

## KNOW THE DIOCESES IN 2020

### DIOCESE of TOOWOOMBA

In 1929, a land area of 486,159 sq. Km. was excised from the Archdiocese of Brisbane to establish the Diocese of Toowoomba.<sup>1</sup> It is one of four suffragan dioceses – with Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton – of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Brisbane and together the five dioceses form the ecclesiastical Province of Brisbane.

**Demographics:** At the 2016, Census 272,118 persons lived in the diocese, with 65,212 self-identified Catholics (24.0% of total). Since the 2001 Census (234,522 and 62,153 (26.5%)), the general population has increased by 16% and the Catholic population by 4.9%. The Catholic population peaked at 66,286 in 2011, but since 2001, as a proportion of the total population, it has decreased by 2.5%. In 2016 the median age of Catholics was 38 years. Australia is the birthplace of 89.5% of all Catholics, including 3,196 indigenous Australians (4.9% of Catholics in the diocese), while the biggest groups born outside Australia are from the Philippines (2.3%), UK excluding Nth Ireland (0.9%), and New Zealand (0.8%).<sup>2</sup>

**Bishops:** The present Bishop is Robert McGuckin, born in Australia in 1944, ordained a Priest for the Archdiocese of Sydney in 1973, and ordained a Bishop in 2012. He was installed as the 6<sup>th</sup> Bishop of Toowoomba in 2012. He prepared a *Quinquennial Report* for his June 2019 *ad limina* visit. He reached retirement age (75 years) in 2019 and has tendered his resignation to Pope Frances.

**Structure and Governance:** The diocese had 37 parishes at end-2020, organised into five territorial deaneries. At 15 March 2021 just 19 of the parishes had a resident full-time priest, the other 18 having to share a priest. The diocese has a Diocesan Finance Council and Financial Administrator, a College of Consultors, a Council of Priests, and a Diocesan Pastoral Council. It also has an Episcopal Vicar for Canonical Matters, a Tribunal, and a Social Justice Commission. Only one diocesan synod has ever been held, in 1948, but the previous Bishop convened five diocesan assemblies between 1998 and 2011. A Diocesan Pastoral Plan and Diocesan Action Plan for the period 2018–2023 were launched by the current Bishop in 2018 after extensive consultation and analysis.<sup>3</sup> Both will be revisited in 2023. Diocesan policy is to encourage parish pastoral councils.

**Priests and Deacons:** At end-2020, there were 37 priests living in the diocese: 28 diocesan and nine religious. They included priests working in the Aboriginal Apostolate (1), as chaplains to hospitals and aged care (1), the university (1), and in the supply ministry (3). Thirteen were living in retirement. At 5 March 2021, 24 priests (including the bishop and 2 retired priests) were ministering in parishes. They included 13 Australian-born (54.2%) and 11 overseas-born (4 in the Philippines, 3 in India, and 1 each in Sri Lanka, New Zealand, Ireland, and Mexico). If only the priests actively ministering in parishes are counted, there are an estimated 2,717 Catholics per priest. There has been a significant turnover of priests in parish ministry in the last 10 years, mainly due to retirements and deaths. Ten priests have died since 2012 and 10 more Australian-born diocesan priests still in parish ministry will likely retire in the next 5-10 years. The diocese currently has 3 diocesan seminarians (1 overseas-born) preparing for priesthood. It has a Vocations Director and a program for the Continuing Education of Priests. No permanent deacons have been ordained for the diocese.

**Lay ministers and officials:** Three laypersons hold senior positions in the diocesan curia: 2 men and 1 woman. Five laywomen also minister as pastoral associates in the parishes, including 2 religious sisters, and a religious sister coordinates *Sychar* House of Prayer and Spirituality. Since the establishment of the Toowoomba Mission in 1862, 14 female and 10 male lay religious congregations have ministered in the diocese. Their numbers peaked at 272 in 1974 and then began to decline. Since 2001 the number of religious sisters in the diocese has decreased from 64 to 22 (-65.6%), while religious brothers have reduced from 9 to 0.

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<sup>1</sup> This data is from the NCPR's 2016 National Census Project (called Statistical Area 1's). The land size is only slightly smaller than Turkmenistan (488,100 sq. Km.).

<sup>2</sup> ACBC, NCPR, *Diocesan Social Profile, Based on 2016 Australian Census: Diocese of Toowoomba*, Canberra, September 2019. [https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Toowoomba\\_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Toowoomba_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Both Plans can be downloaded at [Diocesan Pastoral Plan | Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba](#)

**Mass attendance and liturgy:** In 2006, the typical weekend Mass attendance in the diocese was 8,615 (13.7%). In 2016, typical weekend attendance was 5,510 (8.4%) – down 36.0%. The diocese has a Liturgical Commission, which works to create a healthy liturgical life by promoting good liturgy through workshops, worthy sacred music and art, and formulating and implementing liturgical and sacramental policy. It also provides a range of useful liturgical resources easily accessed on the diocesan website.

**Seminary and Seminarians:** Queensland's first regional seminary, Pius XII, was established at Banyo in 1939 for the formation of 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. At end-2020, the Toowoomba Diocese had 3 seminarians (1 overseas-born).

**Pastoral ministries:** A Diocesan Pastoral Plan and Diocesan Action Plan for 2018-2023 were recently developed by the Diocesan Pastoral Council in extensive consultations across the diocese. There are six Key Pastoral Directions: family engagement, spiritual development, parish leadership, liturgy, creating a safe and welcoming Church, and social justice. The Action Plan sets out practical strategies for diocesan ministries, councils, parishes and parish councils. To action spiritual development, *Sychar* House of Prayer and Spirituality was opened in 2019. A diocesan Aboriginal Apostolate supports and advocates for the numerous Aboriginal persons and community based organisations within the diocese. It also educates, mediates with, and advises non-Indigenous people on improving racial and cultural interactions between communities. The SPRED Centre provides Special Religious Development for People with Intellectual Disability. The Social Justice Commission, established in 2002, focuses on one Key Pastoral Direction in five areas: spirituality, education, leadership, solidarity and research. Its current priorities are justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, caring for the environment, and support and advocacy for refugees.

**Plenary Council:** A total of 1,464 persons – 175 as individuals (45% women and 37% men) and 1,289 in 90 groups – responded to the Plenary Council's Listening and Dialogue phase. They identified the top 10 priority issues for the Council as: greater Inclusion of all; fighting for human rights issues; greater focus on Jesus Christ; better faith formation; ending mandatory celibacy and allowing priests to marry; a greater role for women; a new model of church, diocese and parish; ordination of women; more transparency and accountability on child sexual abuse; and a greater focus on ecumenism. No one was selected for the Discernment and Writing Groups, but 5 persons have been called to participate in the Council sessions: the Bishop, the Vicar General, 1 Episcopal Vicar, and 2 lay persons (Dr Mark Copland and Mrs Patrice Riordan).

**Education:** At end-2019, the diocese had 33 Catholic schools - 21 primary, 5 secondary and 7 combined – educating 10,214 students: 5,813 primary and 4,401 secondary. Of all Catholic children of school age, less than half attended Catholic schools: 45.6% attending primary schools, and 41.9% attending secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> There were 881 teaching staff (part and full-time) in all schools in 2019, and among the 34 school principals, 16 were laywomen (47.1%). 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 policy on research, industrial relations, public relations and communications. Its current *Strategic Plan* covers 2021-2023.<sup>5</sup> Catholic systemic schools receive federal recurrent funding based on each school's socio-economic score (SES) determined according to the school's size, location and student population profile. The grants received from the Australian and state government are distributed to the systemic primary and secondary schools in each diocese. Each diocese has its own Catholic Schools Office (CSO) which provides leadership, service and support to all systemic schools. The Toowoomba CSO's *2019 Annual Financial Report* shows total income of \$85.8 million, with Commonwealth and State recurrent and capitals grants of \$82.9 million. Other Commonwealth and State grants paid to the schools totalled \$43.4 million.<sup>6</sup> There is no Catholic tertiary institution in the diocese, but the diocese provides a chaplain to the University of Southern Queensland.

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<sup>4</sup> [Toowoomba 2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

<sup>5</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)

<sup>6</sup> [Microsoft Word - Emu Gully - 2019 Financial Statements \(windows.net\)](#)

The Toowoomba CSO's 2019 Annual Financial Report shows total income of \$85.8 million, with Commonwealth and State recurrent and capitals grants of \$82.9 million. Other Commonwealth and State grants paid to the schools totalled \$43.4 million.<sup>7</sup> There is no Catholic tertiary institution in the diocese, but the diocese provides a chaplain to the University of Southern Queensland.

**Health and Welfare Services:** CatholicCare Social Services is the diocese's main social welfare agency supporting families in 15 scattered centres throughout the diocese with a range of services including YUMBIN (indigenous programs: Community Justice Group and WHADDUP Youth Group) counselling and relationship education services, family dispute resolution services, support programs for separated parents, TRAMS (refugee and migration support program), and a growing EAP (Employee Assistance Program) service for local business throughout the region. Its 2020 Annual Financial Report shows annual revenue of \$5.5 million including grants of \$5.2 million.<sup>8</sup> Mercy Community Services and St Vincent de Paul Society also provide welfare services to families and young people. The one Catholic hospital in the diocese is operated by St Vincent's Care Services. As in many other dioceses, the proportion of Catholics in Toowoomba aged 65 years and over has increased significantly, from 10.5% in 1996 to 16.2% in 2016, but no significant response to this change is evident. Only one residential accommodation facility (Lourdes Home established in 2011), now owned by St Vincent's Care Services, is in operation. St Vincent's also provides community care for the aged.

**Finances:** The diocese does not publish an annual financial report. It is registered with the Charities Commission (ACNC) as The Corporation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba, together with other related entities, including CatholicCare Social Services, Catholic Education, and Priests Retirement Foundation. 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, financial reports are available on the ACNC website for Catholic Education (2019), CatholicCare Social Services (2020), and the Priests Retirement Foundation (2020). The diocese has a Catholic Development Fund (CDF) whose principal activity is to receive and hold deposits from Catholic institutions, parishes and schools to support the charitable, religious and educational works for the Church via internal lending for capital development and distributions to the diocese. The CDF's 2020 Annual Report shows total assets of \$89.7 million and current loans to the diocese and other (non-identified) Catholic entities at \$25.9 million.<sup>9</sup>

**Communications:** The diocese has a Communications Office, which uses modern technology to communicate to the many rural and isolated communities in its extensive territory. It maintains the diocesan website, and produces a quarterly magazine *Horizons* informing people of local parish events and projects as well as various services offered by diocesan agencies. The office also produces an e-Newsletter covering local events and topics of interest.

**Safeguarding and Child Sexual Abuse:** The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found the Diocese of Toowoomba was not a significant setting for clerical abuse. However, it conducted Case Study 6 into the response of the CSO and school staff to allegations of abuse by a parish school teacher.<sup>10</sup> The Royal Commission's June 2017 *Analysis of Claims* reported 19 claims made against the Diocese, with 14 payments made for a total of \$2,615,132 (average \$186,795 per payment).<sup>11</sup> The diocesan Safeguarding Policy was updated on November 2020 in line with the Royal Commission's recommendations and will be further updated in 2021 to accord with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) developed by Catholic Professional Standards Limited and endorsed by the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and Catholic Religious Australia. The current policy is to safeguard against abuse through the development of respectful relationships, and a commitment to the diocese's Code of Conduct and the laws of Queensland. The Diocesan Safeguarding and Standards Office supports parishes and diocesan agencies to ensure that the safety, well-being, and best interests of children, young people and adults at risk come first, that a positive and immediate

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<sup>7</sup> [Microsoft Word - Emu Gully - 2019 Financial Statements \(windows.net\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [1233d864-38af-e811-a962-000d3ad24a0d-80fb700c-c90e-4992-ad0b-82057a7002de-Financial Report-72a5f9a6-be61-eb11-a812-000d3a6a6817-201113\\_CatholicCare Audited Financial Report 2019-2020.pdf \(windows.net\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.twb.catholic.org.au/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-06-30-Toowoomba-DDF-Financial-Statements-signed-Final.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> [Case Study 06: Toowoomba Catholic school and Catholic Education Office | Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse \(childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au\)](#)

<sup>11</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>

response is provided to those who have experienced abuse, that parish personnel are properly trained and have continuous learning, and that the advice and support from independent experts in the wider community is welcomed.<sup>12</sup> During 2021, the diocese will transition from the *Towards Healing* protocol to the new National *National Response Protocol* and will undertake an audit of the diocese's implementation of the NCSS.<sup>13</sup> A total of 107 diocesan entities, including the Diocese of Toowoomba, are registered participants in the National Redress Scheme as part of Australian Catholic Redress Limited.<sup>14</sup>

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

	2001	2006	2011	2016	2019	2021 at 5 March.	Change 2001 to 2019
Total Population (at Census)	234,522	243,829	260,098	272,118			+16.0%*
Catholic Population (at Census) (% of Total)	62,153 (26.5%)	62,861 (25.8%)	66,286 (25.5%)	65,212 (24.0%)			+3059* +4.9%*
Number of Parishes	35	35	37	37	37	37	+5.7%
Diocesan priests	40	44	42	35	32	31	-20%
Religious priests	9	7	4	10	9	9	No change
Total Priests	49	51	46	45	41	40	-16.3%
Priests in active parish ministry (% of Total Priests)			20 (43.5%)		23 (56.1%)	24 (60.0%)	+15%**
- Australian-born			18 (90%)		14 (60.9%)	13 (54.2%)	--22.2%**
- Overseas-born			2 (10%)		9 (39.1%)	11 (45.8%)	+350%**
Parishes with full-time resident priest			6 (16.2%)		8 (21.6%) <sup>15</sup>	19 (51.4%)	+33.3%**
Catholics per priest in parish ministry			3,314		2,717 (est.)		
Permanent deacons	0	0	0	0	0	0	No change
Religious Sisters	64	42	54	30	23	22	-64.1%
Religious Brothers	9	3	0	1	0	0	-900%
Diocesan Seminarians	1	0	1	2	4	3	+300%
Diocesan Pastoral Council in operation		Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Last Diocesan Synod (Diocesan Assembly)	1948 (2001)	1948 (2004)	1948 (2011)	1948 (2011)	1948 (2011)	1948 (2011)	
Diocesan Pastoral Plan in place				Yes	Yes	Yes	
Catholic schools	33	35	34	33	33	33	No change
Students in Catholic schools	9,234	9,920	10,373	10,128	10,214	10,454	+10.6%
Hospitals	1	0	1	1	1	1	No change
Aged Care Accommodation Facilities	2	1	1	1	1	1	+100%
Typical weekend Mass attendance (% of all Catholics)		8,615 (13.7%)	7,084 (10.7%)	5,510 (8.4%)			-3,105*** (-36.0%)***

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, 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 2019; \*\*\* Change from 2006 to 2016

## Sources:

Toowoomba diocesan website: [www.twb.catholic.org.au](http://www.twb.catholic.org.au)

*The Official Directory of the Catholic Church in Australia*, 2020-2021 (data is accurate at 31 December 2019)

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[https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Toowoomba\\_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf](https://ncpr.catholic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Toowoomba_2016-Diocesan-Profile.pdf)

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

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

<sup>12</sup> [Dioc-SfgStdsMin-DIOC-SFG-POL-ChnAdR-sgnd-06Nov20.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#) and [Resource Safeguarding Policy FINAL \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> [file \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Search for institutions that have joined the Scheme | National Redress Scheme](#)

<sup>15</sup> This number excludes two parishes where a retired priest is 'in residence'.

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 (March 2021)

Note: This profile of the Diocese was forwarded to Bishop McGuckin 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*. The Bishop responded with several recommendations for amendment and some updated information. These have been incorporated.