

SANDHURST MISSION  
AND PASTORAL COUNCIL  
Preparation and Consultation Plan  
2022 - 2023



*I dream of a “missionary option”, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self preservation.*

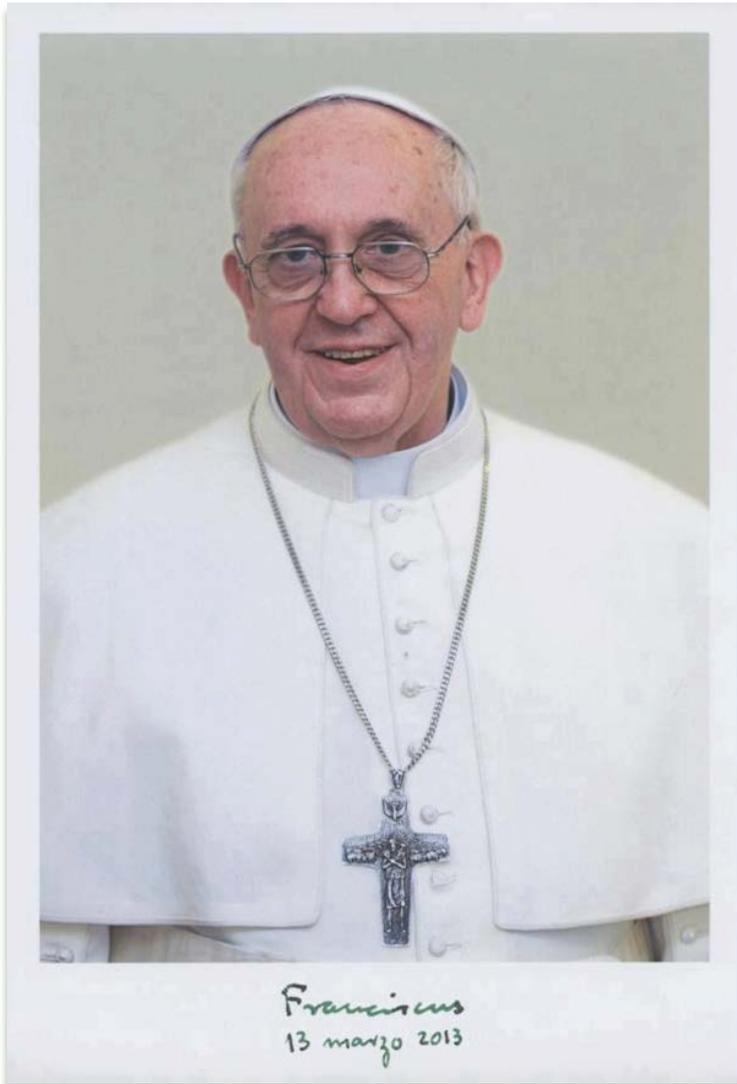
Pope Francis  
The Joy of the Gospel, 27

SANDHURST MISSION  
AND PASTORAL COUNCIL  
Preparation and Consultation Process  
Preliminary Results and Interim Report  
7 October 2022



Prepared by Mission & Pastoral Life Team | Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, October 2022

LISTENING...



*A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening is more than simply hearing.*

Address of Pope Francis at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops

17 October 2015

## Introduction

All the baptised share responsibility for the mission and for structures that facilitate the living out of the mission entrusted to the Church. A key learning from the listening and dialogue phase of the Plenary Council of Australia and the Synod on Synodality is that the people of God are seeking inclusion and opportunities to exercise co-responsibility for governance and leadership of the pastoral life of the diocese.

Establishing the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) is a significant commitment by our diocese to create a structure that supports synodal governance, leadership, and decision-making. As steps are taken to establish these structures, it is also important to inform, prepare and consult the people of God along the way. Bishop Shane Mackinlay announced a year of Preparation and Consultation for the SMPC on 27 April 2022.

The primary objective of this time of preparation and consultation is to make progress toward the formulation and establishment of the SMPC. The process aims to build on the significant work already undertaken via the Review of the Strategic, Consultative and Administrative Structures of the Diocese, as described in the “Go Forth” Report (December 2020), the Listening and Dialogue Phase of the 5th Plenary Council of Australia and the Diocesan Consultation for the 19th Ordinary Synod of Bishops on Synodality. The process of preparation and consultation empowers the people of God and enhance the sense of co-responsibility and synodality across the diocese. It also aims to encourage expressions of interest in becoming a member of the SMPC.

At each Preparation and Consultation Meeting participants:

- are provided with information about the proposed Mission and Pastoral Council
- experience a process of listening and dialogue (as used in the first phase of the Plenary Council)
- are given the opportunity to give written feedback about what they have heard.

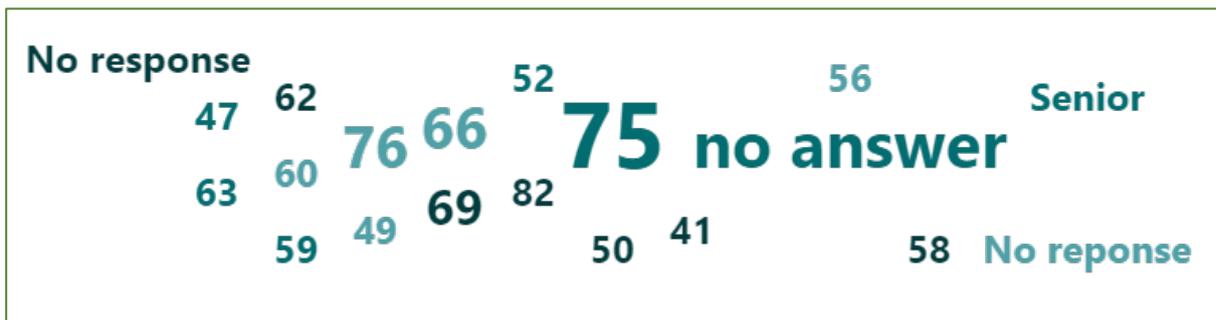
All of this is conducted in the context of prayer.

This is an interim report on the preliminary results of the preparation and consultation meetings conducted in the diocese between 25 July and 29 September 2022. It has been presented as an overview and in summary form. A final detailed report will be issued in February 2023.

## Participant Demographics

The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Life Team have visited a total of thirteen Parishes and six Schools to date. Participants totaled 398.

Average age of participants thus far is 75 years old, however there was a reasonable representation of youth with 6 schools included.



Sixty-three percent of participants were female, 35% male and 1% identifying as nonbinary. One individual identified as Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander.

Ten percent of participants were born outside of Australia with a variety of countries represented.



A record of the collected responses of each group are kept and processed by the Mission and Pastoral Life Team. Where possible, questions asked by the group will be resolved in the meeting, or a response provided as soon as practicable. De-identified collective feedback and questions will be provided to the bishop and help inform development of the Statutes of the SMPC.

The following pages outline the preliminary results of that consultation with the people of God in our parishes and schools to date.

<u>Location/School</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Collected Group Responses</u>
<u>Benalla Parish</u> : St Joseph's, St Brigid's Parishes	11	3
Chancery	6	3
<u>Chiltern</u> : St Mary's Parish	13	4
<u>Cobram</u> : St Joseph's Parish	13	4
<u>Euroa</u> : St John the Evangelist	19	6
<u>Nagambie</u> : St Mary's, St Malachy's Parishes	11	4
<u>Nathalia</u> : St Mary's Parish	9	3
<u>Numurkah</u> : St Patrick's Parish	8	3
<u>Rutherglen</u> : St Mary's Parish	6	3
<u>Shepparton</u> : St Brendan's Parish, <u>Dookie</u> : St Mary's Parish	23	7
<u>Wangaratta</u> : St Patrick's Parish, <u>Moyhu</u> : St Joseph's Parish	26	7
<u>Wodonga</u> : Sacred Heart, St Josphe's Parishes, <u>Tallangatta</u> : St Michael's Parish	27	8
<u>Yarrawonga</u> : Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parishes	19	6
<i>Preliminary Parish Total</i>	<i>191</i>	<i>61</i>
Catholic Education Sandhurst	77	22
Catholic College Wodonga	25	10
FCJ Benalla	22	5
Galen Catholic College, Wangaratta	23	7
Notre Dame College, Shepparton	41	13
Saint Anne's College, Kialla	19	10
<i>Preliminary Education Total</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>67</i>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>128</b>

Table of participant parishes and schools as of 7 October 2022



What were you encouraged by?

People indicated that they were encouraged by many factors with the top mentions being “People” at 23%, “Church” 14% and “Bishop Shane” 12%.

Individual comments indicated positivity about the Bishop’s involvement, the church’s desire for feedback from the laity and involvement and the potential openness of the church to consider changes taking place in the world.



Sample Responses:

*"We are glad church is looking to hear the views of all people and race. Also, this is a continuous unity of all Priests and parishioners of their faith"*

*"The fact that the laity are involved with this dialogue and have a priest that is inclusive."*

*"Opportunity to have success and refuel our future. Good response of people coming to listen."*



**Participants felt we would be challenged by...**

Top challenges from the group were “Church” 25%, “Need to change in the Church” 12%, and “Young People” at 9%.

The concern about a lack of youth present in the church was evident throughout the comments. The handling or inclusion? of LGBT+ was also a common theme, particularly within the schools visited. There was also a consistent concern about the balance of tradition and change. For example, how will older parishioners handle change, and will younger parishioners accept tradition?

Some participants expressed concern about the council members, that it would consist of the “usual participants” and not represent the younger generation. There was also concern about the council meetings becoming “talk fests” and lack a commitment to any meaningful action. These comments indicate that many participants want to see something different than what they have seen in the past.



## Sample Responses:

*“Will older members be able to accept these new ideas? We all would like to have young people come to Mass.”*

*“Lack of trust in the church. Parents not involved in the parish activities and the children’s sporting activities on the weekend.”*

*“Diverse cultures of priests and laity. Lack of younger people attending church. Where are Catholic education Principles [sic] and Staff?”*



### What questions remained unanswered?

Questions that remained unanswered after the preparation and consultation meetings varied and included such subjects as “Council” 16%, “SMPC” 11%, and a variety of comments regarding how the church will manage changes, at 22%.

Common themes were the role of female parishioners in the church, an emphasis on the need for greater recognition and greater respect for women. Many of the questions regarding the council centred on how the members of the SMPC will be chosen, what their role will be and how much influence the SMPC will have.



Sample Responses:

*“Will the elderly find change hard to accept. Will it change their idea of church participation?”*

*“Married priests. Women’s position in the church.”*

*“How do we encourage families to come back to church.”*



### What would participants like to know more about?

This question drew the highest ‘no response’ at 25% of participants. This may be interpreted to mean that participants received adequate information during the Preparation & Consultation Meeting.

Responses did indicate that participants would very much like to know more about the Council. Many asked if the council will tackle “tough” topics such as women in the church, acceptance of LGBT+, laity involvement and acceptance of divorced parishioners.



Sample Responses:

*"How will older people be cared for in change. Will they be omitted for younger people?"*

*"Communion services. Sandpiper in hard copy please."*



## Conclusion

Based on the feedback and questions, the participants to date have clearly received the intended messages. The need to follow up with parishes and schools in a timely manner is evident as scepticism of many participants is strong. A communication such as this could inform them of the results of their participation and demonstrate the commitment of the Diocese to transparency and action, through the work of Mission and Pastoral Life Team.

*We turn to Mary, our Mother of Good Counsel and patroness of our Diocese,  
as we seek to become a more missionary and pastoral Church:  
people of faith, hope and love for our world.  
May we be led by the same wisdom and courage  
sent by the Holy Spirit to guide her along unfamiliar paths  
and through challenging decisions.  
We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen*

*Our Lady of Good Counsel, pray for us!*



