



Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Geraldton

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About this Report

The ACBC National Centre for Pastoral Research is pleased to provide you with this report on the Plenary Council project.

The findings in this report are a summary of submissions that were received from your diocese in Phase One of the Plenary Council process called 'Listening and Dialogue'. The National Centre for Pastoral Research was granted ethics approval for the data analysis of this stage in November 2018 through the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Christian Research Association.

The online process for submissions in Phase One opened on 20 May 2018 and ran until 6 March 2019. Due to the high response rate in the last two months, this deadline was extended to 13 March 2019.

The findings in this report include data from all submissions from your diocese that were received online, along with those received via email or in hard copy format, such as letters, books and submissions made through the 2018 Christmas card campaign.

The analysis provided in this report is mainly quantitative in nature and explores the demographic characteristics of individuals and groups that participated in the process. Some examples of these characteristics examined in the report are age, sex, country of birth, location and religion. This analysis was done using Microsoft Excel and SPSS statistical software.

The report also includes a list of themes that were discussed by participants in their submissions related to the question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?* A complete list of themes that were discussed nationally can be found in the report *Listen To What The Spirit Is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue*. This analysis was done using NVivo software.

Along with the list of themes, we have also included in this report the submissions of participants who consented to have their submission made public as well as released to their diocese. These submissions (made in response to Question 1: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*) are published in full but have been de-identified in keeping with ethical protocols. Several participants made their submission through uploaded documents, while others uploaded additional material as part of their submission. These documents have been provided to the bishop of your diocese in electronic format.

The latter sections of this report contain a sample list of questions received from your diocese in response to Question 2: *What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?* Along with this, a number of stories of faith or Church are shared, which were submitted by participants in response to Question 3: *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

We hope you find this report insightful and helpful as we continue our work on the project.

Trudy Dantis

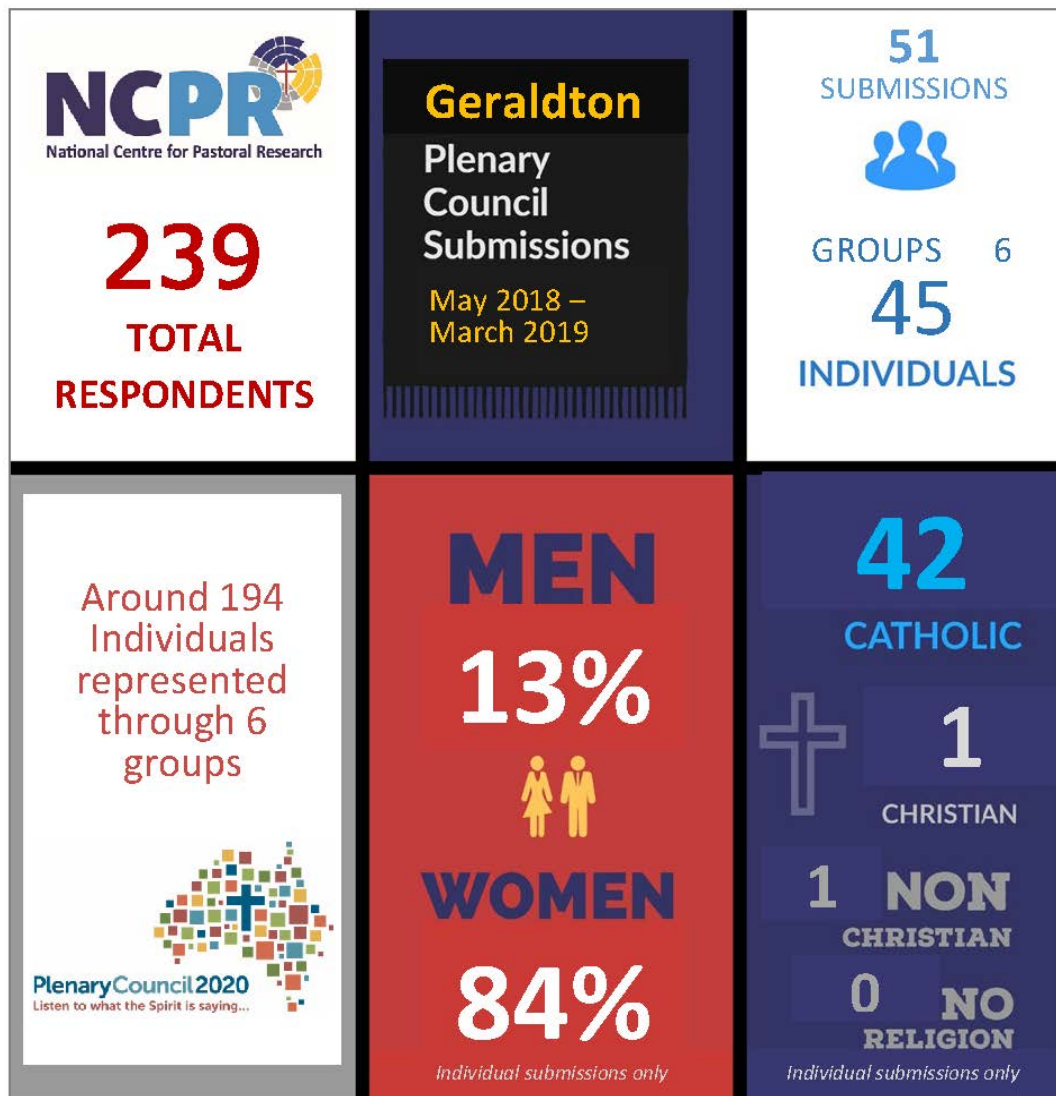
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Diocesan Submissions Summary Snapshot: May 2018—March 2019



Number of Submissions Received - all Australia

Across Australia, we received a total of 17,457 completed submissions from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 9,690 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue encounter. Another 2,113 were unsure if they had, so we presume they had not. Less than 26 per cent of the total number of respondents (4,402) indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 17,457 submissions, 4,699 were from groups or organisations and 12,758 submissions were from individuals. There were over 209,170 people represented through the 4,699 groups, bringing the total number of participants in the “Listening and Dialogue” process to over 222,000.

Number of Submissions Received - Geraldton

The Plenary Council questionnaire did not ask respondents for the diocese in which they were located. However, it asked participants to type in their postcode. These postcodes were used as a basis for this analysis.

From the Diocese of Geraldton, we received a total of 51 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 42 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another four were unsure if they had. About four respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 51 submissions, six submissions were from groups or organisations and 45 submissions were from individuals. There were 194 people represented through the six groups. It is important to note, however, that not all groups completed this question, so total group numbers may be under-represented.

Overall, the total number of respondents from your diocese was 239.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	51
<i>Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?</i>	
Yes	42
No	4
Not sure	4
Not stated	1
Total	51
Submissions received from groups or organisations	6
Submissions received from individuals	45
Total	51

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 45 individual submissions had been received from your diocese. Most of the individual submissions were made online. However, a number were also received through letters, emails and the Christmas card campaign.

Age of Respondents

Table 2 shows the ages of individual respondents from Geraldton. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 27 per cent (12) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 50-54 years age group (5 responses).

At the close of submissions, there were two individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

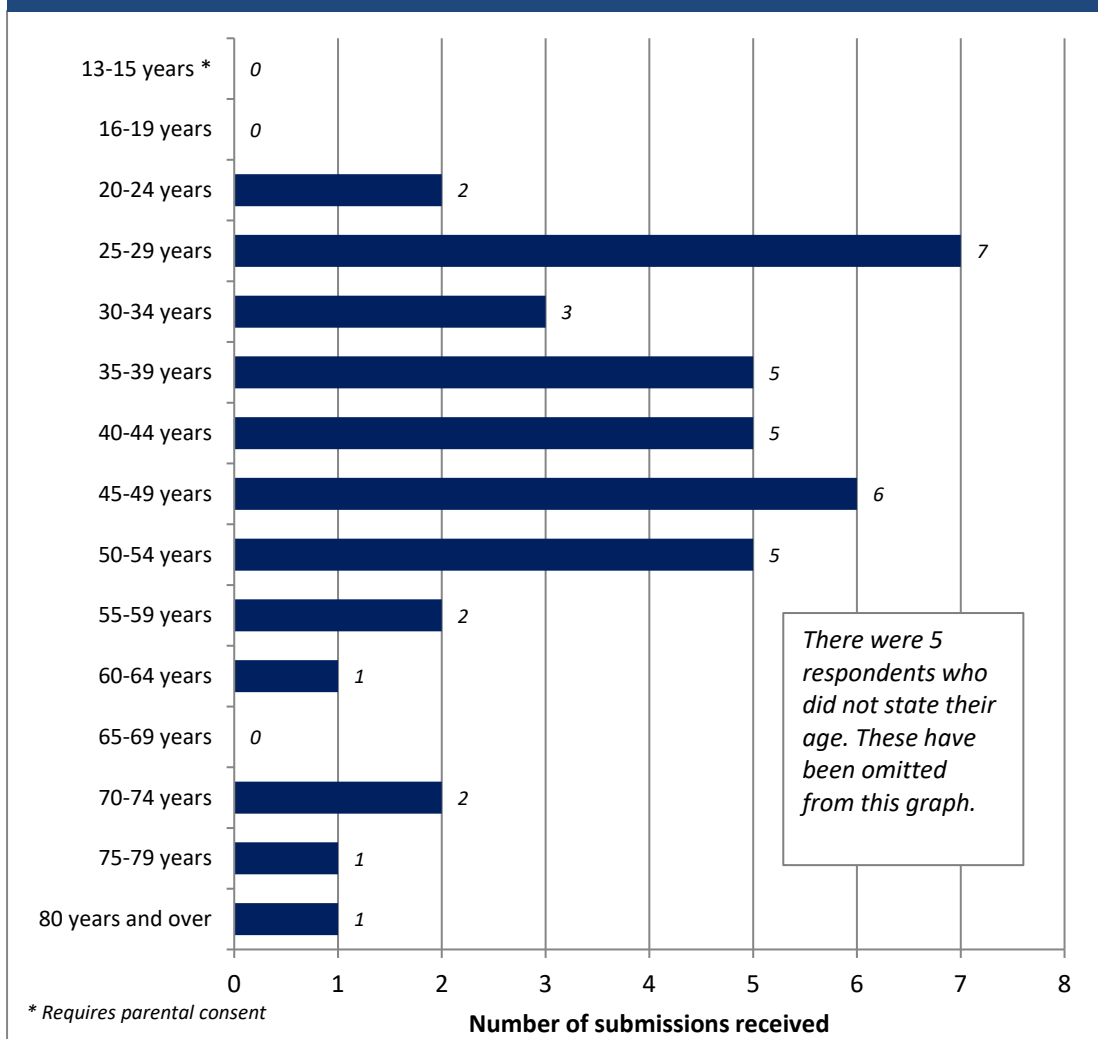
Participants aged 16-17 were encouraged to discuss the questionnaire with their parent or guardian. Many of these responses came from schools that sent in their responses through the online survey. As Table 2 shows, there were no individual submissions made from the 16-19 years age group in your diocese.

Participants aged 13-15 years were prompted to provide their parent or guardian's email address. An email was then automatically sent to seek consent for their child to participate in the study. There were no individual submissions made from this age group in your diocese.

Table 2: Age groups (*individual responses only*)

13-15 years *	0
16-19 years	0
20-24 years	2
25-29 years	7
30-34 years	3
35-39 years	5
40-44 years	5
45-49 years	6
50-54 years	5
55-59 years	2
60-64 years	1
65-69 years	0
70-74 years	2
75-79 years	1
80 years and over	1
Not stated	5
Total	45

* Requires parental consent

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

A majority of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (84%), while a further 13 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were six men and 38 women who made submissions. One respondent did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)

Female	38
Male	6
Prefer not to say	0
Not stated	1
Total	45

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (78%) were born in Australia. Just over 13 per cent came from other countries, while around nine per cent did not state their birthplace. Table 4b provides a summary of the countries of birth by English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries*, while Tables 4c and 4d indicate the countries of birth of the respondent's mother and father respectively.

Table 4a: Countries of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	35	77.8
Germany	1	2.2
Italy	1	2.2
New Zealand	1	2.2
South Africa	1	2.2
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1	2.2
United States of America	1	2.2
Not stated	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	35	77.8
Other English speaking country	4	8.9
Non-English speaking country	2	4.4
Not stated	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	31	68.9
Other English speaking country	6	13.3
Non-English speaking country	4	8.9
Not stated	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	31	68.9
Other English speaking country	7	15.6
Non-English speaking country	3	6.7
Not stated	4	8.9
Total	45	100.0

* Other than Australia, English-speaking countries refer to New Zealand, United Kingdom, Ireland, United States, Canada and South Africa. All other countries are designated as non-English-speaking countries.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Table 5 shows the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from your diocese who made submissions. At the close of submissions there were three individuals who identified themselves in this way, representing just under seven per cent of all individual respondents.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	3
No	39
Not stated	3
Total	45

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 45 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 42 respondents (93%) were Catholic. One respondent was from another Christian denomination (Pentecostal) while there was one from a non-Christian religion. One respondent did not state their religion and no respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (individual responses only)		Person	Percent
Catholic		42	93.3
Other Christian:			
Pentecostal		1	2.2
Other Christian		0	0.0
Non Christian:			
Other religion		1	2.2
No religion		0	0.0
Not stated		1	2.2
Total		45	100

For those who indicated that they were Catholic, a further question asked them to describe their participation in church activities. Their responses are shown in Table 7. A total of 17 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were 21 respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while a further three respondents considered themselves Catholic but were not involved or described their participation in other terms. One respondent did not answer the question.

Table 7: Religious description (for those who answered 'Catholic' to previous question)				
	Female	Male	Not stated	Total
I am Catholic and regularly attend Mass and other church activities	13	4	0	17
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	20	1	0	21
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	1	0	0	1
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	2	0	0	2
Other	0	0	0	0
Not stated	0	1	0	1
Total	36	6	0	42

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of six group submissions made from your diocese. Around 194 individuals were represented through these groups.

While four group submissions provided a group name, two did not do so. Table 8 shows a list of the group submissions from the diocese with the number of members in each group. Groups that did not provide a name were omitted from this table. The number of participating members was provided by the person submitting the group response. These figures could not be checked for accuracy.

Prominent among the largest groups was the Diocese of Geraldton with around 110 members. There were three other groups with seven members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
Diocese of Geraldton	110
St Lawrences Parish Diocese of Geraldton	20
Exmouth parishioners	7
St Marys School	7

Age and Sex of Group Members

On 5 November 2018, a question was added to the survey asking group respondents to estimate the ages and sex of members represented in their group. Not all groups answered this question. Therefore, the results presented here reflect only the submissions of those groups which provided information to this question between 5 November 2018 and 13 March 2019. Table 9 shows the ages of group members for those submissions.

The 30-49 years age group was the largest group represented with 73 members. This was followed by the group aged 50-69 years with 58 members.

Table 9: Estimates of ages of people in group submissions	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Under 20 years	3
20 - 29 years	25
30 - 49 years	73
50 - 69 years	58
70 and over	35
Unknown	0
Total	194

Totals in tables 9 & 10 will not always agree due to submission errors.

Of the total 194 group members whose sex was reported, 64 per cent (124) were female and 36 per cent (70) were male.

Table 10: Estimates of sex of people in group submissions	
<i>(group responses - for submissions received after 04 November 2018 only)</i>	
Female	124
Male	70
Total	194

Totals in tables 9 & 10 will not always agree due to submission errors.



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 1

*What do you think God is
asking of us
in Australia at this time?*

THEMES DISCUSSED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

A number of themes emerged nationally in Phase One of the Plenary Council project. These are described in the national report titled, *Listen to What the Spirit is Saying: Final Report for the Plenary Council Phase I: Listening and Dialogue* published in July 2019.

A wide range of themes were discussed in the submissions from groups and individuals in your dioceses. The most prominent ones are listed below. For a detailed analysis of each of these themes please refer to the **national report**. We have provided references to the report by way of chapter and page numbers for this purpose.

The main topics discussed by participants from your diocese were:

- Social Justice and the Environment
- Love God, Love Neighbour

Within these topics, the most widely discussed themes were as follows:

- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater inclusion of all* (p. 108)
 - *Putting gospel values into action* (p. 115)
- Love God, Love Neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Care for neighbour* (p. 36)
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching* (p. 32)
 - *Be a witness in society* (p. 34)
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)

Other important themes that emerged from the responses from your diocese included:

- *Modernise Church teachings* (p. 169)
 - *Modernise Church teachings – on liturgy and sacraments* (p. 171)
- *Outreach to youth* (p. 124)
- *Holy Orders – Ending celibacy / allowing priests to marry* (p. 66)
- *Evangelisation in and of the family* (p. 130)
- *Sharing the faith with others* (p. 128)
- *Outreach to the wider community* (p. 123)

SUBMISSIONS MADE IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 1

The submissions in this section were made in response to the first question: *What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?*

In keeping with ethics guidelines of the online survey, the privacy of each participant was protected under the Privacy Act 1988. Due to the personal and detailed nature of the submissions, consent was sought to conduct any follow-up consultation and for publishing of the findings.

Care was taken, therefore, to obtain informed consent from each participant or group/organisation in three distinct areas. Firstly, whether they wished to have a member of the Plenary Council team contact them about their submission. Secondly, consent was obtained for the publishing of their de-identified submission online, via the Plenary Council website or through social media. De-identification is the process used to prevent a person's identity from being revealed. In this survey, this meant that all names, locations and other identifying information were removed prior to the response being used. Finally, consent was also sought for sharing their de-identified submission with their diocese.

In keeping with these guidelines therefore, the submissions that follow are only from those individuals or groups who consented to having their submission being made public and being shared with their diocese. About 47 per cent of all responses did not have consent for one or both of these criteria and therefore, their submissions have not been included here.

We think God is asking why are only few people going to Church? We respond how can we contribute? And what is my purpose? We hear Jesus say to us "listen, pray together, evangelize together, strength in the Church in Australia." We hear God remind us that He is always there for us and always watching over us, and we must rely on Him. We must give young people guidance to get back to church, and spread the faith, and love God in our lives. We see that youngsters are into technology and feel they have no need for God. Many Catholics have had a bad experience in the church, or are disillusioned with the Church in the world today. Many of us have lost our catechism forward toward properly. There seems to be nothing to encourage youngsters to be attracted to Jesus.

God is asking for us to unite and respect one another.

I am a Parishioner in [-] WA and have attended a local Parish Meeting and also the Diocese Conference in July and since then a further Parish meeting. What is God asking of us? For me personally, I believe that I want to see some "change" and for the Bishops to deal with issues in a defining way and not conclude with a "warm and fuzzy" feel. We have major issues with Parents, Schools and Youth in our Society today. What are our RE teachers "actually" teaching? Gay marriage? Are we going to weaken on this? What does God want—if people choose a different life style, so be it, but they CANNOT have legalised marriage, totally against the definition of Marriage. Does God want us to witness and be honest, I believe He does, and it may not always be what the journalists want to hear, and society in general? Do we want to be a Christian country here in Australia or do we not? Was Jesus always loving and "free and easy"? Are we going to accept teachers telling our primary children that they may be different to what they are told? My hope of

what God wants is that the Plenary Council will look at our problems in a totally and sincere genuine manner.
I feel that Australia is looking and acting as a world leader, as a puppet of America, making enemies and spending money on military assets. I feel that we should consider making friends not enemies by embracing all people with continuous dialogue. I feel that our schools have fallen victim to the secular world and the Gospel is no longer being proclaimed. Our trust in God is replaced with financial security. Looking back over Church history I feel that the Church has spent too much time teaching man-made doctrines of the Church instead of truly listening to the spirit.
To share His word, be role models and spread His word.
Unsure.
To come together and help the Church move into a contemporary society that welcomes new and old members into Catholic faith.
How can the Church move forward?
To live like Christ and spread the message of God.
God is asking us to be good people, to live for others, to care, to love. God is asking us to raise children who will live the same way. God wants us to be happy, loved and included.
To look at the Church and its Mission in a contemporary society.
We need to change, to be inclusive of all people.
God is asking us to be inclusive. The Church needs to be accepting of all people and families. The 21st century family has changed and progressed. Some are divorced, gay or de facto. Each of these life choices are not held in the same regard as an average 'ideal' family of man and wife. If these people were openly accepted and not discriminated against, I feel this would be more inclusive for all people.
I feel God is asking us to be inclusive of everyone, race, religion and gender. He wants us to be open minded. Everyone is part of the human race. More accepting of people's life choices is the only way to keep the faith.
To take care of those around us, by showing understanding and respect to all. To support and nurture our children to be followers and examples of Christ.
Is it any different to what God was asking of us from forever? Promote and live the Catholic ethos. Living out the gospel values and pastoral care. Appreciating the spirituality of the Catholic Church. Being dedicated to attending the Masses on Sundays and other Catholic ceremonies. Valuing the sacraments and receiving the grace from these sacraments to live a spiritually nourishing and rewarding life.
To follow and live like what he sent Jesus to teach us.
To run the Church as Jesus would have run it. To take away the dogmatic, pompous, male dominated, scripted, fundamentalist ways of thinking and behaving. To make the Church family friendly, welcoming, open, non-judgmental, personal, spiritual, inclusive and loving...everything that Jesus taught. It is time to accept all people without judgement, gay people, people living out of wedlock, people of other denominations, cultures and life experiences. Jesus welcomed and

accepted all people, not only those who fit the mould. I believe that we need to allow priests, brothers and nuns to marry and have families so they can relate to the people they are preaching to (it works in other religions). Also it means that there is a lack of knowledge of the Vatican II among parishioners and society in general and the belief systems held by many are out of date. We need to look at other religions and how they take care of their youth and how they make church fun, inviting, engaging and relevant to the different age groups. The Catholic Church are losing their youth because Mass is boring and not relevant to the youth of today. Also the communion ritual is so far from what Jesus did at the last supper. It should be open for all. Not excluding other denominations, divorced people, gay people ... Do we want people to come to church or be turned away?

To show inclusivity, compassion, respect to all people.

The two great Commandments. Love God. Love one another. To live out the Gospel values.

I think God is asking Australians to be honest about who we really are. We are not the open, accepting, inclusive nation that we like to portray ourselves as. There is a great deal of suffering in our community, but many of us can't or don't want to see it. God wants us to stop ignoring the truth.

God wants us to return to the faith of the Church founded by Jesus. The primary role of our Church is to lead souls to heaven—not to be selective social justice warriors pandering to far left causes. Our Church has lost its way, caught up in shocking sex scandals, faithless clergy and religious, hierarchy hostile to the true Catholic teachings and even worse a corruption of scriptural teachings. Unfortunately, Leftist / Marxist ideology has infiltrated the Church; succumbing to pressures from homosexual and abortion activists. It is time for the clergy to be brave—to speak out against abortion, euthanasia, homosexual marriage, the madness of gender confusion and numerous other insane changes that are intended to corrupt the Catholic Church. This is not the time to capitulate to LGBTQRST etc. agenda and the death cults and the satanic movements that are evolving in Australia and other Western nations. The Church must also oppose the devil inspired Islamic religion and oppose the invasion of our nation, sponsored by Catholic haters as a means of crushing the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is losing ground rapidly as we succumb to leftist ideology and we simply are becoming another protestant church. Some clergy and religious are more interested in global warming, women's "rights", homosexual marriage, belief in gender diversity and its now 50 or 60 different genders—this is all madness that has seized the Church! This is partly why the evangelical movement in Australia is growing—in some instances these new religious movements are more faithful to the teachings of Jesus than are the Catholic hierarchy! In summary—return to our real function—saving souls. Remove the Leftist/Marxist ideologies, the homosexual influence and stand firm, strong and outspoken against abortion. There will never be peace in this world until the killing of unborn children is exposed and seen as the worst genocide in human history.

God would want me to say, "Take us back to basic teachings". The Eucharist is the most important part of our Church. NOW it does not matter what faith you are, living in a relationship, free, married out of the Church it makes NO difference to the Church. Priests say they are not to judge and they do not know what is in a person's heart. Bring back respect. Why christen babies if anyone can go to Holy Communion?

I'd like to upload material. This submission from the Geraldton Diocese contains the responses of the people who took part in our parish/school/ministry groups or diocesan agencies group conversations (listening & dialogue) prior to our Diocesan Conference held in July of last year. Further reflection and discussion was done by all conference delegates on the collated responses. The numbers I have provided reflect the number of people who attended the conference and not the number of people who gathered in small groups across the diocese before the July Conference. This diocesan gathering was significant as it formally launched our pilgrim journey as a local Church towards the Plenary Council 2020/21. The question that was put beforehand for people in our parishes, schools, agencies/ministry groups to reflect upon and engage in dialogue was, "Where are we called to be more in our response to God?" I have put this material together as our diocesan response to the PC question. It expresses our individual hope/s and dreams for a Church that is truly imbued with the love and spirit of Christ.

First of all to let God be God, to know that God is God, to recognise that God is the One in whom we live and move and have our being. "To be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) To believe with all our heart and mind that without God we can do nothing. Therefore, as God's people we strive to live by his commandments, listen to his word/voice more and more amidst the noise and conflicting messages/ideologies around us. God is faithful to us and is constantly inviting us/calling us to live in communion with him. God is asking of us to be people of prayer, to make of our lives a constant prayer of faith and submission to God's will. Somewhere along the way we have forgotten that faith is both a gift and a task (mission/evangelisation). We have taken our faith for granted. We feel that God is asking us to be brave enough to profess our faith in daily life and live it consciously and purposefully through love and service and daily conversion. Only then, can we promote our faith and speak freely about it, unafraid to invite other people (young and old) "to come and see" what being Church is about—loving relationship with God and with one another. It's about compassion, understanding, respect, inclusion, acceptance, social justice, care for the poor, the vulnerable and the outcast etc. all done in the name of Christ. We have a responsibility to change the way we are perceived as Church by the media in our secular world, to repair the damage done by clerical sexual abuse. The Church is a force for good. We still have every reason to be proud of our Christian faith and our Catholic heritage because they are gifts. We can still stand up and speak out against certain elements in society that are opposed to the values we hold dear as Christians. We can be open to diversity around us, but in a manner that doesn't compromise our religious, spiritual and moral values (doctrinal teachings included) for the sake of future generations. We have learnt from experience that things aren't black or white and that the grey areas truly test the strength of our Christianity— what we believe, what we hope for, what makes us a loving people. There's need for us as Church to take a serious look at what we need to change (from top to bottom). We need to be honest and humble enough to recognise our shortcomings as a faith community so we can move forward in faith, hope and love as a community of Jesus' disciples. In other words, God is asking us to rebuild His Church! This is a collective endeavour, a journey for all of us to undertake, walking hand in hand.

God is asking us to change the way we think about our Catholic religion and faith in Australia. I think God wants us to take brave and bold measures to engage people back into faith.



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 2

*What questions about the future of
the Church in Australia
would you like the
Plenary Council to consider?*

QUESTIONS FOR PLENARY COUNCIL

Participants were also asked to submit questions about the future of the Church in Australia for the Plenary Council to consider. The question put to participants was:

What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?

Responses to this question were examined for consent both for the publishing of their de-identified submission online and for sharing their de-identified submission with their diocese. Questions were also checked for comprehension and duplicate questions were identified. From this, a sample list of questions indicative of the submissions from your diocese was developed. This list is as follows:

1. Are we going to accept gay marriage?
2. What will bishops really determine about primary school kiddies who really do not know about all the conditions of gender at their age?
3. With the dwindling numbers in our churches, do you consider that there will be a revival of faith in God as conditions worldwide deteriorate?
4. As teachers in Catholic schools, why cant we live with a loving partner when nurses in a Catholic hospital can?
5. Why is there no acceptance for those in long-term relationships, who are not yet married?
6. The values of society as a whole have changed since the last Plenary Council. How will the Church change to suit these values? E.g. family dynamics—IVF, de facto relationships, homosexual relationships, divorce.
7. Will the Church consider the role of women in the future?
8. Would the Church consider giving priests more freedoms in relation to marriage, children and gender?
9. Why do we have no female Church leaders?
10. Why cant priests and bishops marry and be loved the way God wants us to be?
11. Why is Mass and church so pompous and boring?
12. How can the Church retain our new generations?
13. How is the Church making welcome gay, divorced people, those who do IVF, etc.?
14. How does the Church make welcome children and families?
15. Do we need to attend church at all?
16. When working in the Catholic schools, should we be discriminated against because we are gay?
17. How do we deal with people who claim to be Catholic but not live out the commandments and gospel values?
18. How do we administer sacramental programs at schools when the parents are not supportive and lack respect for the Catholic teachings?
19. Can we employ teachers at Catholic schools and RE consultants to be more supportive of the Catholic ethos and model the gospel values?

20. If Jesus loved ALL people and accepted all people without judgement, why is it ok for the Catholic Church with all of its rules and regulations to do the exact opposite of what Jesus fought so hard against?
21. How do we overcome the stigma of belonging to the Catholic Community?
22. What will the Church do to engage the youth in Australia?



RESPONSES TO QUESTION 3

*Would you like to share a story
about your experience of faith
or of the Church in Australia
that has shaped you?*

STORIES OF FAITH OR CHURCH SHARED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION 3

The stories in this section were shared in response to the third question: *Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?*

In keeping with the guidelines of consent explained earlier in the report, these stories are only from those individuals or groups from your diocese who consented to having their submission being made public and being shared with their diocese. About 47 per cent of all responses did not have consent for one or both of these criteria and therefore, their stories have not been included here.

We shared stories of times that we were discouraged, and the community encouraged us back. Times when priests were well known in our community without being pushy, because pushiness tend to turn people off the church. We feel that we are often rejected as Catholics in the community, and people don't hear us. We can tell the story of how people come to church just to have their children put through the sacraments, so that they can attend Catholic schools. However we don't see them again. We have to defend the faith in the light of bad publicity of [the] Catholic Church, with no priest or people of authority on site to help. One of our group shared about a retreat when he was a young man, gave him a strong face and a purpose in life. We each shared how we needed that sense of belonging, and being able to contribute. The more we can share our faith the deeper our faith will become.

In my school, I have friends with a variety of religious beliefs as well as personal beliefs. Even though we have different beliefs we still have the same faith of believing that we should all be respected to encourage unity and collaboration. Since we are knowledgeable of respect and different beliefs, we are accepting of personal faiths and religious beliefs.

I was born into a split religion family, attended an Anglican College for all of my schooling with the Sisters of the Church as my Godparents. After several years of marriage I converted to the Roman Church and have been so at peace until recently, but my unrest is not with God, but with all of us as people.

The moment things began to change for me was a Marriage Encounter weekend. From there I began to experience that God was alive in Jesus Christ, he became real and personal and from there began a close relationship through the Holy Spirit. My life changed as I became more involved in the Church. My wife and I began a charismatic prayer group for 10 years and did many outreaches. However things have changed today—we have grown older and it's difficult to encourage young people to seek God. But I must admit that the Pentecostal churches are still thriving.

<p>I am not comfortable being seen with my long-term partner in public, or sharing that we live together as it is imposed on me that I will lose my job if this is known. When I am still a practising Catholic and live out my faith.</p>
<p>When my children were small my baby son was crying and my daughter misbehaving during Church. I walked out at the end of Mass thinking I wouldn't return again until my children were much older. A elderly lady came up to me and said "It is so lovely to hear children's voices in the Mass" I felt welcomed and a part of the community. I continued to come to Mass with my children. I know people who have had the opposite experience and have left the Church, not because of a lack of faith but because they know misbehaving children are seen as a detriment to Mass not as a part of our church celebration. How do we make families welcome in our Church? They are our future.</p>
<p>When applying for my job, I was asked if I was married as I was not allowed to be living with a male whom I was not married to. I was also asked to not express my political or social views of anything. I think this is outdated and wrong. I have the same right as anyone else. Freedom of speech.</p>
<p>I work in a Catholic school, my children attend Catholic schools, they liked religion lessons and were doing well. Now they are at high school, they are failing, being disruptive and disengaged, they no longer want to attend Mass because it is boring. We need to engage our teenagers especially to become passionate and involved in their faith again.</p>
<p>I grew up in a Catholic household both of my parents are Catholic, we went to Church every Sunday and participated in altar serving and many other church gatherings. I enjoyed being a part of the Church as a child and I still attend to this day, now with my son. It saddens me to see the little number of children coming to church now with their parents—what future does the Church have if there is no one to continue on attending Mass and giving thanks for God and all of his great works.</p>
<p>I am a passionate about teaching R.E. I believe that FAITH is CAUGHT and not TAUGHT! I have seen success stories from my students deepening their faith. Spending time praying and valuing prayer goes a long way. A great way to start the day and encourage the spirituality in the students.</p>
<p>I enjoy the time to reflect on what Jesus said and did but our busy life restricts me going to a particular building.</p>
<p>The sexual abuse factor has made me embarrassed to admit that I am Catholic.</p>
<p>I have walked several pilgrimages in the past few years. Not all members of these walks were Catholic but I felt like I belonged to a community who were all walking the same path and searching the same outcome. This truly was a spiritual journey for me and deepened my faith. The importance of spending time with just me and my God was never more evident to me.</p>
<p>I grew up in rural Victoria surrounded by a large extended family. We attended Mass every weekend—it was part of our routine and how we socialised—it generated a very strong sense of identity and belonging.</p>

I left the Church for about 10 years. The greatest gift I have received is coming back. I have come back the old way not just walked in & gone to communion. Confessions are not encouraged any more the greatest gift of healing our Church has. Start telling people they must go to confession before Communion. Priests seem to think if someone comes to Church once a year that is a good thing. It is not confession first. You are doing so much wrong by not telling the truth. These people are missing out on knowing the truth.

I'd like to upload material from our diocesan conference. It comes with the heading, "Signs of Hope". Again, the responses here provided are given by those who participated in our small group conversations prior to our diocesan conference last year. Through them we get a glimpse of people's experience of faith or Church in country parishes amidst ever growing and increasing challenges.

1. We shared stories of how we felt we belong and how that wonderful feeling of being part of a faith community, of like-minded people as it were, can inspire, encourage, and foster communion. God's presence becomes palpable when we are present to one another. Many good priests who have come and gone, through the gift of their presence and ministry, were instrumental in making people feel they belong and have something to contribute to the life of the parish/Church. 2. Someone in the group shared a story of how she felt she was treated with contempt because she was divorced. A friend of hers who lost a baby was made to feel alone and abandoned, because no one from the parish she goes to came to see her to even comfort her. Other Christian churches demonstrate a great ability to reach out to people in their time of need. Sadly, there are people who have been hurt by our actions—indifference and lack of compassion. We are not a VIP club, but a pilgrim Church. We walk together and support each other through the good times and the bad times. If other churches can do it, why can't we? At times we can be discriminatory wittingly or unwittingly, sometimes verbally, other times by our body language. Having insight into what people are going through in their lives and having knowledge of the people who are suffering and the vulnerable in our community and being present to them is a ministry for everyone who belongs to the Church, not just for priests and religious. 3. There's so much to be desired in terms of social interaction between members within our Church community and outside to include the larger community of people who are unchurched or anti-Church. That said, it's the quality of our interaction with one another that strengthens our humanity and deepens our communion as brothers and sisters. Jesus said, "love another as I have loved you." (John 13:34)

I have had many positive experiences associated with my faith and church over the years. But I am increasingly feeling as though I have to hide my religion from those around me as recent events, such as the Royal Commission into Child Sexual abuse have caused the Catholic Church in Australia to have a major image problem.

CONCLUSION

This report presented a summary of submissions that were received from your diocese in Phase One of the Plenary Council process called 'Listening and Dialogue'. The findings are in response to three main questions:

Question 1: What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?

Question 2: What questions about the future of the Church in Australia would you like the Plenary Council to consider?

Question 3: Would you like to share a story about your experience of faith or of the Church in Australia that has shaped you?

Phase Two of the Plenary Council: *Listening and Discernment* is already underway and will continue until early 2020. The purpose of this stage is to listen deeply to what the Spirit is saying through the responses that have been submitted in Phase One and to understand and connect with the sense of faith that has been shared by the people of God across Australia.

We hope this report helps you in continuing to lead and encourage the engagement of many people in your diocese in this second phase as we discern together how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:

- Missionary and evangelising,
- Inclusive, participatory and synodal,
- Prayerful and Eucharistic,
- Humble, healing and merciful,
- A joyful, hope-filled and servant community, and
- Open to conversion, renewal and reform.

The National Centre for Pastoral Research sincerely thanks all the people from your diocese who participated in the Listening and Dialogue phase and those who continue to be engaged in the preparations towards Plenary Council 2020. We wish you and your diocese all the very best for the journey ahead.

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