

APPENDIX C

DIOCESAN SYNOD PROCESSES

MEMBERS OF SYNOD (DELEGATES) INFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

1. The Diocesan Synod 2019-2021, to be held in three sessions, invites the People of God to carefully discern together what the Spirit is saying to the Church of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle and to agree on common goals and actions for the coming years.

Session One – Celebration – 23 November 2019

Session Two – Discernment – 22 May 2021

Session Three – Implementation – 20 November 2021

2. Our diocesan Synod is being held in conjunction with the Plenary Council of Australia. During 2019 our people were asked to respond to the Plenary Council question:

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

and the Diocesan Synod question:

As disciples of Christ, what needs to happen in our hearts and in our minds and in our community for us to be a Christ-centred Church that is:

- *Missionary and evangelising*
- *Inclusive, participatory and Synodal*
- *Humble, healing and merciful*
- *Prayerful and Eucharistic*
- *Joyful, hope-filled and servant community*
- *Open to conversion, renewal and reform*

These six areas are the themes coming from the Plenary Council process.

SYNOD WORKING PARTY

3. The Synod Working Party is the work of the Council for Mission (CfM), on behalf of Bishop Bill. They have been meeting monthly since 2018 to coordinate the many processes for our diocesan Synod.

The members of this Working Party are:

- Teresa Brierley – Moderator, CfM Executive Secretary, Director Pastoral Ministries
- Helen Belcher – Co-chair CfM, Parishioner, Plenary Council delegate
- Lawrie Hallinan - Co-chair CfM, Parishioner
- Michael O'Connor – CfM Member, Parishioner
- Sr Patricia Egan - CfM Member, Parishioner, Religious, Connection to previous Synod processes
- Ben van der Wijngaart - CfM Member, Parishioner
- Bernadette Gibson – Head of Religious Education and Spirituality for the Catholic Schools Office, Plenary Council Delegate
- Helene O'Neill - CfM Member, Parishioner, Family Ministry Coordinator

- Gary Christensen – Director CatholicCare
- Fr Geoff Mulhearn – Council of Priests
- Uta France – Liturgy Council

Staff Assisting the Working Party:

- Alyson Segrott – Executive Assistant to Director Pastoral Ministries
- Jenny Harris – Administrative Assistant Pastoral Ministries
- Rachel James – Head of Communications
- Brooke Cross – Marketing and Communications Manager
- Sarah James - Marketing and Communications Coordinator

Planning Cycle

4. The following organising cycle or planning model is helpful for our Synodal processes:



FOCUS GROUPS FOR THE SYNOD

5. Focus Groups have been created on behalf of the Diocesan Synod Working Party. Their tasks are to focus on the different aspects of the Synod. The work of the Focus Groups is ongoing with some work not ready for tabling at Session Two of Synod but with the hope of presenting this at Session Three of Synod.
6. The Synod Focus Groups are:
 - **Foundational Guiding Principles:** To develop a spiritually inspiring document that reflects the vision of how we the Church of Maitland-Newcastle will work together to further Jesus' mission in today's world.
 - **Discernment of Data:** To process data relevant to the Plenary Council and Diocesan Synod that has been generated thus far within and beyond the diocese, and from that data develop recommendations for discernment by the diocesan community and in time by the Synod. Focus Teams were established for each of the five foundations. The diocesan Data and Analytics Team will provide an objective analysis of data that has been collected since our last Synod.
 - **Diocesan Directory:** To compile and review all the documentation that has provided direction for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle since the last Diocesan Synod of 1992/93 and recommend the ongoing ratification or abrogation of that documentation.
 - **Governance Guiding Principles and Documentation:** To develop clear documentation concerning the governance structures of the diocese, parishes and agencies and the principles on which the diocesan community is governed both canonically and legally. There is a need to honour the principles of synodality, transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and stewardship.
 - **Event Planning:** To develop processes for planning and coordinating in managing each of the Synod sessions.
 - **Liturgy Planning:** To assist in the creation of prayer and worship resources in preparing for and conducting the Synod.

OVERALL TIMELINE FOR THE DIOCESAN SYNOD AND PLENARY COUNCIL

23 NOVEMBER 2019

Session One of Diocesan Synod – Listening and Dialogue

NOVEMBER 2019 to OCTOBER 2020

Preparation of Synod Discernment Session Two by the Synod Working Party

- Diocesan feedback from the Plenary Council and Synod was arranged by the Synod Working Party according to the five foundational aspects of the life and mission of a community of Jesus' followers - Identity and Community; Worship and Prayer; Formation and Education; Mission and Outreach; Leadership and Structure

NOVEMBER 2020

Publication of the Diocesan Synod Working Documents (**Foundation Papers**) based on the Foundational Guiding Principles and Discernment of Data Focus Groups

DECEMBER 2020 to FEBRUARY 2021

Preparation for the discernment of delegates by local Church community for the Diocesan Synod

FEBRUARY TO MARCH 2021

Formation of Delegates who will be appointed and commissioned as Synod Members

Reflecting on the Synod during Lent:

- Background Reading on Foundation Papers
- Reflection Groups using a contemplative dialogue process convened and led by Synod Delegates for all
- Feedback from individuals and groups via website Forum

APRIL TO MAY 2021

Reflection Days with Bishop Bill

Appointment and Commissioning of the members of Synod - Synod Members, Observers, Participants, and Interested People

Further formation of members of Synod

Review of Foundation Papers

Written proposals via the website by members of Synod who wish to speak at Synod

Announcement of Diocesan Synod Discernment Agenda and Proposals

Video Presentations from Synod Theologians and Canonist

22 MAY 2021

Session Two of Synod – Discernment

MAY TO NOVEMBER 2021

Prayerful discernment of the proposals from the Session Two of Synod

Synod Focus Groups and Synod Working Party continue to prepare material for Session Three of Synod

3 - 10 OCTOBER 2021

The first Assembly of the Plenary Council

20 NOVEMBER 2021

Session Three of Synod – Implementation

NOVEMBER 2021 ONWARDS

Process begins to enact the decisions voted upon at the Diocesan Synod Assembly

4 - 9 JULY 2022

The second Assembly of the Plenary Council to be held in Sydney

AUGUST 2022

Process begins to enact the decisions voted upon at the Plenary Council Assemblies

Session Two of Synod (Decision making by Discernment)

Preparation for Session Two of Synod

- The Church of Maitland-Newcastle is centred on Christ, the cornerstone, and seeks always to live as a community of people who believe and are missionary disciples.

From Lent until Pentecost the people of the diocese will be invited, through a process of contemplative dialogue, to discern more fully **the framework** for considering ***'Building the Kingdom of God Together'*** in our diocese.

The purpose of the diocesan reflections during Lent is to enable all members of the diocesan community to respond to the **Five Foundation Papers** developed by the Synod Working Party for the Session Two of Synod.

People are being invited to explore our life and mission as the church of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle through our five foundations:

- Identity and Community
- Worship and Prayer
- Formation and Education
- Mission and Outreach
- Leadership and Structure

- Each Foundation Paper includes:

Our Story	looks to the Acts of the Apostles for an overview of how the first Christians lived out their discipleship within the parameters covered by the five foundations. The story 'morphs' to our own time and place to briefly present our continuity with the first Christian communities – and perhaps to challenge how we may better emulate the ideal presented of our origins.
Foundational Statements	were developed from the work of the Foundational Guiding Principles Focus Group. They serve to remind us of what should characterise communities who are committed to Jesus' mission of bringing the Good News of God's love to our world. It is hoped that, from these, we will be able to develop Foundational Guiding Principles for the whole diocese.
Concerns	summarise related issues raised by diocesan respondents to the Plenary Council Listening and Dialogue Sessions as well as those who submitted written responses at the first session of our Diocesan Synod in November 2019. These were developed by the Foundational Focus Teams working with the Discernment of Data Focus Group. They attempted to honestly reflect what they heard people saying without making judgement.
Recommendations	are mostly general statements which suggest what could be done to address the issues raised in the preceding section (Concerns) .In many cases they will involve personal and communal conversion and/or actions at local community level.

Synod Membership

- Nominations for delegates were called for from members of the diocese so that those who participate in the Synod are a true reflection of the entire portion of the people of God who constitute the diocese, taking account of the different regions of the diocese, of social conditions and professions, and of the part played in the apostolate by the members.

10. Delegates will then be appointed by the Bishop into one of the following categories as **members of Synod**:

Synod Member – Synod members will be required to sign the Profession of Faith and the Oath of Fidelity. They would be able **to speak** from the floor of Synod and **would have voting rights**.

Observers – according to Canon 463 §3 the bishop can invite ministers or members of other Christian Churches or ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who have a close connection to the diocese, to be Synod observers. They may wish to contribute to the discussions of Synod but have **no voting rights**.

Synod Participant – Some of those who have been invited to be delegates may not be in a position to sign the Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity. They have been invited because of their commitment to the vision of the diocese/parishes and their assistance in delivering the mission of the Church. Their knowledge and experience may contribute to the Synod discussions and so they have a voice but **no voting rights**.

Interested People - there may be people who wish to be invited because of their interest in the Catholic Church and the work of the Synod and/or who are unable to be Synod members because of the substantial commitment required. They may be present at sessions of Synod with **neither voice nor voting rights**.

These appointments and commissionings will take place during the Mass as part of the six Bishop's Reflection Days (13 April – 4 May).

Review of Foundation Papers

11. During the Lenten Contemplative Dialogue, the members of Synod will have listened to participants' responses to the material prepared by the Focus Groups on the Five Foundation Papers.

Participants will also be invited to provide feedback by way of the Synod Forum linked to the diocesan Synod website (by Monday 12 April).

Submissions (Following Contemplative Dialogue)

13. In preparation for Session Two the people of the Diocese are invited to consider the Foundation Papers. The purpose is to determine if they provide the basis for an overarching spiritual framework that can guide our life as a faith community. It is not intended to be legislative in nature.

Diocesan Synod Agenda and Proposals

14. As a result of the feedback, the Synod Working Party will amend the Foundation Papers which will then become the **Synod Papers** for Session Two of Synod. These will be sent to all delegates/members of Synod by 4 May.

Upon receipt of these Synod Papers, members of Synod will be asked to consider for each Synod Paper:

Are you satisfied that this paper reflects the direction you believe the Holy Spirit is leading us?

What, if anything, do you think needs to be modified, added or deleted?

15. A member of Synod who wishes to make a further modification to a Synod Paper will indicate this by posting a **written proposal**, using the electronic template provided

(Appendix E), on the Synod website Forum. The proposal must clearly state the proposed modification and reasons for suggesting it.

The deadline for this is 10 May.

All Synod Members will be expected to study these proposals in preparation for the 22 May event.

16. Given the limitations of time (maximum of one hour only for each Synod Foundation Paper) members of Synod who wish to speak at the Synod session (either for or against any proposal) will be limited to two minutes.

If individuals wish to speak to more than one paper, the Facilitators along with the Synod Working Party, will ensure subject to time constraints, that all who wish to speak have the opportunity to do so.

The agenda including proposals will be distributed to members of Synod by 14 May. (See Appendix D)

Further Formation of Synod Members

17. In preparation for the May 22 session, members of Synod will be invited to attend some further formation on diocesan Synods, processes and technology.

May Gathering of Synod Delegates (Multimodal Hubs)

18. While it is preferable that members be physically present, at times they may participate via an electronic means. The decision to use electronic means lies with the bishop.

In planning for Session Two on Saturday 22 May consideration has given to COVID – 19. Ideally it would best to gather in one place but that seems impractical, therefore the plan is to gather in a number of hubs, probably 5-6, linking the hubs together through technology. Approximately 50 people will gather in each hub. Hospitality and administrative support will be provided in each hub.

The Events Planning Focus Group are exploring locations and technology options for conducting a 'hybrid model' of holding the Synod. At this stage the preference is for the hubs to be located in our schools.

Given this hybrid model of holding Session Two of Synod we may be in a position to open this up to **interested people** via the use of technology.

Proposed Agenda for Session Two of Synod

- 19.

Time	Agenda Item	Process/Who
8.15 am	Registration	Gathering
8.45 am	Acknowledgement of Country Prayer Opening of Session Two of Synod	Video Synod Liturgy Team Bishop Bill Facilitators
9.30 am	Identity and Community	Process

10.30 am	Morning Tea	
11.00 am	Worship and Prayer	Process
12.00 pm	Formation and Education	Process
1.00 pm	Lunch	
1.45 pm	Mission and Outreach	Process
2.45 pm	Leadership and Structure	Process
3.45 pm	Break	
4.00 pm	Reflection from Theologians (5 minutes each) Reflection from Canon Lawyer (5 minutes) Reflection from Bishop Bill (5 minutes) Where to from here? Preparation for Session Three Prayer	Theologians Canon Lawyer Bishop Bill Facilitators
5.15 pm	Finish	

Proposed Process for the Day (See Appendix B for further detail)

The following processes are suggested for each of the Five Foundations:

20. Part One – Our Story, Prayer and Reflection (10 minutes)

21. Part Two – Considering the Synod Foundation Paper (45 minutes)

Each of the Synod Foundation Papers will be presented by a member of the Synod Working Party to the Bishop and the members of Synod.

Prior to the Assembly, members of Synod who wish to speak to their proposal will be asked to give notice of this on the form provided. **(Appendix E)**

Each speaker is allowed a maximum of 2 minutes. A warning bell will sound at 90 seconds and another will indicate when a speaker's time has expired.

The Facilitator/s will seek the mind of the Synod Members on each proposal by voting procedures.

Synod Members will decide whether the proposal will be recommended for:

- adoption (*green*)
- rejection (*red*)

22. Part Three – Voting

Having reviewed the Synod Foundation Paper, listened to people during the Lenten reflections, studied the feedback on the Synod forum, and considered advice provided by the theologians, canon lawyer and the Bishop, Synod members will consider and vote on the question:

As disciples of Christ will this Foundation Paper (incorporating minor modifications), lead us to be a Christ-centred Church?

- adoption (*green*)
- rejection (*red*)

23. Adoption – Given the time limitation, support of the voting on the proposals and Foundation Papers will be based on a substantial majority vote. If the vote is divided further discernment will be necessary.

Synod Members are encouraged to consider an adoption vote on the basis of ‘Can I live with this decision even if I would prefer it to be somewhat different’.

24. Reflections, Final Question and Future Direction

Our theologians, canon lawyer and Bishop will be invited to reflect upon the day’s proceedings and outcomes.

Post Session Two of Synod

25. The task of the Synod Working Party, its associated Focus Groups, the Council for Mission and the Council of Priests is to listen deeply during the gathering of the members of Synod at Session Two of Synod, review the information provided by this session and prepare for Session Three.

Time may not permit for Session Three of Synod to legislate how each recommendation will be implemented, nor should it be concerned with legislating such details. The implementation of recommendations will be the responsibility of individuals and of parish/school/agency communities.

26. Session Three of Synod may recommend to the Bishop the need to legislate for an accountability framework for which the various diocesan communities are accountable for how they implement the recommendations by submitting a report (e.g. at least biennially) to the Council for Mission and the Council of Priests.

To assist communities in the process of implementation, the Synod Working Party might commission some groups during the May to November period, to take one of the Foundation Papers and submit a plan for how they would go about implementing its recommendations. This plan might be offered as a guide to other groups.

Session Three of Synod (Action)

27. Depending on the outcomes of the Session Two of Synod, Session Three should clearly set a direction, of common goals and actions for the diocese (**the how**) for the coming years.

The purpose of Session Three of Synod would be to reach consensus on whatever formal proposals may be put to it, which may then become local law. Everyone across the diocese will be held accountable.

28. The outcome may be in the form of a number of directives (Mandate), e.g.
- Re the Foundation Papers
 - that the Five Foundation Papers (as finally accepted) be adopted by the Synod as a framework for our mission of *‘Building the Kingdom of God Together’* in our diocese.
 - that every parish, school, agency and organisation submit a report biennially to the Council for Mission and the Council of Priests on how they have implemented the spirit and recommendations of the Foundation Papers.
 - Re the Governance Focus Group’s work
 - whatever decision comes from it
 - Re the Diocesan Directory Focus Group

- review and abrogation of previous documents and the acceptance of the new directory.

29. It may be that Session Three of Synod provides only a diocesan direction and not a direction for our parishes. If that is the case, then a fourth session of Synod may need to be held:

- To consider the implications for parish life
- To celebrate the outcomes of our Synodal journey
- To review the outcomes of the Plenary Council and their possible impact on the pastoral planning of our diocese