

KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

DIOCESE of SANDHURST

The territory of the Diocese of Sandhurst was excised from the Diocese of Melbourne and erected as a diocese in 1874. When the ecclesiastical Province of Melbourne was established in 1887 it became a suffragan diocese of the Metropolitan See of Melbourne. Its geographical area is 45,196 square kilometres.¹

Demographics: At the 2016 Census 380,584 persons lived in the diocese, with 90,189 self-identified Catholics or 23.7% of the general population. Since the 2001 Census (332,197 and 88,805 (26.7%)) the general population is up 14.6% and the Catholic population is up 1.6%. In 2016 the diocese ranked 15th in Catholic population, with the median age of Catholics at 42 years. Australia is the birthplace of 88% of all Catholics, including 1,348 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (1.5% of all Catholics), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from Italy (2.1%), Philippines (1.5%), UK (1.0%), New Zealand (0.6%), and India and Netherlands (0.5% each).

Bishop: The bishop is Shane Mackinlay BSc. PhD, born in Melbourne in 1965, ordained a priest for the Ballarat Diocese in 1991, and ordained a bishop in 2019. He was installed as the 9th bishop of the diocese in 2019. His predecessor prepared a *Quinquennial Report* for the Australian bishops' *ad limina* visit in June 2019.

Structure and Governance: The diocese has 40 parishes organized into 3 vicariates. It is one of just 6 dioceses with 40-100 parishes. Only 12 parishes have a full-time resident priest (30%), while 28 share a priest or priests. The diocese has a diocesan financial council, and diocesan consultors, but the council of priests is still to be re-established, and there is no diocesan pastoral council. The last diocesan synod was held in 1948. In June 2020 the bishop commissioned a Review of Strategic, Consultative and Administrative Structures of the diocese with a report likely to be finalised by December 2020.² Diocesan policy has been to encourage parish pastoral councils and most have them.

Priests and Deacons: The diocese has 52 priests, including the bishop: 49 diocesan and 3 religious. Only 30 (including the bishop) are active in parish ministry: 27 diocesan and 3 religious. Of these 19 are Australian-born and 11 overseas-born (4 in India, 6 in the Philippines, and 1 in Malta). Fifteen priests live in retirement, 1 works in the regional seminary, and another has left ministry. The diocese has no permanent deacons. There has been a significant turnover of priests (50%) in parish ministry in the last 10 years and this will likely continue, as 9 of the 19 Australian-born priests were ordained in 1980 or prior. In the next 5 years the diocese will become increasingly reliant on overseas-born priests. Currently, there three transitional deacons. Two will be ordained to the priesthood in 2021. There are 4 seminarians – 2 overseas-born - preparing for priesthood. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are now 3006 Catholics per priest

Lay ministers and officials: Seven lay persons minister as pastoral associates or assistants in the parishes: 1 religious sister, 4 lay women and 1 lay man. Ten lay persons hold senior positions in the diocesan curia: 4 men and 6 women. The presence of religious sisters has been in significant decline since 2001 (down 63%) and after 50 years in the diocese, the Poor Clare Sisters have reluctantly decided to leave, due to lack of numbers. However, the number of religious brothers has remained the same. Also established in the diocese at Dookie is the St Augustine of Canterbury Monastic House of the Community of the Sons and Daughters of God, a

¹ This is a similar geographic area to Estonia (45, 227 sq. km)

² https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=1366-sandhurst-review-terms-of-reference-document&category_slug=news-events&Itemid=830

group of mainly lay men and women, with a priest and a monk, who live a traditional contemplative monastic life.

Mass attendance: In 2006 an average 11,438 Catholics attended Mass regularly (12.7%). In 2016 the average was 8,572 (9.5%) – down 25.1%.

Seminary and Seminarians: The Regional Seminary of the Corpus Christi College in Melbourne serves the diocese, and 4 seminarians of the diocese are currently in formation. One overseas-born deacon is also studying at the seminary.

Pastoral ministries: The diocese has active ministries in adult faith formation, youth development and spirituality, marriage preparation, catechesis, bereavement outreach, charismatic renewal, and clergy health and well-being. It also places a strong emphasis on liturgical and sacramental programs. Chaplains provide pastoral services in the prisons, LaTrobe University Bendigo Campus, and hospitals in the diocese.

Plenary Council: The previous bishop appointed a Plenary Council Committee in 2018, with an executive officer and 12 members from the parishes and interest groups. A total of 4,285 persons (4.8% of the diocesan faithful) responded to the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase: 203 as individuals (51% women and 24% men) and 4,082 in groups. They identified the top 10 priority issues for the Council as: greater inclusion of all; greater focus on Jesus Christ; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; greater role for women; inclusion of divorced and remarried persons; outreach to youth; better faith formation; new model of church, diocese and parish; and ordination of women. One person was selected from Sandhurst for the Discernment and Writing Groups (Bernadette Sullivan) and 5 persons have been called to participate in the Council sessions: 3 clerics (bishop, Episcopal vicar and vicar general) and 2 lay persons (Catherine Jenkins and Ruth Lawlor).

Education: The diocese has 56 Catholic schools: 42 primary, 11 secondary and 3 combined. They educate 18,866 students: 10,065 primary and 8,801 secondary. Since 2001 there has been a 6% increase in school numbers and a 28.5% increase in student enrolments. In December 2019 the Bishop set up a Governance Working Party to review and enhance the governance processes and structures for Catholic education in the diocese. All recommendations from its report have been accepted, including incorporating all parish schools into one integrated diocesan system under the auspices of the diocese. An implementation plan is currently being prepared. Also operating in the diocese are the Doxa School, a Catholic Flexible Learning Setting for vulnerable youth in the region, and the Borinya Wangaratta Community Partnership which helps educate young people struggling with social or emotional challenges or not progressing in mainstream schools. In 2018, under the Victorian Catholic Systemic Recurrent Funding arrangements, \$84.8 million in recurrent government grants was budgeted for allocation to the Sandhurst diocesan primary schools (around 88% of total income).³

Health and Welfare Services: The diocese, through the CatholicCare offices, provides support to asylum seeker and refugee families, emergency relief, assistance with family violence, and timely responses to homelessness. Government grants of \$7.2 million support most of this work. CatholicCare has a commitment to culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through its Reconciliation Action Plan, and provides chaplaincy and counselling services to primary schools. St John of God Health Care operates the St John of God Hospital in Bendigo, one of the largest hospitals in Central Victoria offering surgical care, rehabilitation services, home healthcare, pathology, and maternal care, especially for vulnerable and young mothers. Aged care, including residential, is provided by several organisations, including Mercy Health and Southern Cross Care. Family planning services are provided by Billings LIFE.

³ <https://www.ceosand.catholic.edu.au/downloads/key-documents/stewardship-of-resources/184-sandhurst-primary-recurrent-funding-guide-2018/file>

Finances: The diocese is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as The Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Sandhurst, and also as Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, Diocese of Sandhurst Development Fund, and Priests Retirement Foundation of the Diocese of Sandhurst. 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. However the Retirement Foundation submitted its FY 2028-19 Financial Report showing net income of \$379K and net assets of \$6.2 million. In 2020 the diocese published its fourth annual *Year in Review 2019*, a comprehensive annual report covering church organisations, parish ministries, education, health and welfare services, liturgy, adult faith education, youth ministry, mission and outreach, child protection, clergy in-service, and finances.⁴ Income for the diocese in FY 2018-19 from various sources was \$7 million, with expenses totalling \$4.2 million.

Communications: Prior to COVID-19 the diocese published *The Sandpiper*, a monthly printed newspaper to develop the sense of community linking faith and life through dialogue. Since the pandemic, the printed paper is on hold, and a fortnightly online newsletter published. The diocese has its own website.

Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission's statistical report includes the diocese as a significant setting of abuse, with 16 priests identified as alleged perpetrators over the period 1950-2010. They represented 12.0% (unweighted) of the 133 priests in ministry in the diocese over the period, and 14.7% (weighted) taking account of the duration of ministry. In its June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report it noted 30 claims (43% from males) made against the diocese, with 12 payments made for a total of \$573,000 (average \$48,000 per payment). The diocese employs a Child Safety Officer and has a Professional Standards Committee established under the Towards Healing process and consisting of clergy and laity representing the law, health, education, and social work professions. The diocese, with 214 other diocesan entities, is a registered participant in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.

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

| | 2001 | 2006 | 2011 | 2016 | 2019 | Change 2001 to 2019 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Total Population (at Census) | 332,197 | 343,898 | 358,165 | 380,584 | | +14.6% |
| Catholic Population (at Census) (%) | 88,805 (26.7%) | 90,199 (26.2%) | 93,799 (26.2%) | 90,189 (23.7%) | | +1.6% |
| Number of Parishes | 41 | 41 | 40 | 40 | 40 | -2.4% |
| Diocesan priests | 49 | 51 | 50 | 50 | 49 | No change |
| Religious priests | 5 | 0 | 2 | 4 | 3 | -40% |
| Total Priests | 54 | 51 | 52 | 54 | 52 | -3.7% |
| Priests in active parish ministry | | | 37 | | 30 | -18.9%* |
| - Australian-born | | | 31 | | 19 | -38.7%* |
| - Overseas-born | | | 6 | | 11 | +83.3%* |
| Parishes with full-time resident priest | | | 22 (55%) | | 12 (30%) | -45.5%* |
| Catholics per priest in parish ministry | | | 2,535 | | 3,006 (est.) | |
| Permanent deacons | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | +100% |
| Religious Sisters | 76 | 74 | 55 | 44 | 28 | -63.2% |
| Religious Brothers | 4 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | +75% |
| Diocesan Seminarians | 3 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 4 | +25% |
| Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation | | No | No | No | No | |
| Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly) | 1948 | 1948 | 1948 | 1948 | 1968 | |
| Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place | | | | | | |
| Catholic schools | 50 | 53 | 54 | 55 | 56 | +5.7% |
| Students in Catholic schools | 13,835 | 14,681 | 16,626 | 18,306 | 18,866 | +28.5% |
| Hospitals | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | No change |
| Nursing & Convalescence Homes | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | +100% |

⁴ https://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&alias=1368-year-in-review-2019&category_slug=diocese-of-sandhurst-publications&Itemid=830

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|--|-----|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|--|----------|
| Regular Mass attenders (% of all Catholics) | n/a | 11,438 (12.7%) | 9,388 (10.0%) | 8,572 (9.5%) | | -25.1%** |
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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; 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 2011-2019; ** Change 2006-2016

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

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

Text and table prepared by Peter J Wilkinson (October 2020)

Note: The draft profile of the diocese was forwarded to Bishop Mackinlay with an invitation to correct any errors and to advise of any recent changes made or future plans being contemplated in relation to the recommendations in *The Light from the Southern Cross*. He responded with some corrections which have been incorporated.