



Final Report for Phase I: Listening and Dialogue

A Report to the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes

Trudy Dantis, Paul Bowell, Stephen Reid, Marilyn Chee & Leith Dudfield

Report prepared by: National Centre for Pastoral Research
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

Telephone: +61 (02) 6201 9812
Email: ncpr@catholic.org.au
Web: www.ncpr.catholic.org.au

Contents of this Report

◆ About this Report	1
◆ Diocesan Summary of Submissions Snapshot: May 2018–March 2019	2
◆ Number of Submissions Received	3
◆ Individual Submissions	4
◆ Age of Respondents	4
◆ Sex of Respondents	5
◆ Countries of Birth	6
◆ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	7
◆ Religion of Respondents	8
◆ Group Submissions	9
◆ Age and Sex of Group Members	10
◆ Responses to Question 1	11
◆ Themes discussed in response to Question 1	12
◆ Submissions made in response to Question 1	14
◆ Responses to Question 2	24
◆ Questions for Plenary Council	25
◆ Responses to Question 3	27
◆ Stories of faith or Church shared in response to Question 3	28
◆ Conclusion	33

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

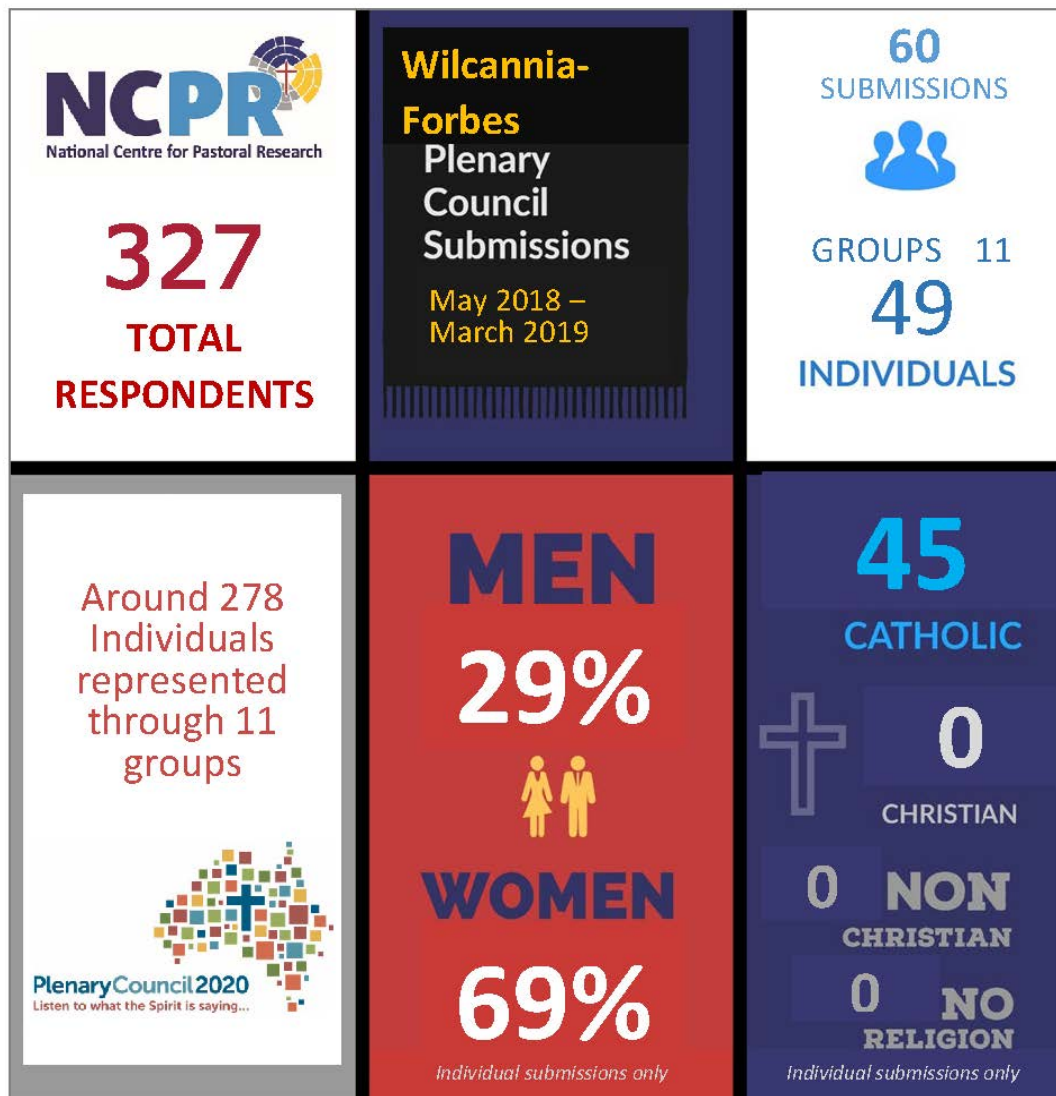
Paul Bowell

Stephen Reid

Marilyn Chee

Leith Dudfield

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 – Wilcannia-Forbes

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 Wilcannia-Forbes, we received a total of 60 completed responses from May 2018 until 13 March 2019. Of these, 27 respondents had participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter, while another 10 were unsure if they had. About 23 respondents indicated that they had not participated in a Listening and Dialogue Encounter.

Of the 60 submissions, 11 submissions were from groups or organisations and 49 submissions were from individuals. There were 278 people represented through the 11 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 327.

Table 1: Number of Submissions	
Total number of submissions received	60
Participated in Listening & Dialogue Encounter?	
Yes	27
No	23
Not sure	10
Not stated	0
Total	60
Submissions received from groups or organisations	11
Submissions received from individuals	49
Total	60

INDIVIDUAL SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March 2019, a total of 49 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 Wilcannia-Forbes. Figure 1 is a graphical representation of the same table. About 73 per cent (36) were received from those aged 50 and over. The most number of submissions within this age range were received from the 70-74 years age group (11 responses).

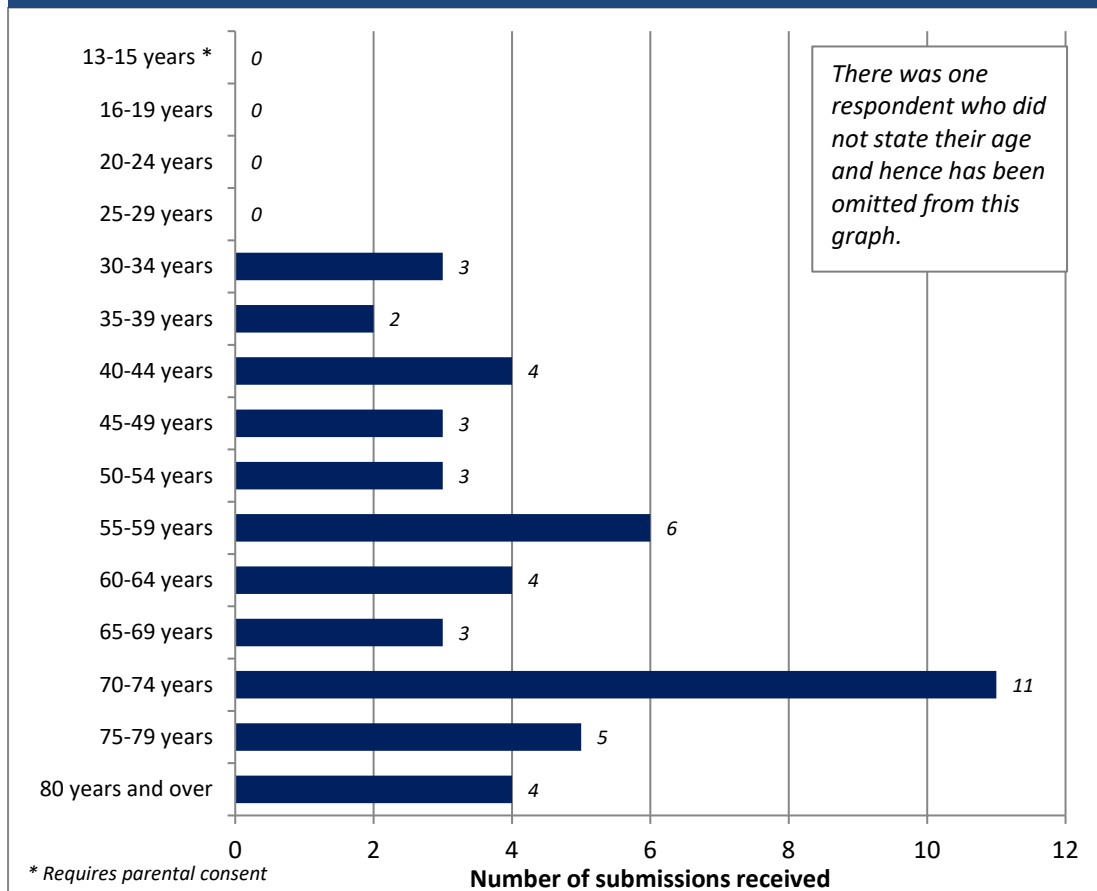
At the close of submissions, there were no individual submissions received from those aged under 25.

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 (<i>individual responses only</i>)	
13-15 years *	0
16-19 years	0
20-24 years	0
25-29 years	0
30-34 years	3
35-39 years	2
40-44 years	4
45-49 years	3
50-54 years	3
55-59 years	6
60-64 years	4
65-69 years	3
70-74 years	11
75-79 years	5
80 years and over	4
Not stated	1
Total	49

* Requires parental consent

Fig. 1: Age groups (individual responses only)

Sex of Respondents

A majority of all individual respondents from your diocese were female (70%), while a further 29 per cent were male. Table 3 shows that there were 14 men and 34 women who made submissions. One respondent did not answer this question.

Table 3: Sex (individual responses only)	
Female	34
Male	14
Prefer not to say	0
Not stated	1
Total	49

Countries of Birth

Table 4a shows the country of birth of individual respondents from your diocese. As expected, a large number of respondents (71%) were born in Australia. Just under 11 per cent came from other countries, while around 18 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	71.4
India	1	2.0
Ireland	1	2.0
Malaysia	1	2.0
Mauritius	1	2.0
Zimbabwe	1	2.0
Not stated	9	18.4
Total	49	100.0

Table 4b: Country of birth - Summary (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	35	71.4
Other English speaking country	1	2.0
Non-English speaking country	4	8.2
Not stated	9	18.4
Total	49	100.0

Table 4c: Mother's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	34	69.4
Other English speaking country	1	2.0
Non-English speaking country	5	10.2
Not stated	9	18.4
Total	49	100.0

Table 4d: Father's country of birth (individual responses only)		
	N	%
Australia	32	65.3
Other English speaking country	2	4.1
Non-English speaking country	6	12.2
Not stated	9	18.4
Total	49	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 was one individual who identified themselves in this way, representing about two per cent of all individual respondents.

Table 5: Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (individual responses only)	
Yes	1
No	39
Not stated	9
Total	49

Religion of Respondents

The religion question was answered by individual respondents only. Of the total 49 individual submissions that were received from your diocese, 45 respondents (92%) were Catholic. Four respondents did not state their religion and no respondents chose the 'no religion' response.

Table 6: Religion (<i>individual responses only</i>)		Person	Percent
Catholic		45	91.8
Other Christian:			
Other Christian		0	0.0
Non Christian:			
Other religion		0	0.0
No religion		0	0.0
Not stated		4	8.2
Total		49	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 37 respondents indicated that they went to Mass regularly and were involved in other church activities. There were four respondents who said they went to Mass and church activities sometimes, while a further four respondents described themselves in another way or 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	24	13	0	37
I am Catholic and go to Mass and church activities sometimes	4	0	0	4
I am Catholic, but I don't practise or get involved in anything	0	0	0	0
I consider myself Catholic but I am not sure what to think about the Catholic faith	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	1
Not stated	2	1	0	3
Total	31	14	0	45

GROUP SUBMISSIONS

At the close of the survey on 13 March, there were a total of 11 group submissions made from your diocese. Around 278 individuals were represented through these groups. However, there were two groups that did not report their number of participating members, indicating that the total number of people represented through the group submissions may be higher.

While seven group submissions provided a group name, four 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 St Laurence's Forbes with around 166 members. There were also a number of other parish and school groups such as the Holy Family Parish with 48 members. There were four other groups with six members or more.

Table 8 : Group submissions from the diocese	
Name of group	Group size
St Laurences Forbes	166
Holy Family Parish	48
St James Catholic Parish	16
St Laurences Youth	9
Catholic Church	6
St Laurence Forbes	6
St Josephs Condoblin	Not stated

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 under 20 years age group was the largest group represented with 158 members. This was followed by the group aged 70 and over with 64 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	158
20 - 29 years	0
30 - 49 years	19
50 - 69 years	39
70 and over	64
Unknown	0
Total	280

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

Of the total 278 group members whose sex was reported, 62 per cent (173) were female and 38 per cent (105) 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	173
Male	105
Total	278

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 top five topics discussed by participants from your diocese were:

- Love God, Love Neighbour
- The Mass
- Sacraments
- Leadership and Church Governance
- Social Justice and the Environment

Within each of these five areas, the most widely discussed themes were as follows:

- Love God, Love Neighbour (Chapter 4)
 - *Be a witness in society* (p. 34)
 - *Care for neighbour* (p.36)
 - *Better faith formation* (p. 38)
 - *Greater trust, faith and hope in God* (p. 29)
 - *Remaining faithful to Church teaching* (p. 32)
- The Mass (Chapter 5)
 - *Mass to be appealing to youth and children* (p. 51)
- Sacraments (Chapter 6)
 - *Holy Orders – Ending celibacy / allowing priests to marry* (p. 66)
 - *Holy Orders - Ordination of women* (p. 69)
 - *Restoring the Third Rite of Reconciliation* (p.75)
- Leadership and Church Governance (Chapter 7)
 - *Greater involvement of the laity* (p. 84)
 - *Greater role for women* (p. 83)
 - *Youth to be involved more* (p. 86)
- Social Justice and the Environment (Chapter 9)
 - *Greater inclusion of all* (p. 108)
 - *Fight for human rights issues* (p. 110)
 - *Care for the environment* (p. 112)

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

- *Stronger parish communities (p. 156)*
- *Sharing the faith with others (p. 128)*
- *Greater connection with and inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (p. 120)*
- *Establishing more youth programs (p. 144)*
- *Evangelisation in and of the family (p. 130)*
- *Outreach to youth (p. 124)*

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 22 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.

Restore good marriages and strong families. Engage teenagers and early 20 year olds and make the Mass and other sacraments more meaningful and relevant to them.
--

I think God is asking the Church in Australia to get back on track. Unfortunately the majority of our Catholic students at Catholic schools no longer practice their faith when they leave school. They along with their teachers are largely uncatechised and this problem has not been addressed for many decades.
--

More teaching of theology in schools.

The same thing He asked us since the beginning. To be faithful. Enough with poor or cheap liturgies, if it is not something special then I am not interested. Enough relativism. The Church has to speak the truth even if not popular; otherwise, we are not taken seriously. Transparency in the Church. Better catechesis better and modern music, better internet presence, parishes to understand that internet and online presence is not an option but necessary. A real push for youth, without being paralysed by fear from the recent scandals. The faith of the young should be our first priority always.

-Hang in there - renewed spirit - more prayerful - listen to the pope - better liturgies, catechesis, theology - encourage people to take more ownership of their faith - listen more to laity -show empathy to all and inclusiveness

- Resources going specifically reaching youth. To have good bible studies for people to know the two pillars: bible and tradition.
--

- Actively welcoming younger people and middle-aged that have become estranged either because of scandals or personal sins (e.g. divorce).
- To maintain and practise our Christian beliefs despite the changing values of society—give more opportunities to young people for fellowship and growth in faith.
- Encourage "whole families" activities and liturgy.
- Support Catholic schools and universities.
- Adhere to gospel teachings—be open and accepting of others.
- Practice what we believe—preach the gospel as it is written and not deviate from it.
- To genuinely love one another and to be active in our communities.
- Encourage silent prayer and listening to the Spirit rather than saying prayers and relying on rituals.

Jesus Christ was a man of his time, living in a society of his time, reaching the people of his own time and addressing issues of his time. His greatest message for us was to love one another as he loved us. His message was underpinned by his actions, reaching out to the marginalised, the outsiders. I would like to think that God's expectation of us has not changed yet we don't seem to get it right. We see our Church diminishing with an increasingly ageing population. Many young people are unable to connect to the Church. They hear the words but they don't understand. They fail to make the connection to their lives. In my opinion, the Catholic faith can only make sense and be relevant if it is lived in the context of our time. The world has changed, our society has. The way in which we practice and share our faith has not necessarily evolved alongside those changes. This has created a disconnect that is felt by many who consequently withdraw or struggle to engage. In terms of reaching young people, parents play an important part but so do schools. I feel blessed that our children enjoyed being educated in the Catholic Education System. I believe that a consistent message through all channels in a young person's life is very powerful. Family, school, parish provide a great faith community for families and young people. Sadly the precious seed that is planted in childhood often suffocates once children enter high school. We are so incredibly blessed to have a Catholic high school in [-] with a strong commitment to nurturing our faith. If anything, we need more Catholic high schools. I was saddened to discover that the Marist brothers are leaving [-]. They did a wonderful job reinforcing the Catholic teachings our children received at home and in the Parish Community.

- More youth involved in Church activities.
- Not cover up the abuse of the Priests to the children.
- The Royal Commission is a wake-up call to HEAR to the full.
- Priests are not trusted anymore by the people.

- To have greater input from the laity—personal prayer.
- To teach young children religion at home and school.
- To be tolerant of all—to be generous to people of all nations.

- Try to retain young people involved in the Church after school and early parenthood. We are in our diocese an ageing population we need to look at how to encourage young ones especially our families to be more active in our church. We know they have a Christian upbringing and it is still there. We need to make changes make the Mass more active for young ones, not boring as our grandchildren say.
 - Love thy neighbour, help people who are worse off,—to solve the problem with our priests concerning sex troubles.
 - Find ways to get our young people to be involved in the Church.
 - To try to involve more young people in the Church by doing gatherings.
 - Parents to encourage their children to return to Mass.
 - I to be more tolerant of those from other communities, to be more welcoming.
 - To set a good example of charity esp. with family.
 - To have the courage to answer relevant questions if occasions should arise.
 - To live a Christian life in full—Prayer and live the Christian ethics.
-
- To give more time to Him by doing charitable deeds and praying to Him.
 - I think the Church needs more women to help in the higher Church.
-
- Some way to help bring young people back to the Church.
- Allow priests to marry.
- Change the rite of reconciliation.
-
- Music in the church should be more upbeat like praise and worship instead of the older version.
 - 10 am mass should be more focused on the youth, e.g. youth group do readings offertory, etc—we should encourage younger people to read at Mass.
 - Youth group should be longer and we should invite all the towns surrounding so we make more friends.
 - To help others just by doing little things that makes a big difference, you would be capable of doing this by putting money in the mission box.
 - To have more family Masses. For more children to get involved with the Church. This will help the children to understand the Gospels.
 - To care for our youth, it is particularly evident in [-]as the clergy and youth groups are developing and encouraging our children. We need to continue to do this to ensure the longevity of our faith community.
 - I believe God is asking us to look after our priests and care for them so they can continue to guide us. I believe priests become lonely and lost at times. They need consistent support through retreats, family connections (by visiting their families). Being allowed to marry and be allowed to have female priests as well.

- Honest and open to everyone.
- Respect everyone's decisions.
- Provide a learning environment.
- Be kind.
- I think that youth groups should target kids in year 3 and 4 above, so they can develop their faith earlier and see what they think of youth group.
- Mass needs to be more interesting and fun for young people.
- Priests should be able to get married and women should be able to be priests.
- Mass with better songs at Mass like Blaze concert and our retreat youth group should be on every week.
- Make more Masses more engaging for young people by having better music and other activities at youth group.
- Equality for all people no matter the gender or sexuality.

For the Christian:

- Encouraging Christians to have a daily time reading the Bible, praying. Putting God First.
- Standing firm on the tenets of the faith.
- Greater opportunities for fellowship/worship amongst Christians and equipping them to share the gospel effectively.
- Evangelism.
- Practical Help to those in need.
- Upholding the traditional family/marriage.
- Working to restore the value of men and fathers.
- Encouraging indigenous leadership to lead forward.
- Building a one Australia.

God may be asking us to [be] kinder [and] more understanding of others. Times are getting tougher for families. Mental health issues are on the rise. Government funding is going to wrong areas. Can God help with this? I really don't think people have much faith at the moment especially towards the Catholic Church including myself. I see the Church as a cover up of evil. I haven't lost my faith in God only in the Church. In the real world you pay for the crimes you commit, how can such evil be committed by adults on the gifts we call children and be covered up by the Church—disgusting, this has disgusted me so much that I will never step foot in a church again. I cannot forgive the cover up and acceptance of the crimes committed.

What a question and how do you put an answer into words without getting upset, or disappointed about what we are actually doing to achieve what God has asked of us? I find it quite overwhelming at times, there are so many less fortunate than others, who due to lack of

education, family, and community support or due to addictions and mental health issues, just can't live what we consider a "normal" life. God has asked us to empower and care for the less fortunate –those that need our assistance to grow and live a better life, to have hope and to see a future that makes them feel worthwhile and valued. We do this day in and out. Are we putting a dint in the needs of so many? I hope so and if you ask the folk that we have been able to help, to educate and mentor, to give hope to, they say yes, you helped me. But hey are so many (Catholic Care WF) as a mentor of mine once said to me when I felt snowed under and dejected— [-], how do you eat an elephant... one bite at a time, just keep doing the do and you will get there. So to answer your question, God has asked for us to be strong for those who can't be, to love the ones who do not feel loved, to empower and give hope to the ones who do not feel valued and worthwhile. And this is what I strive to achieve day in day out... and I pray that I am making a difference. If everyone just made a little bit of a difference... this would all add up to making a big difference.

To be a community that welcomes everyone regardless of race, creed, sexuality, that his integrity and is open and honest, that maintains traditions and access to the sacraments, that trains and encourages the laity to keep the Church going in times without a priest.

First, to read the sign of the times... Secondly to focus on proclaiming, promoting and living the Kingdom of God. Redefine our focus, so we do not get out of balance. Include women in all decision making. Practice inclusivity and subsidiarity. Positively develop a synod model, and not a Plenary one. Tell the Bishops about Vatican II. Priests in the Latin Rite must have the choice of being married or not. Better screening of prospective candidates to the Priesthood. Displaying more art in the resurrected Jesus and less in the crucified Jesus. It is because of his life that we are what we are, not his death... More full and open accountability of church finances, including a full financial report, not a tokenistic one of Income and Expenditure. This is parish and diocesan. Adult education must become a priority over primary and secondary education of children. Promotion of Basic Christian Communities in every parish. Introduction of third rite of reconciliation. A simple means of complaints to the bishop, of presbyters who are being dictatorial regarding parish activities.

God is asking of us what he has always asked, i.e. that we obey His commandments and those of the Church.

To change the Church—to be less threatening and more inclusive so that we can get our young people back. It needs to move into the 21st century with hymns, ideas etc. and not be so regimented and old. All priests need to be the same as well—Different priests can have such different impacts in communities.

I think God is asking, "Where have you gone?" Our churches are empty; our children don't think it is important to have Church in their lives. They want God but not the responsibility of the Church community. Our churches need money to keep the everyday running and maintenance but the younger generation don't give. They want Baptism, Confirmation and some want Marriage and they want the Church for burial but nothing in between. God must seriously wonder "where have they gone?"

That we enable and empower people in their Christian vocations and ministries. That we recognise, affirm and develop people's gifts, and then commission them for their duties. Ideally this would be in a sacramental and liturgical way. This means that ministries would be distributed between the Christian faithful, not only lying with priests. For example, a chaplain working in a hospital could be trained and 'ordained' (or a different word could be used, but it would have to hold the same imaginative power) for anointing of the sick, or confession/reconciliation. A theology student or parish worker could be trained and ordained to lead liturgy or preach homilies. This would recognise that we are all called to be the image of Christ, to be Christ-like, to minister as Christ's disciples in various ways. It also recognises that there are not two classes of people among Catholic Christians—we are all baptised. Women and men, married, single or consecrated, all can be called and sent out to officially represent Christ to the world. These people would be role models of Christian life. Therefore vocational paths may not be for life—people may not need to become priests for life or administer one or more sacraments for life. However, they may well be also. Another model along this line is in the Anglican Church, where there are 'local priests,' who are ordained to minister within a particular local parish and have less training than regular priests. This is a good solution for rural and remote parishes or particular ministries such as in prisons. To be of, with and in the outskirts, those in most need of God's mercy, rather than the mainstream echelons of power in Australian society. This includes with people who are homeless, refugees, sick with mental or intellectual challenges, in prison, living in rural communities, Aboriginal. This also includes very strongly our suffering Earth, which is so much in need of good faith champions in Australia. From a place of minority in Australia, we can speak better for the suffering minorities. Let us not hold on to being in a position of power in Australian society. Transparency and accountability in the area of governance. The dioceses could learn much from the professional standards of Catholic Education Offices, Catholic Healthcare, Catholic Social Services, etc. The hierarchical structure of the Church could be much more democratic in Australia and could learn from consecrated religious communities. In these, people say they are 'in leadership' for a certain time; they are not identified as 'leaders'. They are in leadership in a religious congregation for so many years and then are replaced by others. This could be a good model for bishops, rather than being in the position (and BEING the position) until old age or death. Look at and celebrate what we have among us, not what we don't have.

I think God wants us to be Christian towards others, help those less fortunate than us.

To follow the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of his Church. Adapt to our changing world and its needs. New evangelisation in earnest.

To reflect on my faith and the importance of the Catholic Church, how much I value it and am I prepared to stand as a witness for our religion and our faith.

That we follow the teachings of the Gospels, attend Sunday Mass, educate our children in the teachings of the Church and visibly practise our faith.

God wants us to live out his mission within the community. God wants us to be loving and caring members of our communities. God wants us to live our faith through our words and actions and build our community whether it be town, church, work or family.

God is asking us to be good—kind, thoughtful, to have empathy and to live a good life within family and community. To keep our planet clean, to be healthy and happy. To live like Jesus would.
The Church needs to rethink amount of special collections, as a rural community which is in drought we parishioners have not the funds or inclination to help others we have to think of our community first. So should the Church hierarchy. Young priests need to spend mandatory time in the rural areas of Australia. Hierarchy of the Church needs to listen to its people regarding their faith needs and that starts with the pope, all the way down the line. The third rite of reconciliation needs to be available. We voted with our feet on this, the bishops and pope need to listen and stop saying NO to grass root Catholics. The Church powers that be, should consider the older parishioners who do not have computer knowledge and do not wish to learn. Stop the nonsense of not sending printed copies of news to the parishes for all to see. Also for notices and messages from the bishop to be available a week prior to the event (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Lent, Advent etc.). Actually the Church hierarchy need the common touch to be able to get down to the same level and understand the needs of the people instead of being isolated from the people with unrealistic ideas and views.
No idea have never had a direct line to God.
To be inclusive and embrace diversity. Change the conversation by giving a voice to young children in their community. Create opportunities for the community to express themselves at Mass through their first language and culture. Open heart, open mind and open arms.
For the Church to move with the times—to stop thinking the Catholic way is the only way to redemption; to embrace other religions and share some resources with them e.g. in towns where often the Catholic Church is the only reasonable building, why not share the use of the church? I also get the feeling that at least some of the reason that the Church wants to see more people at Mass is to increase the financial contributions to the church. I often feel there are 3 categories of people who do/don't attend Mass—some go because they like the priest, some will not go if they do not like the priest and some go irrespective of the priest because they want to reflect and perhaps meditate and they don't consider the priest as the "centre" of the Mass but want to "do this in remembrance of Me". Many times the homily is lost on so many people that I question the time spent on the preparation could be better spent being out in the community. I really do hope that the Plenary Council will listen carefully to the people and that this is not just a "talkfest" with little outcome/change. I hope there are many more ordinary people in the decision making than clergy.
To make time for a spiritual life so our hearts are open to listen, to care for each other in our communities, to care for our environment and to find ways to be more inclusive. The sexual abuse scandals have highlighted that hierarchical, elitist systems lead to an abuse of power; we need to get back to basics.
God asks us in Australia to worship Him to our fullest, to love Him to our best, to serve Him to our full capability, to honour and obey Him and to respect Him. He has given us His love and we should give our love to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus gave us the Catholic Church and we must use our best human resources to keep and preserve the Church for the greater glory of God

and the salvation of souls. God expects us and His Church to spread the Gospel, to love our neighbour and live in faith, hope and charity according to His Word.

Why have you forsaken me? Come back to me with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbour as yourself. Feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, welcome the stranger. Follow Christ, who came to serve, not be served. Follow Christ, who scorned the pomp and circumstance, the 'phylacteries and tassels' so important to the Jewish leaders of that time. Follow Christ, who abhorred hypocrites. Practice what you preach. Preach what you practise. Be the kingdom of God. Be Christian, aspire to the heights and don't accept the depths that Catholicism has descended into. Jesus says 'come, follow me'. Follow him!!!

I think we are asked to be more inclusive, to have more lay leadership, equal participation of women in all aspects of Church life, take on board what science, particularly medical science, tells us, and for the Church to be brought into the contemporary world we live in.

I believe that God is asking us in Australia to make the Catholic Church in Australia accountable to the people of God in Australia—this Great South Land of the Holy Spirit. To date, the arrangements about accountability are not working. We have seen decades of cover ups of grievous crimes committed by the clergy of the Australian Catholic Church against innocent children. This has to stop. The Roman Catholic Church was set up in its present form by the Roman Emperor Constantine nearly 1700 years ago. Constantine was an Emperor who was determined to make the Church function properly. The Church was accountable to him. When he said that they needed to call a Council to clear up false teaching within the Church, the Church obeyed. When the Church was deadlocked in debate, Constantine stepped in and got a resolution. Unfortunately, Constantine was the first and last Emperor to hold the Church accountable. No one is above God's law. Everyone needs to be held accountable for their actions and inaction. I believe that any high Church official be they a cardinal, an archbishop, a bishop, a head of a religious order of priests, brothers or nuns should be accountable to the people of God in Australia. I would suggest that a committee of perhaps three people be set up to represent the people of God. They could then act as the Governor Generals of the Church in Australia. They could be elected by our Catholic Community who would need to enrol to vote. I would think when Catholics have been confirmed they should be allowed to vote. The Church leaders would have to pledge their support to this new state of affairs. The normal reporting lines to the Vatican would continue from these leaders of the different Church organisations. Should some Church leader not cooperate with the Governor General's Committee when some scandal surfaced, then hopefully the other Church leaders would take the matter up with the person or persons concerned and failing that, take the matter up with the pope. The power of the Committee would stem from their moral authority given to them by the people of God in Australia. Should they be frustrated in their attempts to resolve issues they would have the recourse of reporting back to the people of God should their representations to the leaders of the Australian Church and the pope fall on deaf ears. There would be a new body to seek redress from. There is a wealth of detail to be worked through but should a model such as this be established and it is able to work, then Australia could set a worthwhile precedent for other countries to work out their own solutions. Should the Holy Spirit want this to happen, it will happen and the Catholic Church will be accountable to the people of God as it once was to the Emperor Constantine.

I think to empower the youth and include them a lot more with music and participation in all parts of parish life, including Mass. For our Parish—including Aboriginal culture in the Mass and transport to and from the Sunday Masses for children and families.

I think God is asking the Church to go back to the beginning, that is, when the Church was formed as written in the first chapters of Acts of the Apostles (Acts). The Church needs to be community again where all peoples gather and share their lives so to speak. The Church has to be a center-pivot in the believers' lives and not an after-thought. The ministers should focus on tending the flock of God and much less on administrative tasks which has resulted in ministers being far away from the flock. Again, as in Acts the Church is being called to be fearless in the face of attacks from non-believers more so influential non-believers who seek to water down the Church's mission. The Church should stand with the TRUTH no-matter how agonising or polarising it is. The Church is a Church of God and must proclaim the word of God without limitation. Again as in Acts, the Church has to be found in the community breaking of bread happening in households. Jesus has to be brought to Australian homes again, HE should not be kept captive in the church building. May God's chosen ones, the priests, make Jesus real in the community. The bishops have to evangelise and minister to God's people. The wounds from the Church scandals cannot be healed by increasing the distance between priests and the faithful as this plays into the hands of the devil. God will always protect the priests and the Church. Let the priests and all religious be found among the flock in homes, schools, work places, hospitals, trains and social media ministering to God's children.

To live the Gospel message, loving God and our neighbour. This can take many forms e.g., in worship and in social interaction. After Vatican II, we made a whole lot of cosmetic changes (with little result) whilst the conciliar documents remain gathering dust on Vatican shelves. A survey conducted about 5 years ago showed that about 90% of the laity had no knowledge of these documents or their content. Sadly, we appear to have lost respect for both God and neighbour in many ways. E.g., People will talk loudly in church before Mass and receive the Eucharist casually as a matter of course. Again, we have abandoned many of our rich liturgical practices, unlike our Eastern cousins. Liturgical experimentation and inappropriate music have been forced on us while our rich liturgical heritage has been mothballed. (I am not referring to Pope Francis' concept of the "messy Church.") Again, the Mass should be the same worldwide rather than differing in format often from parish to parish. Direction is needed, for example, for the appropriate symbolic use of the sign of peace (see Fr. Edward McNamara in Zenit). Direction is also needed for eulogies during Mass. I have witnessed a two hour requiem including 8 separate eulogies. These often include inappropriate content. We have lost respect also for our neighbour. Politicians promote class warfare which is contrary to Christ's message. Parish life can often be non-existent as we and our clergy rush back to personal lives. I believe we need to learn from the early Church. Informed laity need to be involved in selection of bishops. The current method does not always give pastoral leaders and teachers. Often they lead us nowhere and teach us nothing. (I am not referring to the current sex scandals). I feel again that the early Church granted baptism after about three years of instruction. Today sacraments are given in order to get children into Catholic schools or worse, into expensive selective Catholic schools. Is this sacrilege?? We should evaluate the value of our schools. They are businesses concerned with numbers and money and I believe

do not impart the faith (save a few). If we are to have parish councils, our priests need to respect their input rather than ignoring and squashing their often valuable input.

The future of our Church in this Far West is vitally important just as it is in the city. The Church community is spread over vast areas now and has been in the past. Numbers were bigger and many more families attended our community Masses. Families came into town and met, talked and shared quality time together. Also too, religious sisters/brothers were very much within the community—this of course added to their involvement in both parish and school. Now we are experiencing less numbers, less families, older generation. Schools now have lay teachers, principals. And the change with religious orders has had an impact on the Church community. As our numbers dwindle attendance at Masses, same and also our financial status does too. So one can wonder “What will become of our little church community? What can we do to help to make changes?”

First and foremost, we need to have deep personal relationships with God. Prayer should be promoted and supported with vigour, offering opportunities both to learn how to pray and to grow in a relationship with Jesus. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament could really be prioritised in parishes. There needs to be a renewal in Catholic education in schools but also through parishes and outreaches to Catholics on the peripheries, we should be providing excellent formation so that we, as a Church, at least understand our own faith. We have to have as strong a message as the mainstream media, which is often misinformed and misleading. Many Catholics currently learn about the faith from secular sources, rather than from the Church itself. We think we could make our public image reflect more the joy of choosing to serve others and living with Christ rather than the gloom of following rules blindly. I think God is asking us to respond to our baptismal vocations more vibrantly and eagerly. A great deal of Church-attending Catholics appears to be focused on their own personal holiness but don't seem to seek out ways of sharing their faith with others. Obviously, I believe the Church in Australia needs to collectively address the abuses and cover ups that have emerged over the past decades, in a way that the country is satisfied that the current leadership is determined to ensure similar scandals won't happen again.

Not to lose our faith and remember He will not give us anything He and I can't get through.

To be better Christians. God needs us to live Christianity in our everyday lives so that we become more fully human—then the ‘ordinary’ becomes ‘extraordinary’. God needs us to allow him to work through us as we show care and concern for the young, elderly and disadvantaged. Allow others to see God in us. God wants us to have an increasing knowledge of the scriptures and the person of Jesus so that we can be inspired by the wisdom of Jesus. God wants us to grow, be challenged, stretched and inspired to live our lives knowing and loving God.



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. The average age of the parishioners in our parish would be 70 - 80. What happens when these people are gone?
2. How do we get the younger generation back?
3. What message of hope do you have for Catholic communities who are deprived of the sacraments?
4. What message of hope do you have for young girls in the Church who feel called to, or are interested in, a liturgical or sacramental vocation?
5. How can we attract young families to Mass?
6. Is the modern day Church relevant to the modern day standards of living?
7. How do we influence parents to encourage their children to attend Sunday Mass?
8. How do we incorporate respect for the Church and its teachings?
9. How do we address local issues in our community?
10. How do we reach out to the community?
11. How will the Church spread the Word of God while continuing to practice institutionalised cruelty through its clergy and religious orders?
12. Will the ordination of lay people be considered to fill the shortage of priests?
13. What is the relevancy of forced celibacy in today's world?
14. Will the dress code of priests reflect today's more liberal attire?
15. Our Catholic schools are overflowing, but this is not reflected in the celebration of Mass?
16. Will lay-led liturgies become more the accepted form of worship?
17. How is the Church in Australia going to be made accountable to the people of God in Australia?
18. What plans are there for the youth, particularly in remote areas?
19. How can we encourage youthful music in the Catholic Church?
20. What will Plenary Council do to not only maintain the current parishes and centres in Australia but also bring Jesus to every habitable part of Australia?
21. Can we avoid the loss of the faithful, now in its 3rd generation?
22. Can the Church purge clericalism?
23. How can we involve the youth of our parish community?
24. How can we make our Masses more spiritual and uplifting for them and us?
25. How will we respond to the call for a greater representation of women in the leadership of the Church?

26. Can baptism be included into sacramental programs (kindergarten) in schools so that more children and their families have the opportunity of joining Gods family at an important crossroad in their lives?
27. What should evangelisation look like in the Church?
28. How can lay people be better represented in the Church?
29. Should Mass attendance be the main indicator for practicing Catholics?
30. Could the Church provide more faith development for adults in the form of e.g. mini retreats, meditation sessions, and Centacare programs?
31. Are we able to develop strategies to attract children and young adults to our Church perhaps through community events or location of worship?



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 22 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.

Cradle Catholic, always held my faith, faith-strong parents helped a lot. Mind you, many sins of my youth, but by the grace of God, my faith is strong at age 58. I worry that many young people are not shown a good example of living their faith by their parents, who themselves, fell away through poor example by their parents. Hence, as I mentioned earlier, a new emphasis on 12-25 year olds.

I have experienced faith in Australia because of the wonderful parents God gave me. Most of my six siblings still practice, they understand why the Church is important. Unfortunately without the family I have and if I was relying on my Catholic school education I am pretty sure I would not be practising today. When I go to school reunions that is the story of most of my former class mates. The sacredness and beauty of the faith was never made known, along with Church history and the fact that we belong to Christ's Church!

The current teachings of the Church are difficult for people to believe in the digital age

I grew up in a place and time that embraced the ecumenical movement with a true appreciation for the ways in which other denominations celebrate and live their faith whilst believing in the same God. In fact, I grew up in two churches, one of which welcomed female ministers and allowed their ministers to marry. Did they fail to deliver God's message? Not at all. Did they have less struggle to connect with people and call young people to ministry? They did. In my experience of ecumenism, I felt a true sense of community and respect and a desire to move forward together. I would like to think that God would like to see more of that.

After a lifetime of interest and enquiry I became a Catholic in middle age. I had previously been a parish leader in the Anglican Church. Different Catholic priests were welcoming of people other than Catholics or openly hostile or anything in between! Many Catholics are welcoming of those like me who have made a choice to become Catholic, others treat us as second class Catholics. My many friends of different races and creeds are not welcomed by many in my small rural church but a very few parishioners are open and welcoming. I believe we all need re-educating in ways to be more like Jesus not just to fulfil an obligation to be in Mass on Sunday.

I grew up in a family where Sunday Mass was what you did before you did anything else. It was what our parents did & because the parental role was one that demanded RESPECT, this practice was never questioned. As we each in turn, left home to work, not attending Sunday Mass was

never considered, by myself or to the best of my knowledge, by any of my 3 siblings. Of course there was an element of fear regarding the repercussions of not following this ritual, but I happen to think a little fear is not necessarily harmful. We clean our teeth so we won't suffer the pangs of tooth decay & later on, the pain of having to pay dental bills. The first priest I remember was an Irishman who preached 'fire & brimstone.' It didn't give me nightmares but it certainly made me aware of what was RIGHT & WRONG. I feel that the Catholic Church has lost the RESPECT it used to enjoy, partly perhaps because of the scandals that have plagued it in recent years, but also perhaps because of a desire to emulate other churches. As the only Church that was founded by Christ, the Catholic Church was once respected because it was 'different', but that 'difference' seems to be fading into obscurity as more and more people drift away from the constraints of Catholicism.

I am employed in Catholic Education so I am heavily involved in our Parish. I have been teaching for over 20 years and can say the each year less and less families are coming to Church. Now in our Parish we are lucky to have 1 or 2 families out of 83 come to Mass each weekend. When and where I grew up (in outback [-]) our Masses were only once a month and were such a community event that everyone looked forward to.

I was raised with a wonderful family where our faith was extremely important, Mass came first. My parents, they were involved in sport and many other social events but Mass was always first. It was a privilege to be involved in our Church community, my father gave us wonderful examples of charity and love in helping those less fortunate than us and we learnt so much from that. Caring for others and sharing in our community were daily occurrences. My schooling with the Sisters of St. Joseph also played a big part in moulding me as a Catholic woman.

I am deeply grateful that Jesus, image of our universal God, was born among us, died for us and proclaimed the reign of God, commandments of love and beatitudes. I find meaning in following him and seeking to share the good news with all those, including myself, who are poor and lost. And I receive nourishment, community, inspiration and challenge for the journey in the Catholic Church. So often, when celebrating Mass with fellow Christ-followers, I feel the Spirit affirm my presence. I love the Church so much that I feel pained at its failings, and I want to participate in bringing it closer to Jesus' vision—a rehearsal and symbol of the reign of God here on earth. My family initially worshiped together in the Uniting Church. My father was a lay preacher and elder, and my mother the Sunday School teacher. We had wonderful examples of ministers, both ordained and lay, women and men. Then my siblings and I attended a Catholic primary school and we children and my mother made our sacraments in the Catholic Church. I felt right at home in the Catholic liturgical and sacramental world, and we had excellent priests who inspired me no end. I thought that because I had received so much from my faith's liturgical experience, I wanted to give back one day in the same way. I felt called to become a Catholic priest. I was seven years old, and I told my parents straight away. Throughout school I became more and more involved with the Church and my faith, becoming an altar server, reader, sacristan, and attended Mass most days of the week. I always prayed and planned to become a religious person, whether a priest, nun or sister. When I finished school, however, I questioned my faith and explored other forms of spirituality and religion. However, the fourth year after school I returned to my Catholic home and again found my meaning and value in Jesus Christ. I immediately started to discern

again about a religious vocation, and began a Bachelor of Theology. When I was 25 I took my first vows as a consecrated apostolic Sister, and my final vows at 31. I have ministered with youth and young adults in the Church; rural/remote dioceses; chaplaincy in prisons, detention centres and hospitals; and as a pastoral associate. I finished a Master of Theology last year, with a research focus in liturgy, when I was 33. However, the Spirit continues to niggle and question me. Why are there such sacramental needs in the fringes of our Catholic world—rural/remote communities, prisons, hospitals, etc.—and not enough priests or deacons to fulfil them? Why are there women who have worked or volunteered for years with the Church and yet do not receive official recognition? Why are there no options for real vocations for girls and women who are drawn to liturgical and homiletic roles? I continue to believe that the Church can be better, and I want to help make that happen for all of God's children.

I love going to church on the basis that it is a peaceful moment for me to sit, pray, reflect and listen to Father's sermon—the music is relaxing and very meaningful too. I am a spiritual person and believe in why we are here—to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

I personally was influenced by the example and teachings of the religious who guided me through primary years into adolescence and also the practising faith of my parents.

I was raised in a non-married family with a Catholic father and an Anglican mother. My mother took us to the Catholic church every second weekend and my siblings and I completed our sacraments in the 1980's. I did not practice for 20 years until I met my wife who is an active Catholic. We have been to a local Anglican church which is full of young families with modern music, laughs, God's word and a strong sense of community. We attend the Catholic Church regularly but wish it was more like the Anglican one.

It is great to be part of the Christian community. When my mum died the priest waited for us at the church gate and walked us in, we were also allowed to have her favourite song "One Day at a Time" He made this funeral personal and caring.

Father [-] and Sister [-] were the first 2 people we met when we moved to [-] 13 years ago. They welcomed us with open arms and we always felt that we belonged.

I think my faith is pretty simple. I am a registered nurse/midwife/ child & family nurse and witnessing a birth and parenthood makes one realise there is a "Someone" responsible for the wonderful things of nature. I pray (mainly asking favours) as I feel sometimes there is nothing else left that I can do. To me that "Someone" is a deity I call God, but I can accept that to others that could be Buddha or Allah. Just believing in your "Someone" gives some hope in this sometimes crazy world.

I have lived in Australia for 11 years. I was reared a Catholic in rural Ireland. I fell away from being a practising Catholic for a number of years when I was young but realised that no matter what my disagreements with the institutional Church, I am a Catholic and it is within that tradition that I must follow my spiritual journey. I spent 15 years living in [-] in Africa and have seen many expressions of Christianity and Catholicism that are vibrant and authentic. The Church is as resilient as its adherents.

My late father was Protestant. I spent my first two school years happily in the local Public School. Then two black-garbed women visited my home. The next day I was in a Catholic school. Soon after that I was found by my beloved godmother crying my heart out. Why? Those black-garbed devils told me my father was going to hell because he was not Catholic. I was told this regularly. Christian? Definitely not. Catholic? Definitely yes.

I met a retired priest who had worked in a gaol in New York for 20 years. Every second year the families of the prisoners paid this priest's fare to New York. Why? He treated them as human beings and called each by name. To everyone else these men were a number.

Since I was a student at school I have loved studying history. My father [-] who died just after we celebrated my 21st birthday, also loved history. We would discuss history and the events of the day while in the car or gardening together. I fell in love with Jesus on my first communion day. I believe that Jesus is the giant of history. Jesus is the overarching triumph of the human story. No other story or person can compare with the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus, the fulfilment of these prophecies during the life of Jesus and Jesus founding His Church and its history to the present day. Down through history Jesus selects the most unlikely characters to do great things for Him. Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David the shepherd boy, John the Baptist, Peter, James and John followed by a mass of saints cascading down through the pages of history. It is only now starting with the twin advances of the hourly press and the age of instant communication that people in authority have begun to be held to account. God's infinite goodness demands a Church that is repentant and humble of heart. The Church needs guardian angels to light and guard, to rule and guide it through the wickedness and snares of this world. The Church will only be perfect with Jesus at its head. In the meantime the Church must strive with all its might to be the hope in action of the world around us. This is my dream, my story in the making.

The music in the [-] Parish has inspired me with my comments and greatly increased youth participation in Masses.

As a young man, I am encouraged by the older generation (ages 70 plus) who have held onto their faith. This has strengthened me a lot and given me hope that the Church will rise again.

I was blessed with a faith education from my parents, then from the Sisters of Mercy and Marist Brothers (one period daily for twelve years—This obviously no longer happens!!). I left school with a fair understanding of my faith. Without catechesis we have nothing to base issues like loving God and neighbour, like social justice, on.

I was brought up in a Catholic family where Sunday Mass was our main Sunday outing. We all attended and celebrated with other families. We were educated at a Catholic School where we taught by the religious sisters. Life in the parish was parish and school all working together. They were very happy times and memorable ones. My faith is very deep and this is due to my father and mother giving me a great love of God and He being so important in one's life. I have experienced great challenges in my life and some very testing times. I would say that my faith has helped me and my belief that you will not be tested beyond what the Lord has for you. He is ever with you loving and keeping you in his care.

The churches in my diocese are mostly void of young people. As director of Youth Ministry in our diocese I have had to go to the peripheries to find youth, in particular the Catholic Schools. We have worked over the past 2 years to develop parish youth groups which initially target the upper primary age kids but encourage further participation into high school. My experience has been that many of the kids in the schools are looking to belong to a parish youth group, which promote faith, formation, friendship and fun. I have also found that many of the kids continue their participation in the youth group into high school where they would have previously fallen off the radar. These kids have a sense of belonging to their parish, even though most are never given the opportunities to attend Sunday Mass. The youth groups provide time for Eucharistic Adoration and the kids spend time praying. We are in a rural diocese and the parishes are often isolated. One would understandably consider youth ministry to be too difficult in such a setting. The reality is that in two years we have been able to start youth groups in 7 seven parishes, some attracting as many as 30-40 regular members. The kids have enjoyed their experience and are choosing to continue their formation into high school. They love traditional Catholic experiences such as Adoration and the Holy Rosary. A little bit of innovation, experimentation, courage and perseverance mixed with a lot of prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit has been successful with this youth project in our diocese and I am convinced the same approach will be successful in the majority of evangelisation projects.

I believe in the power of prayer. I had a 2 yr old granddaughter who had severe brain cancer now in remission and did her second year at school.

My faith has been strengthened by attending several 2/3 day programs organised by the CEO during my working years. Prayer, discussions and sharing times with like-minded people both expanded and consolidated my faith.

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.

This page is intentionally left blank

This page is intentionally left blank



National Centre for Pastoral Research
Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601
Australia

