

## KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

### DIOCESE of ROCKHAMPTON

The Diocese of Rockhampton was erected in 1881 when it was excised from the Diocese of Brisbane. In 1930 part of its own territory was excised to establish the Diocese of Townsville. Its current land area is 396,147 sq. km.<sup>1</sup> It is one of four suffragan dioceses – with Cairns, Townsville and Toowoomba – of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Brisbane and together the five dioceses form the ecclesiastical Province of Brisbane.

**Demographics:** At the 2016 Census 445,772 persons lived in the diocese, with 108,566 self-identifying as Catholic (24.4% of total). Since the 2001 Census (371,949 and 94,827 (25.5%)), the general population has increased by 19.8% and the Catholic population by 14.5% (+13,739). The Catholic population is now at its highest level ever and among all the dioceses ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in numbers and 7<sup>th</sup> for the proportion of Catholics in the general population. The median age of Catholics is a low 36 years. Australia is the birthplace of 87.6% of all Catholics, including 5,351 Indigenous Australians (4.9% of Catholics in the diocese), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (3.4%), New Zealand (1.4%), and UK excluding Nth Ireland (1.1%).

**Bishop:** The present Bishop is Michael McCarthy, born in Toowoomba, Australia in 1950, ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Brisbane in 1978, and ordained bishop in 2014. He was installed as the 10<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Rockhampton in 2014. 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 30 parishes organised into clusters within 5 Regions. Just 10 parishes had a resident full-time priest, the others having to share a priest. The diocese has a Diocesan Financial Administrator, a College of Consultors, a Council of Priests, a CentracareCQ Council, a Diocesan Education Council and a Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) established in 2019. The DPC met 3 times by Zoom during COVID lockdown in 2020 and has met twice in 2021. The diocese also has a Marriage Tribunal Office and Offices for Community Engagement, Communications, Safeguarding and Pastoral Response, Adult Faith Education and Formation, Clergy Life & Ministry, Youth, Vocations and Family Life, Human Resource, and Education; and Committees and Councils for Aboriginal & Islander People (Consultative), Building & Property, the Diocesan Development Fund, Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations, Parents & Friends' Association. Only one diocesan synod has ever been held, in 1959, but a Diocesan Assembly with 170 delegates present was held in March 2019 to review the diocese's pastoral and evangelisation initiatives and to prepare a 10-year diocesan pastoral plan which is yet to be finalised. Diocesan policy is to encourage parish pastoral councils.

**Priests and Deacons:** At end-2020, there were 37 priests listed in the diocese: 27 diocesan and 9 religious. They included 22 priests ministering in parishes, 13 (including the former bishop) living in retirement, 2 doing further studies and 2 working outside the diocese. , At 29 August 2021 there were 18 priests ministering in parishes (including the bishop) including 12 diocesan and 6 religious, with 6 Australian-born (33.3%) and 12 overseas-born (56.5%) of whom 7 are from India, 3 from Nigeria, and 1 each from Indonesia and Vietnam. Four retired priests reside in parishes. The Bishop, ordained in 1978, is due to retire in 2025. If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are an estimated 6,031 Catholics per priest. There has been a significant turnover of priests in parish ministry in the last 10 years, mainly due to retirements, and movements of religious priests. The diocese currently has 2 diocesan seminarians with one ordained in June 2021. Only one permanent deacon has ever been ordained for the diocese.

**Lay ministers and officials:** Eighteen laypersons hold responsible positions in the diocesan curia: 10 men, 7 women and 1 religious sister. In the parishes 6 religious sisters and 7 laywomen minister as parish ministers or coordinators. The first congregation of religious sisters – Sisters of Mercy – arrived in the now Diocese of Rockhampton in 1872. Other religious congregations of men and women followed, offering educational and health services to the local people. Their numbers peaked at 373 in 1964 and then began to decline. Since 2001 the number of religious sisters in the diocese has decreased from 113 to 64 at end-2020 (-43.3%), while religious brothers have reduced from 16 to 3 (-81.3%).

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<sup>1</sup> This data is from the NCP's 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). The diocese's land size is slightly smaller than Paraguay (406,752 sq. Km.) and slightly larger than Zimbabwe (390,757 sq. Km.).

**Mass attendance and liturgy:** In 2006 the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 10,382 (10.6%). In 2016, typical weekend attendance was 8,119 (7.5%) – down 21.8%. If only the priests in parish ministry are counted there is one priest for an average 451 regular Mass attending Catholics. The diocese has a Liturgical Commission, which advises the Bishop, plans major liturgical events, assists parishes, schools and agencies with implementing the diocesan vision of liturgical practice, monitors local and universal liturgical developments, identifies areas of liturgical need, formulates policies and guidelines, develops resource material to promote liturgical life, and organises and offers liturgical formation. Commission members are appointed for 3 years.

**Seminary and Seminarians:** Queensland’s first regional seminary, Pius XII, was established at Banyo in 1939 to form diocesan priests for the five dioceses. From a peak of 134 seminarians in 1967, there were just five seminarians from all dioceses in 2005. Following the establishment of the Australian Catholic University’s McAuley Campus at Banyo in 2003, the new Holy Spirit Regional Seminary, adjacent to ACU, was opened in 2008. Though seminarian numbers have increased, candidates are now older and from diverse ethnic backgrounds. In May 2021 the diocese had two seminarians with 1 ordained to the priesthood in June 2021.

**Pastoral ministries:** While most pastoral ministry takes places in the parishes, there are special outreach ministries for Indigenous people (Woorabinda Mission), for maritime workers (Apostleship of the Sea) and prisoners (designated chaplains), as well as for youth, aged and homeless persons in residential care, overseas seasonal farm workers (Bundaberg Project), and people on the land in the far western areas of the diocese (Western Pastoral Ministry). A new Diocesan Pastoral Council was established in 2019 but the 10-year diocesan pastoral plan proposed in 2019 is yet to be finalised. The Aboriginal and Islander Catholic Consultative Committee advises the bishop on pastoral care for Indigenous people. In 2020 a new pastoral model to serve the remote and isolated parishes of the Central West was introduced with a Regional Pastoral Council, 2 dedicated priests working *in solidum*, and 2 pastoral coordinators (a laywoman and religious sister). The diocese partners with the University of Dayton Ohio’s Virtual Learning Community for Faith Formation (VLCFF) offering short courses (3-5 weeks) designed for adult faith formation, and reimburses local Catholics who complete the course. The diocesan Youth Office provides leadership training for Years 10 and 11 students, and sends young people to the annual Brisbane Ignite Conference, the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (3-yearly) and the World Youth Day (3 yearly). The St Joseph’s Cathedral Bookstore provides resources for faith development.

**Plenary Council:** A total of 148 persons (only 72% were Catholics) – 68 as individuals (60% women and 21% men) and 80 in 10 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, especially on marriage; greater inclusion of all; greater focus on Jesus Christ; greater involvement of the laity; better selection and formation of priests; care for the environment; sharing the faith with others; more welcoming parishes; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; and greater emphasis on prayer and sacraments. No one was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 5 persons have been called to participate in the Council sessions: the Bishop and Vicar General, and 3 lay persons (Ms Loretta McKeering, Mrs Catherine Simmonds, and Mr Peter Doherty).

**Education:** At end-2020, the diocese had 42 Catholic schools - 31 primary and 11 secondary – educating 18,081,465 students: 9,107 primary and 8,974 secondary. Of all Catholic children of school age, less than half attended Catholic schools: 43.1% attending primary schools, and 46.7% attending secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> There were also 10 Catholic kindergartens. More than half (22) of the school principals were laywomen (52.4%) and 1,378 teaching staff (part and full-time) were employed in all schools in 2020.<sup>3</sup> The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is the peak body for Catholic education in Queensland representing the Queensland bishops, religious institute leaders, parents, diocesan councils and boards, and other incorporated bodies with schools. It sets state-wide policy on funding and advocacy with governments and other peak bodies at state and national levels, as well as develop policy on research, industrial relations, public relations and communications. Its current *Strategic Plan* covers 2021-2023.<sup>4</sup> Catholic systemic schools receive federal recurrent funding based on each school’s socio-economic score (SES) determined according to the school’s

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Rockhampton\\_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Rockhampton_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://qcec.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210413-QCEC-2020-Annual-Report-Final-WEB.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://qcec.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QCEC\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2019\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](https://qcec.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/QCEC_Annual_Report_2019_Final_WEB.pdf)

size, location and student population profile. Grants received from the Australian and state governments are distributed to the systemic primary and secondary schools in each diocese. Each diocese has its own Catholic Schools/Education Office (CSO/CEO) which provides leadership, service and support to all systemic schools. The *2019 Annual Report* of Catholic Education Diocese of Rockhampton shows total revenue of \$299.5 million with \$236.3 million derived from Commonwealth and State grants, and net assets of \$617.9 million.<sup>5</sup> There is no Catholic tertiary institution in the diocese.

**Health and Welfare Services:** CentacareCQ is the diocese's main social welfare agency, providing professional community services throughout Central Queensland with over 300 staff. Its services, provided on a non-discriminatory basis, include aged care and disability support, counselling, and family and community support and education. Besides its 7 sites between Bundaberg and Mackay it also operates Family Relationship Centres providing information and referrals to families with relationship difficulties, dispute resolution, and property mediation to separated or separating families. Its *2020 Annual Report* shows income of \$25.9 million, predominantly from government grants, and net assets of \$7.1 million.<sup>6</sup> In 2019 there were 3 Catholic hospitals and 3 Day Therapy Community Centre Services in the diocese operated by Mercy Health and Aged Care CQ (Mater Group). In July 2020 the 3 Mater hospitals in Rockhampton, Mackay and Bundaberg merged with the Mater hospitals in South-East and North Queensland to form Mater Ministries Queensland, making it the state's largest not-for-profit healthcare provider with increased capacity to provide more and best practice services. As in many other dioceses, the proportion of Catholics in Rockhampton aged 65 years and over has increased significantly between 1996 (8.9%) and 2016 (13.0%). The Mater Group now operates 5 aged residential accommodation facilities in Rockhampton, the Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus have a Home for the Aged in Mackay, and OzCare operate an aged care facility in Mackay. Ozcare has 3 hostels for homeless men in Rockhampton, Bundaberg and Mackay, and St Vincent de Paul also provides welfare services.

**Finances:** The diocese does not publish an annual financial report. It is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as The Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Rockhampton, together with other related entities, including Centacare: Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton, Charismatic Renewal, the Diocesan Trust Fund, and Catholic Education. 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 Annual Financial Reports for the Diocesan Trust Fund (net assets of \$1.14 million), Centacare (cf. Health and Welfare Services above) and Catholic Education (cf. Education above) are available on the ACNC website. The diocese has a Diocesan Development Fund to further its pastoral mission by harnessing the financial resources of the Catholic community to provide cost-effective financial arrangements for capital works and other pastoral programs. Its *2019 Special Purpose Annual Report* shows total assets of \$246.8 million, net assets of \$13.6 million and loans of \$70.8 million. DDF profit in 2019 was \$7.8 million and of this \$3.7 million was distributed to the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation.<sup>7</sup>

**Communications:** The diocese has a Communications Office, which uses predominantly digital technology to communicate to the many rural and isolated communities in its extensive territory. It has a diocesan website, and produces monthly online Newsletters containing a message from the Bishop, reports from the regions, and other items of interest. It has a Facebook page and YouTube channel which it uses for Mass at home and messages from the Bishop. It also promotes Catholic podcasts by various sources.

**Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse:** The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found the Diocese of Rockhampton to be a significant setting for clerical abuse. The Commission's June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* report showed the diocese had the 11th highest proportion of alleged priest abusers

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<sup>5</sup> [https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/4c564158-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad24077-35a1760e-385a-42d0-b571-7afb98df5b16-Financial%20Report-8394f794-2143-eb11-a812-000d3acae853-Catholic Education Diocese of Rockhampton FY19 Signed Financial Statements.pdf](https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/4c564158-38af-e811-a963-000d3ad24077-35a1760e-385a-42d0-b571-7afb98df5b16-Financial%20Report-8394f794-2143-eb11-a812-000d3acae853-Catholic%20Education%20Diocese%20of%20Rockhampton%20FY19%20Signed%20Financial%20Statements.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/0eb2dcf9-39af-e811-a95e-000d3ad24c60-5bf86da5-e663-4830-b22b-b7295dc9af1d-Financial%20Report-38051612-1e4f-eb11-a812-000d3acb05bc-2019-2020 audited financial report.pdf](https://acncpubfilesprodstorage.blob.core.windows.net/public/0eb2dcf9-39af-e811-a95e-000d3ad24c60-5bf86da5-e663-4830-b22b-b7295dc9af1d-Financial%20Report-38051612-1e4f-eb11-a812-000d3acb05bc-2019-2020%20audited%20financial%20report.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ddfrochampton.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Diocesan-Development-Fund-Special-purpose-annual-report-for-the-year-ended-31-December-2019-Signed.pdf>

(8.0%) of all dioceses after taking into account the duration of ministry.<sup>8</sup> A total of 79 claims were made against the diocese, and 46 payments made for a total of \$1.66 million (average \$36,000 per payment).<sup>9</sup> The Royal Commission also conducted a Case Study (No. 26) into St Joseph's Orphanage at Neerkol located within the Diocese of Rockhampton and operated by the Sisters of Mercy between 1940 and 1975. It reviewed the earlier Forde Inquiry<sup>10</sup> and heard evidence from former male and female residents at the orphanage as well as responses from the Sisters of Mercy, the Diocese of Rockhampton, and the Queensland state government to the complaints made by the former residents between 1993 and 2015. The Royal Commission's Report of the Case Study endorsed all the findings of the Forde Inquiry and included more of its own.<sup>11</sup> The diocese now has a Safeguarding and Pastoral Response Office with a designated manager to implement the diocesan policy of setting a uniform standard of best practice in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, with clear procedures for safe recruitment and selection practices, ethical behaviour, safe activities and environments, and for responding to concerns, allegations and disclosures. The policy applies to everyone working within the diocesan pastoral structure, including clergy, religious, employees, students on placement, volunteers in parishes and diocesan agencies.<sup>12</sup> The published policy, last updated in November 2019, does not mention the 2020 National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS), nor the *National Response Protocol* to which the diocese must transition during 2021. An audit of the diocese's implementation of the NCSS conducted in 2020 found it had fully implemented or was substantially progressed in the implementation of 97 (94%) of the 103 Indicators relevant to their operations, 4 others (4%) were in the initial stages of implementation and 2 were yet to be addressed.<sup>13</sup> A total of 196 diocesan entities, including the Diocese of Rockhampton, are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.<sup>14</sup>

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

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2020	2021 at 29 August	Change 2001 to 2020
Total Population (at Census)	371,949	397,867	434,549	445,772			+19.8%
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	94,827 (25.5%)	97,846 (24.6%)	107,724 (24.8%)	108,566 (24.4%)			+13,739 +14.5%
Number of Parishes	39	34	31	31	30	30	-20.5%
Diocesan priests	25	42	32	31	27		+16%
Religious priests	5	8	11	13	9		+60%
Total Priests	30	50	43	44	36		+23.3%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			25 (58.1%)		18 (50.0%)	18	-8%**
- Australian-born			19 (76%)		7 (33.3%)	6 (33.3%)	-47.4%**
- Overseas-born			6 (24%)		14 (66.6%)	12 (66.6%)	+116.7%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			9 (29%)		10 (33.3%)	5 (16.7%)	-44.4%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			4,308		5170 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	0	1	0	0	0	0	No change
Religious Sisters	113	112	93	73	64		-43.4%
Religious Brothers	16	11	13	4	3		-81.3%
Diocesan Seminarians	5	0	1	1	2		-60%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1959	1959	1959	1959	1959 (2019)	1959 (2019)	

<sup>8</sup> 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>

<sup>9</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>10</sup> Commission of Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions, [https://www.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0023/54509/forde-comminquiry.pdf](https://www.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0023/54509/forde-comminquiry.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [Case Study 26 - Findings report - The response of the Sisters of Mercy, the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton and the Queensland Government to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol \(St Joseph's Orphanage, Neerkol\)](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-study-26-finding-report-the-response-of-the-sisters-of-mercy-the-catholic-diocese-of-rockhampton-and-the-queensland-government-to-allegations-of-child-sexual-abuse-at-st-josephs-orphanage-neerkol-st-josephs-orphanage-neerkol)

<sup>12</sup> [Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults \(catholic.net.au\)](https://www.catholic.net.au/safeguarding-children-and-vulnerable-adults)

<sup>13</sup> [diocese-of-rockhampton-cpsl-final-audit-report-april-2020.pdf \(cpsltd.org.au\)](https://www.cpsltd.org.au/diocese-of-rockhampton-cpsl-final-audit-report-april-2020.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> [Search for institutions that have joined the Scheme | National Redress Scheme](https://www.nationalredress.gov.au/search-for-institutions-that-have-joined-the-scheme)

Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place							
Catholic schools	37	38	39	42	42		+13.5%
Students in Catholic schools	12,632	14,160	16,230	17,010	18,081		+43.1%
Hospitals	5	0	5	4	3		-40%
Aged Care Accommodation Facilities	6	6	6	5	7		+16.7%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		10,382 (10.6%)	8,855 (8.2%)	8,119 (7.5%)			-2,263*** (-21.8%)

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, 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:

Rockhampton diocesan website: [www.rok.catholic.org.au](http://www.rok.catholic.org.au)

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

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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: This profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Bishop McCarthy 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*. His response included several corrections, updates and additions and these have all been incorporated in the text and table.