

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

DIOCESE of SALE

The Diocese of Sale was established in 1887 when a large section of the eastern part of the Melbourne Archdiocese was excised. With Ballarat and Sandhurst, it is a suffragan diocese of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Melbourne and the 4 dioceses constitute the ecclesiastical Province of Melbourne. Its present land area is 42,847 square kilometres.¹

Demographics: At the 2016 Census 566,079 persons lived in the diocese, with 123,594 self-identified Catholics (21.8% of total). Since the 2001 Census (372,136 and 92,746 (24.9%)), the general population has increased by 52.1% while the Catholic population has increased by 33.4% (+30,925). Catholic numbers are now the highest they have ever been, but as a proportion of the total population they have decreased by 3.1%. In 2016 the diocese ranked 11th in Australia's Catholic population with the median age of Catholics at 39 years. Australia is the birthplace of 74.2% of all Catholics, including 896 indigenous Australians (0.7% of all Catholics), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (2.8%), India (2.4%), UK excluding Nth Ireland (2.2%), Italy (2.1%), Sri Lanka (1.7%), Mauritius (1.4%), Netherlands (1.2%), New Zealand (1.0%), Croatia/Former Yugoslavia ((0.8%), Ireland (0.7%), and Malta and Poland (each 0.6%).

Bishop: The Bishop is Gregory Bennet, born in Australia in 1963, ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1992, and ordained a bishop in 2020. He was installed as the 10th Bishop of Sale on 8 December 2020. He has never prepared a *Quinquennial Report*.

Structure and Governance: At end-2019 the diocese had 27 parishes, one of 17 dioceses with less than 30 parishes. At 3 March 2021 there were 14 parishes with parishes-in-partnership (twinned parishes) arrangements sharing one or more clergy. In half of these, the parishes are pastored by 1 priest, while in the other half there is a shared ministry by 2 or more clergy (priests/deacon). The East Gippsland area ministry has 3 priests resident in Bairnsdale ministering to the parishes of Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and Orbost. The diocese has a Diocesan Finance Council, Liturgical Commission, Ecumenism Commission, Marriage Tribunal, and a College of Consultors. A Council of Priests is yet to be established by the new bishop. Currently there is no formal Diocesan Pastoral Council, but the Diocesan *Gaudium et Spes* Plenary Team acts as an interim Diocesan Pastoral Council. Four diocesan synods were held more than a century ago – in 1898, 1901, 1905 and 1906 – but none since then. Two diocesan assemblies were convened in 2002 and 2019. The current Diocesan Pastoral Plan derives from the recommendations for pastoral initiatives which resulted from the 2019 Diocesan Assembly proceedings and the new bishop has promoted this pastoral direction.

Priests and Deacons: At end-2019, 40 priests were listed as resident in the diocese: 32 diocesan and 8 religious.² Eleven were living in retirement, 1 was on leave, and 1 was working outside the diocese. At 3 March 2021, 32 priests – including the bishop – were in active parish ministry, including 23 diocesan and 9 religious.³ Of these 11 were Australian-born and 21 overseas-born (10 in India, 4 in Nigeria, and 1 each in England, Netherlands, Poland, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe and Vietnam). There has been a significant turnover of priests in parish ministry in the last 10 years, mainly due to retirements. Four more Australian-born diocesan priests ordained prior to 1980 will retire over the next 10 years. While the number of overseas-born priests has already increased markedly, an even greater reliance on these priests should be expected. The diocese had 5 seminarians preparing for priesthood at end-2019, and since then 4 have been ordained and are now ministering in parishes. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are now an estimated 3,886 Catholics per priest. The diocese has 5 permanent deacons: 2 in parish ministry, 2 retired and 1 working outside the diocese.

Lay ministers and officials: Nine lay persons hold responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 1 man and 8 women. Some 35 persons exercise pastoral ministry roles in the parishes: 12 as pastoral associates/workers

¹ This is the land area according to the 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). Its land area is slightly greater than the Netherlands (41,850 sq.Km.) and slightly smaller than Denmark (43,094 sq.Km.).

² The Statistics table in the Official Directory lists only 35 priests: 27 diocesan and 8 religious.

³ www.sale.catholic.org.au Parish data is at 3 March 2021

(including 4 religious sisters and 12 lay women), 20 as Sacrament/RCIA coordinators and others.⁴ Many religious congregations have ministered in the diocese and their numbers peaked at 181 in the 1960s. But since 2001 religious sisters have decreased by 74.4% (from 39-10) and religious brothers from 8 to zero. At present, across Australia, there are few young religious sisters and brothers in ministry.⁵

Mass attendance and liturgy: In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 11,838 (11.4% of all Catholics). In 2016 the typical weekend attendance was 11,960 (9.75%) – a slight increase in numbers (+122), but a decrease (-1.0%) as a proportion of the Catholic population. Each priest active in parish ministry currently ministers to an average 373 regular Mass attenders. The diocese has a Commission for Liturgy and an Office for Liturgy and Pastoral Ministry which provides liturgical resources, planning aids, advice, and training programs. It also produces a seasonal publication *Living Liturgy* which is distributed to parishes and schools.

Seminary and Seminarians: The Regional Seminary of Corpus Christi College in Melbourne provides formation for diocesan seminarians from all 4 Victorian dioceses and other dioceses. Currently, just 1 seminarian for Sale is in formation. Four new priests were ordained in 2019-2020 (2 born in India and 1 each in Australia and Zimbabwe).

Pastoral ministries: Much of the pastoral ministry in the diocese takes place in the parishes. There are also chaplains ministering to the Italian community, police, and youth. The diocesan Office for Liturgy and Pastoral Ministry provides formation in parishes and schools, especially for liturgy, music ministry, sacramental celebrations, RCIA, adult faith formation and parish pastoral councils. A large group of catechists teaches children in government schools and prepares them for the sacraments and children's Liturgy of the Word. Youth formation takes place primarily in the parishes and regionally, and the 7 Catholic secondary schools offer a stream of Youth Ministry in their religious education programs. The diocese is closely aligned with Aboriginal Catholic Ministry for Victoria (ACMV), the agency which stands as a model of Reconciliation within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council (NATSICC), the peak advisory body to the Australian Catholic Bishops. The Catholic Education Office runs a Family Life Education Program. The Emmaus Spirituality Centre at Newborough - a joint ministry of the Campion Centre of Ignatian Spirituality and the Sale Diocese - offers parishes, groups, and individuals the opportunity for prayerful reflection, retreats and spiritual direction. Parish Pastoral councils are strongly encouraged in all parishes.

Ecumenism and Inter-Faith: The diocese has an Ecumenism Commission established to encourage various initiatives in the diocese such as prayer for Christian unity and ecumenical dialogue.

Plenary Council: A total of 6,409 persons – 274 as individuals (56% women and 31% men) and 6,135 in 187 groups – responded to the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the top 10 priority issues for the Council as: remaining faithful to church teaching; better faith formation; greater Inclusion of all; fighting for human rights issues; teaching authentic Catholic faith; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; a greater role for women; greater leadership from bishops; greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments; and sharing the faith with others. One lay person was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 5 persons have been called to be members of the Council: the Bishop, Vicar General, Episcopal Vicar, and 2 lay women (Mrs Lizabeth Privitera and Mrs Katherine Jelavic).

Education: At end-2019 the diocese had 44 Catholic schools: 37 primary and 7 secondary.⁶ They were educating 19,197 students: 10,183 primary and 9,014 secondary. A new primary school was added in 2020. Of all Catholic children of school age, 53.7% were attending Catholic primary schools and 51.1% attending Catholic secondary schools.⁷ Among the 44 lay school principals, 19 were women (43.2%). The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV), whose members are the 4 diocesan bishops, is responsible for Catholic schools in Victoria, and receives bulk grants from the Australian and state governments which it distributes to the systemic primary and secondary schools in each diocese. Total income for all schools in

⁴ <https://www.catholic.org.au/fsagg>

⁵ 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>

⁶ The diocesan website states there are 45 schools at April 2021.

⁷ https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sale_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf

Victoria in 2019 was \$2.7 billion, with \$2.6 billion derived from government grants.⁸ The distribution to the Sale Diocese's schools and Education Office in 2019 totalled \$262.1 million.⁹ The Diocese of Sale Catholic Education Limited (DOSCEL), a company limited by guarantee with a Board of Directors which reports directly to the Bishop, is responsible for the management of Catholic Education in the diocese while the Director of Catholic Education, supported by the diocesan Catholic Education Office, manages day-to-day operations. The Catholic Development Funds of Sale, Melbourne and Bunbury, which amalgamated in 2016, currently have combined total assets of \$1.98 billion and net assets \$204.5 million. A significant proportion of its current loans of \$1.18 billion are allocated to the building of educational facilities in the 3 dioceses.¹⁰ The diocese does not have a Catholic tertiary institution within its borders.

Health and Welfare Services: To end-2020 the principal welfare provider for Melbourne and Sale dioceses was CatholicCare Melbourne and Gippsland. On 1 January 2021 this agency merged with Centacare Ballarat and CatholicCare Sandhurst to form CatholicCare Victoria with the aim of improving better coordination and choice for clients, amplifying scale and reach, and continuing the strong commitment to local communities to better address the root causes of poverty and injustice.¹¹ It will deliver a broad range of child, family and community services and consolidate its expertise in school counselling, pastoral services, social housing, employment and advocacy services. With 500 staff and 200+ volunteers working from 20 office locations and 107 delivery sites throughout Victoria, it expects to support annually 50,000 people experiencing difficulty or disadvantage: children, individuals and families, prisoners, newly-arrived refugees and asylum seekers, people with disabilities, and people who are sick, unemployed, or homeless.¹² The Diocesan Charitable Fund, also known as Trinity Families, does not run programs itself but provides funding for service providers supporting families in Gippsland and outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Health services include St John of God Hospital at Berwick and 2 aged care accommodation facilities at Berwick and Pakenham. Like most other dioceses the proportion of Catholics in Sale aged 65 years and over has risen significantly: it increased from 9.1% in 1996 to 15.8% in 2016.

Finances: The diocese is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as the Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Sale, together with several other diocesan entities including Catholic Education Limited, the Charitable Fund, and the Cursillo Movement. 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 never provided an annual financial report, but Catholic Education Limited and the Diocesan Charitable Fund (also known as Trinity Families) have.¹³ The Sale Catholic Development Fund partnered with the CDFs of Melbourne and Bunbury in 2016 and their combined assets in 2020 totalled \$1.98 billion. Funds totalling \$1.18 billion are presently lent at low-cost primarily to parishes in the 3 dioceses for school building and development projects, and to other agencies for aged care facilities, hospitals and social services.¹⁴

Communications: The diocese has a Media Office which maintains the diocesan website, provides communication and media services for the bishop and diocesan agencies, and manages a social media presence. The last issue of the diocesan print magazine *Catholic Life* was published in April 2019. A free online e-Newsletter with weekly updates is currently available. No diocesan annual report is published.

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse: The Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry (2012-13) found the response of the 4 Victorian dioceses - Melbourne, Ballarat, Sandhurst and Sale - to criminal child abuse was to conceal rather than expose it.¹⁵ The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse identified the Diocese of Sale as a very significant setting for clerical abuse with, among all the dioceses, the highest overall

⁸ [CECV Annual Report 2019](#)

⁹ https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/3fdccca3-3aaf-e811-a95e-000d3ad24c60-9b1e586e-e1f6-400c-ac05-52b1e67e2737-Financial%20Report-2293076a-e4b9-ea11-a812-000d3ad1cc03-91621266993_DOSCEL_Financial_Statements_2019_SIGNED.pdf

¹⁰ [CDF-Annual-Report-FY20-FINAL.pdf \(catholicdevelopmentfund.org.au\)](#)

¹¹ [CatholicCare - CatholicCare Victoria \(ccam.org.au\)](#)

¹² [Victorian dioceses partner to... | The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne \(melbournecatholic.org\)](#)

¹³ https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/38f99aad-3aaf-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d-640f0efb-6330-4ac6-80aa-6c13cde64c68-Financial%20Report-0a780400-ed09-eb11-a813-000d3ad1cf4f-Charitable_Fund_Financial_statements_31032019.pdf

¹⁴ [CDF-Annual-Report-FY20-FINAL.pdf \(catholicdevelopmentfund.org.au\)](#)

¹⁵ Finding 7.4:

https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/fcdc/inquiries/57th/Child_Abuse_Inquiry/Report/Inquiry_into_Handling_of_Abuse_Volume_1_FINAL_web.pdf

proportion (15.1%) of priest members who were alleged perpetrators, after taking into account the duration of ministry.¹⁶ The Commission's June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* also noted that the Sale Diocese had 11 alleged priest perpetrators of abuse, and that a total of 28 claims were made against the diocese, with 13 payments made for a total of \$1.13 million (average \$87,000 per payment).¹⁷ The diocese is now committed to ensuring a safe and nurturing culture for all and holds the care, safety and wellbeing of children and the most vulnerable, including Aboriginal people, as the highest priority. It has zero tolerance of all forms of abuse, and all allegations and safety concerns are treated seriously and reported in line with its legal and moral obligations and church policies. The diocese has a published *Code of Conduct*, adheres to the child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission, and has adopted the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) developed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited, and endorsed by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and Catholic Religious Australia.¹⁸ While the diocese still operates under *The Melbourne Response*, from February 2021 it will transition to the new *National Response Protocol*.¹⁹ In April 2021, a new model for responding to abuse *Pathways Victoria* that proposes how the 4 Victorian implement the National Response Protocol, was published for consultation.²⁰ The diocese has a Professional Standards Committee which meets bi-monthly. A total of 146 Sale diocesan entities are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.²¹

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

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2019	2021 at 3 March	Change 2001 to 2019
Total Population (at Census)	372,136	428,174	490,327	566,079			+52.1%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	92,746 (24.9%)	90,199 (21.1%)	120,233 (24.5%)	123,594 (21.8%)			+30,925* +33.4%*
Number of Parishes	26	26	26	27	27	27	+3.8%
Diocesan priests	36	38	36	32	32		-11.1%
Religious priests	8	10	6	6	8		No change
Total Priests	44	48	42	38	40		-9.1%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			23 (54.8%)		31 (88.6%)	32	+39.1%**
- Australian-born			17 (73.9%)		11 (35.5%)	11 (34.4%)	-35.3%**
- Overseas-born			6 (26.1%)		20 (64.5%)	21 (65.6%)	+250.0%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			11 (42.3%)		10 (37.0%)	14 (51.9%)	+27.3%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			5,227		3,886 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	2	5	5	5	5		+150.0%
Religious Sisters	39	23	17	14	10		-74.4%
Religious Brothers	8	8	4	3	0		-800%
Diocesan Seminarians	1	0	5	6	4		+300%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		Yes	Yes	Yes	No		
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1906	1906	1906	1906 (2012)	1906 (2019)		
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place					No	Interim	
Catholic schools	41	40	42	44	44	45	+7.3%
Students in Catholic schools	14,079	14,492	15,770	18,685	19,197		+36.4%
Hospitals	0	0	0	1	1		+100%
Aged Care Accommodation Facilities	1	1	1	1	2		+100%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		11,838 (11.4%)	11,503 (9.6%)	11,960 (9.7%)			+122*** +1.0%***

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,

¹⁶ 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>

¹⁷ 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>

¹⁸ [Code of Conduct - Sale Diocese.pdf \(cdsale.org.au\)](https://www.cdsale.org.au)

¹⁹ [file \(catholic.org.au\)](https://www.catholic.org.au) The new National Protocol become operational from February 2021. Cf. [National Response Protocol - Catholic Church in Australia](https://www.nationalresponseprotocol.org.au)

²⁰ [Pathways.pdf](https://www.pathways.vic.gov.au)

²¹ [Search for institutions that have joined the Scheme | National Redress Scheme](https://www.nationalredress.gov.au)

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:

Sale diocesan website: <http://www.sale.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 Sale*, Canberra, September 2019.

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

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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 (May 2021)

Note: The draft profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Bishop Bennet 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 suggesting several corrections and updates and these have all been incorporated into the text and table.