL Parramatta Diocese Review PRINTER.docx \(parracatholic.org\)](#)

Sri Lanka, 3 in Africa, 2 each in Korea, Argentina and China, and 1 each in Colombia, Syria, Egypt, Cuba, Netherlands, Hungary, Lebanon, Croatia and USA). There has been a very significant turnover of priests in parish ministry during the past 10 years with an increasing reliance on priests sourced from churches outside Australia. This is likely to increase as 5 Australian-born diocesan priests ordained prior to 1980 will retire in the next few years. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are currently an estimated 4136 Catholics per priest. At end-2020 there were 13 diocesan seminarians in formation and 16 permanent deacons, almost all ministering in parishes. The diocese has a Clergy Life & Ministry Committee, a special service for Clergy Healthcare & Wellbeing, and a Clergy Remuneration & Retirement Plan.

**Lay ministers and officials:** At end-2020 34 lay persons held responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 14 men, 17 women, 2 religious sisters and 1 religious brother. In the parishes 3 religious sisters and 5 lay women were ministering as pastoral associates. In the local hospitals and prisons 7 lay women, 1 lay man and 2 religious sisters were ministering as chaplains or pastoral practitioners. Currently within the diocese there are 11 congregations of clerical religious, 32 congregations of religious sisters and 5 of religious brothers. In 1986 when the diocese was established there were 361 religious sisters and 135 religious brothers. Since 2001 the number of religious sisters has decreased from 255 to 201 (- 21.2%), and the number of religious brothers has decreased from 89 to 42 (-62.9%). At present, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in Australia.<sup>7</sup> A religious sister is the diocesan Vicar for Consecrated Life.

**Mass attendance and liturgy:** In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 51,684 or 16.2% of all Catholics. In 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 47,005 (14.6%) – down 4,679 (- 9.1%). Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an estimated average 602 regular Mass attenders. The diocese has an Office for Worship, a Liturgical Commission and a Liturgy Educator. The Office for Worship assists local parish communities to implement diocesan policy on the Sacraments of Initiation for Children (SOI) and Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA), and offers courses, workshops and resources.

**Seminary and Seminarians:** The diocese has its own seminary, the Seminary of the Holy Spirit. Currently, there are 13 seminarians preparing for diocesan priesthood, the majority born overseas. First Year seminarians do their studies on site, while those in other years who reside at the seminary, study at a degree-issuing Catholic tertiary institution. The diocese has a Director of Priestly Vocations and a Director of Formation for the Permanent Diaconate.

**Pastoral ministries:** Much of the pastoral care in the diocese takes place in the parishes which are assisted by the Diocesan Centre for Ministries which provides advice and support for youth ministries, liturgical development, married couples and families, pastoral planning, catechists for special religious education (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine), and projects for social justice. The diocese also provides priest chaplains to aged care facilities, tertiary institutions, ethnic communities, hospitals and prisons. Eight lay persons minister as chaplains and care coordinators in hospitals and prisons. Six religious congregations and organisations offer facilities for retreats (individual and group), prayer, reflection and spiritual direction, and several other organisations provide pastoral accompaniment.

**Ecumenism and Inter-Faith:** The diocese has an Ecumenical Commission and an Interfaith Commission. The Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, located within the diocese, builds bridges of understanding, inclusion and solidarity within the local and wider community. The Bishop is expanding the Centre's work as a permanent feature of the diocese.

**Plenary Council:** A total of 11,365 persons – 826 as individuals (56% women and 38% men) and 10,539 in 212 groups – responded to the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the 10 priority issues for the Council as: remaining faithful to church teaching (especially on marriage); greater inclusion of all; fighting for human rights issues; a new model of church, diocese and parish; greater emphasis on prayer (especially the Rosary) and sacraments; greater role for women; greater trust, faith and hope in God; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; sharing the faith with others; and teaching authentic Catholic faith. Just one person (the Bishop) was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 9

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<sup>7</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>

persons have been called to participate in the Council assemblies: the Bishop, the Vicar General, 4 Episcopal Vicars, the Seminary Rector and 2 lay women (Mrs Wendy Goonan and Ms Carol Teodori-Blahut).

**Education:** At end-2020 there were 88 Catholic schools in the diocese: 58 primary, 28 secondary, 1 combined, and 1 special. They were educating 46,802 students: 22,563 primary and 24,239 secondary. Some 5000 teaching and support staff are employed in these schools, and of the 88 school principals, 49 (55.7%) were women. Of all Catholic children of school age, 51.6% were attending Catholic primary schools, while 60.6% were attending Catholic secondary schools, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest rate of all dioceses.<sup>8</sup> Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CEDP) is managed by an Executive Team providing governance and oversight. The CEDP Schools Council, which advises the bishop on Mission, Learning and Enterprise, has 11 members, including the Bishop, Episcopal Vicar for Education, Executive Director CEDP and 8 others. The CEDP's 4 *Priorities 2021-2024* which underpin Catholic schools in the diocese are: 1) Mission is countercultural; 2) Equity is the norm; 3) Learning is owned by the learner; and 4) Everyone is a leader<sup>9</sup> A key focus is on ensuring all staff understand and are able to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. There are 5 Catholic Early Learning Centres and 27 Catholic Out-of-School-Hours Care Centres. Catholic tertiary education within the diocese is provided by the University of Notre Dame (2 campuses in the diocese) and Campion College Australia.

Since 2017 Catholic Schools New South Wales Ltd (CSNSW) has coordinated and represented 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, for ensuring that schools and agencies are government-compliant, for providing policy advice and direction, reporting to the Bishops, for fostering resource collaboration and efficiency, and for promoting and advocating 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 (not publicly available) to individual schools. The *CEDP 2019 Annual Report* shows annual revenue of \$664.7 million with recurrent government grants of \$524.5 million and government capital grants of a further \$4.5 million.<sup>10</sup>

**Health and Welfare Services:** The principal social services agency of the diocese, operating for over 25 years, is CatholicCare Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains. Its 180 staff operating from 7 centres provide a range of professional care and service services to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the local community regardless of their religion, gender, ethnicity, age or socio-economic background. Its services include counselling, family support, advice on NDIS, aged care, community outreach and early childhood education and care. It also provides assistance for problem gamblers, pregnant women, Indigenous persons, and migrants and refugees. An annual report is not publicly available.<sup>11</sup> Social welfare services for the homeless, children and youth, the physically handicapped, women experiencing violence, and refugees, are also provided by 15 other Catholic agencies. Since 1996 the proportion of Catholics in the diocese aged 65 years and over has increased significantly: from 7.6% in 1996 to 13.9% in 2016. Many residential accommodation and nursing care facilities for aged persons are now provided by Catholic Healthcare Ltd, Holy Family Services, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Southern Cross Care, Dominican Sisters of Malta and St Elizabeth Home. There are 2 Catholic hospitals in the diocese, 1 operated by Catholic Healthcare Limited and a private hospital operated by St John of God Health Care.

**Finances:** The diocese is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Parramatta together with several other entities including the Catholic Development Fund, the Catholic Foundation, and Catholic Education Office. 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. The diocese has its own Diocesan Development Fund (DDF) established in 1989 to provide finance and credit for capital projects and investment services as well as for the welfare and pastoral programs of diocesan agencies, ministries, parishes and schools. Small

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<sup>8</sup> ACBC, NCP, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Parramatta*, Canberra, September 2019.

<sup>9</sup> [Enrolment-Policy.pdf \(parra.catholic.edu.au\)](https://parra.catholic.edu.au/enrolment-policy.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [2019-CEDP-Annual-Report.pdf \(parra.catholic.edu.au\)](https://parra.catholic.edu.au/2019-CEDP-Annual-Report.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [CatholicCare Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains is still open! – Catholic Outlook](#)

surpluses are used by the bishop for pastoral and liturgical projects. The *2019/2020 CDF Annual Financial Report* showed total assets of \$588.2 million (deposits of \$567 million) and net assets of \$20.4 million. There was a surplus of \$16.2 million at 30 June 2020.<sup>12</sup>

**Communications:** The diocese has a designated Vicar for Communications and a Communications Office. The diocesan website, updated in 2021, provides a comprehensive overview of the diocese with up-to-date information on its parishes, as well as its educational, social welfare, safeguarding, and communication agencies. The official publication of the diocese is *Catholic Outlook* providing current local, national and international church news and also appearing as a quarterly online and print magazine with a distribution of 45,000 copies to parishes, schools and other diocesan agencies. The diocese has Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Flickr and Instagram pages.

**Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse:** The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the diocese as a significant setting of abuse. It found the diocese as having the 17th highest overall proportion of priests (2.2%) who were alleged perpetrators, taking into account the duration of ministry.<sup>13</sup> Its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* states that 55 claims were made against the diocese, with 21 payments made for a total of \$2,466,267 (average \$117,441 per payment).<sup>14</sup> Two religious congregations operating in the diocese were also the subject of claims: the Sisters of Mercy (7 claims with payments of \$104,355) and the Marist Brothers (66 claims with unspecified payments). The Royal Commission's Case Studies 13 (Marist Brothers) and 44 (Catholic Church Authorities in Armidale and Parramatta) gave particular attention to abuse in the diocese.<sup>15</sup> In response to recommendations from the Royal Commission, the Bishop committed to zero tolerance of abuse in any form, insisted that everyone working or acting for the Church abide by its set of Professional Standards, and promoted the dignity and rights of children and vulnerable persons. He established an Office of Safeguarding to advise and support the diocesan parishes, agencies and ministries, and to receive and manage concerns, reports or complaints. He also appointed a 'Safeguarding Champion' to guide him on implementing the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Standards, the safeguarding practices for safe cultures, and the best practice accountability and governance structures for safeguarding children and at-risk adults. He also established a 'Support and Networking Framework' and an independent Safeguarding Council. The daily work is led and managed by the Head of the Office for Safeguarding who also acts as Safeguarding Coordinator. 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.<sup>16</sup> The diocese is one of a total of 21 diocesan entities that are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> [FY20 Financial Statement.xlsx \(parracatholic.org\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [CARC.0050.025.0001.pdf \(childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>14</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>15</sup> <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/Case%20Study%2013%20-%20Findings%20Report%20-%20Marist%20Brothers.pdf> and <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/file-list/report-case-study-no-44.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> [file \(catholic.org.au\)](https://www.catholic.org.au)

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?search\\_api\\_views\\_fulltext=catholic+diocese+of+parramatta](https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/institutions/search?search_api_views_fulltext=catholic+diocese+of+parramatta)

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

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2020 At 31 December	2021 At 25 July	Change 2001 to 2020
Total Population (at Census)	920,228	973,661	1,050,870	1,155,462			+25.6%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	307,292 (33.4%)	319,319 (32.8%)	332,120 (31.6%)	322,677 (27.9%)			+15,385* +5.0%*
Number of Parishes	46	48	49	47	47	47	+2.2%
Diocesan priests	69	85	84	63	65		-5.8%
Religious priests	62	62	62	61	49		-21.0%
Total Priests	131	147	146	124	114		--13.0%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			82 (56.2%)		78 (68.4%)	77	-6.1%**
- Australian-born			54 (65.9%)		23 (29.5%)	24 (31.2%)	-55.6%**
- Overseas-born			28 (34.1%)		55 (70.5%)	52 (67.5%)	+85.7%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			41 (83.7%)		41 (87.2%)	41 (87.2%)	No change**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			4,050		4,136 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	1	8	7	10	16		+1500%
Religious Sisters	255	252	258	219	201		-21.2%
Religious Brothers	89	77	71	39	42		-62.9%
Diocesan Seminarians	4	7	14	12	13		+225%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation			No	No	Yes		
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	Never (Never)	Never (Never)	Never (2011-13)	Never (2011-13)	Never (2011-13)	Never (2011-13)	
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					No		
Catholic schools	77	80	81	84	88		+14.3%
Students in Catholic schools	45,610	45,767	45,560	46,747	46,802		+2.6%
Hospitals	2	3	2	0	0		-100%
Aged Care accommodation facilities	11	9	12	7	7		-36.4%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		51,684 (16.2%)	50,613 (15.2%)	47,005 (14.6%)			-4,679*** -9.1%***

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, 2019 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:

Parramatta diocesan website: [Diocese of Parramatta | The Official Website of the Diocese of Parramatta \(parracatholic.org\)](https://www.parracatholic.org/)  
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<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 Long 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 and all corrections and updates have been incorporated into the text.