

Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba
DIOCESAN ACTION PLAN

A Working Document to Realise the Vision of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan

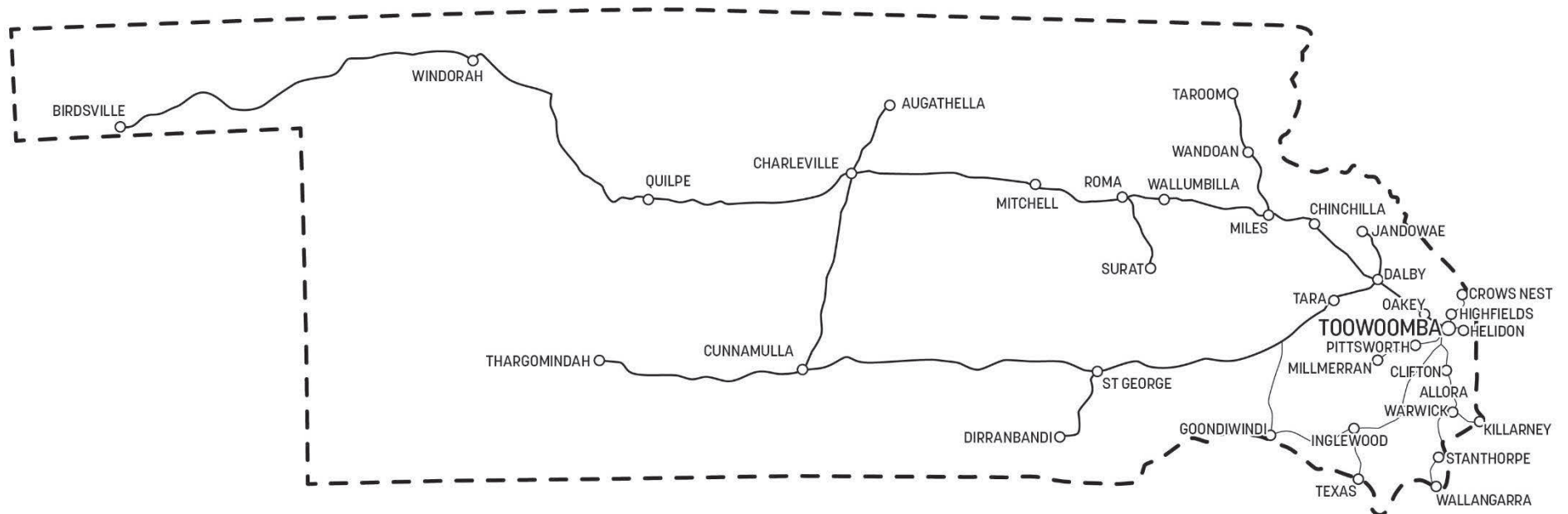
June 2018 – June 2023

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The Catholic Diocese of Toowoomba:

***Nurturing welcoming communities from the Range to the Borders
where God's mercy, love and the joy of the Gospel
are experienced, celebrated and shared.***



Introduction: Diocesan Action Plan

At the heart of the faith in our Diocese is our local Parish. It is in our Parish that we live out our lives within the context of our relationship with Christ and his church. Our Diocesan Pastoral Plan has been developed to give direction to our Diocese during the next five years. It is the result of a facilitated listening process throughout the Diocese during the past year and reflects the voice of the people of this Diocese.

This Diocesan Action Plan is designed to provide action strategies for the Pastoral Plan and complements the work of the Diocesan Pastoral Council in providing support and direction to Parishes in enactment of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan 2018-2023. Both Diocese and Parish have an active role in implementing the Diocesan Pastoral Plan and the subsequent Action Plan.

The Key Pastoral Directions outlined in the Plan are a response to an expressed need for greater attention to be focussed on some areas rather than others. In essence it identifies the Diocesan priorities but does not preclude Parishes from working in other areas of relevance to their own context.

The Diocesan Action Plan is intended to ensure that our Diocesan Pastoral Plan will become more than mere words on paper and therefore includes actions for the Diocese, Deaneries and Parishes. There will be need at the diocesan level to address matters that require long-range planning and cannot be done overnight. Deaneries are asked to make it a priority to facilitate the implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan, ensuring that this item has a regular place on deanery meeting agendas.

Parishes will over time revisit their own pastoral plans and review these in the light of the Diocesan Key Pastoral Directions. Each Parish is responsible for deciding what actions are appropriate in their situation in response to our Diocesan Pastoral Plan since what is appropriate for one Parish may not be relevant in another.

The Diocesan Action Plan looks at each of the Key Pastoral Directions and breaks open opportunities to improve or action each Direction by outlining goals and strategies for achieving these goals, as well as indicating where actions will originate. Parishes, Deaneries and Diocesan Agencies are encouraged to read this document and discern how they can engage with the suggested strategies. It is anticipated that over the coming years, communities will prioritise their approach and address strategies as appropriate, determining what can be built on and what is an achievable timeframe. The list of strategies within the Action Plan is not exhaustive; however, it does offer communities a starting point to review present activities and to meet the challenges and opportunities in the years to come. In considering the way forward, a usual approach may be to ask:

- What is our current approach or status?
- What could it be?
- What will we do?
- Who, when and how will any changes be made?

Family Engagement

The family is the ‘domestic Church’ because it is the primary place where both children and adults learn to intimately love other persons and encounter the forgiving healing power of Christ. Recognising our families as the cornerstone of Church and society, we will support and strengthen them.

We will:

- ❖ Cultivate a welcoming and supportive Parish community
- ❖ Develop faith opportunities for families and other groups
- ❖ Resource and encourage families to celebrate the sacred in their daily life experiences
- ❖ Work collaboratively with schools to embrace diversity and offer pastoral care and support.
- ❖ Offer opportunities for families to participate in service and liturgical ministries.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Cultivate a supportive and welcoming Parish community	Seek honest feedback to critically assess the effectiveness of current parish welcoming practice and encourage parish conversations around what a welcoming community looks like, sounds like and feels like	Parish Pastoral Council	Awareness that welcome is not one person’s task, or one ministry group, but is every Baptised person’s mission
	Engage the whole community in formation for welcome, moving away from attitudes of ownership to those of gratefulness and openness	Diocese/Parish	No “them” and “us” approach; rather Church introduced to the ONE group of which all are part
	Appoint a Parish welcome coordinator (volunteer) and ensure trained welcomers for each mass with a presence at church entrances and exits to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet all Parishioners on arrival • Provide material related to the liturgy • Offer information on Parish life and events • Gather details of identifiable newcomers 	Parish	People are greeted personally and welcomed to the service; new people are noticed and form a link to community
	Assemble and periodically update Parish ‘welcome’ packs providing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of mass times and regular devotions • Parish prayer cards and other Catholic prayers • Ministry group and pastoral care contacts • Parish registration cards to encourage belonging • Communication cards to accept expressions of interest in ministry or Parish groups 	Parish	Welcome packs available at key events including Parish Masses, sacramental programs, RCIA, youth gatherings, weddings, funerals baptisms etc.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Cultivate a supportive and welcoming Parish community <i>Continued</i>	Parish welcome material available online via Parish website, social media page with periodic review and maintenance by nominated Parishioner	Parish	Current online material available
	Provide welcome initiatives after Mass to ensure newcomers experience welcome and hospitality (tea/coffee)	Parish	Regular recognition and welcome of newcomers
	Mass and devotional times to be prominent in Parish bulletins, on noticeboards and signs; Parish groups, liturgies and significant events clearly advertised	Parish	Clarity of Church events; Awareness of parish life
	With appropriate permissions, develop strategies to recognise significant milestones and anniversaries among members	Parish	A sense of connectedness, belonging and communion in Parish life
	Offer a grief or bereavement group for those that have experienced loss (through death, divorce etc.) and facilitate connection with Catholic Care services	Parish	Support for bereaved families and individuals
	Promote on a regular basis the stories of faith, discipleship and witness of the community focussing on the way in which the Gospel has changed and directed lives	Parish	Integration of faith and life; faith support
	Articulate a clear Catholic Identity and distinctiveness for the Diocese	Diocese	Parishes and agencies can readily communicate the diocesan identity
Develop faith opportunities for families and other groups	Host social events to bring families together (e.g. Mothers' & Fathers' Day breakfasts; Shrove Tuesday pancake mornings; Easter egg painting events; Parish Christmas carols, ecumenical and interfaith gatherings etc.)	Parish	Parish celebrates secular and religious events together
	Collect information about family retreats and programs and disseminate across Parishes	Diocese	Access to spiritual or theological development
	Review opening hours of the Parish church taking into account a desire for prayer during the day and early evening	Parish	Space conducive to prayer made available

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Develop faith opportunities for families and other groups <i>Continued</i>	Collect and promote information about pilgrimages and faith based events within and beyond the Diocese that may be of interest to families and disseminate across Parishes	Diocese	Opportunities to develop spirituality with wider church
	Encourage and work towards a diversity of Parish pastoral council members and leaders	Parish	Parish pastoral council membership reflect the parish diversity
	Promote ecumenical and interfaith prayer experiences	Diocese/Parish	Mutual understanding and respectful relationships
Resource and encourage families to celebrate the sacred in daily experiences	Promotion of community events in which Parish families can express their faith within the wider community (e.g. Relay for Life; Clean Up Australia; SVDP Winter Sleep-out, World Day of Prayer)	Diocese	Encouraging a communal faith concerned with the transformation of society
	Assemble or make available resources for families to pray together and to celebrate milestone events in their lives	Diocese/ Parish	Awareness of the sacredness of all of life
	Offer a Parish early years group specifically for Parishioners with children under school age	Parish	Facilitate mutual support and strengthen sense of belonging
	Initiate and coordinate ongoing gatherings and reunion of parents of the newly baptised	Parish	Providing a welcoming and supportive community
Work collaboratively with schools to embrace diversity and offer pastoral care and support	Organise a commissioning ceremony at the start of the school year to bring together key leaders and groups and bless them for their evangelising mission in the year ahead	Parish	Valuing and visible authority given to Parish leaders
	Invite schools to share celebrations, liturgical and otherwise, in order to strengthen a sense of common identity and mission	Parish	Welcoming and partnership with Parish School
	Provide an annual youth retreat promoting leadership and mission	Diocese	Youth have access to age appropriate spiritual development
	Invitation to children in state schools to Masses and sacramental programs to ensure inclusion in Parish life	Parish	Awareness of Parish life and opportunities for inclusion

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Work collaboratively with schools to embrace diversity and offer pastoral care and support <i>Continued</i>	Parish teams to represent the Parish at school orientation and open days to inform new parents of activities, programs and support	Parish	Promote parish identity and parish/school relationship
	Sharing of liturgical resources between Parish and schools	Parish	Sustainable resourcing and a commonality of language and resourcing
	Develop joint Parish/school plans to strengthen relationships which demonstrate a respect for the marginalised and those with disabilities and for the diversity of families, faith and ethnic traditions within our community.	Parish/School	Unity and collaboration in promoting an inclusive community
	Develop possibilities of catechesis of state school children outside school hours	Parish	All parishioners offered welcome and support
Offer opportunity for families to participate in service and liturgical ministries	On a regular basis extend special welcome to families with homilies, liturgical music ministries specifically directed towards family recognition and engagement.	Parish	Develop an understanding that we worship as a community not as individuals
	Make available the readings and other liturgical resources for weekly preparation; provide projected or printed versions of the Order of Mass at Parish liturgies in keeping with diocesan guidelines.	Parish	Promote preparation and encourage better participation in Eucharist
	Roster entire family groups to ministry at Eucharist	Parish	Celebrate family, affirming the call of each to holiness and ministry
	Develop the role of the Diocesan P&F in relationship to Toowoomba Catholic Schools	Diocese	Highlight the role of parents in the faith education of their children
	Involve parents directly in the Sacramental programs	Parish	Parents assume responsibility for educating their children in faith
	Access and utilise existing resources to assist parishioners to discover their particular gifts for ministry. (e.g. <i>Discovering My Gifts for Ministry</i> , Diocese of Wollongong.)	Diocese/Parish	Joy and creativity in sharing one's God-given gifts for the common good.

Spiritual Development

Committing to the spiritual journey deepens the quality of our personal lives but also empowers us to act together for the transformation of our culture and society, according to the vision of Christ.

We will:

- ❖ Establish a Spirituality Centre appropriately resourced to assist Parishes and individuals to:
 - Integrate faith and life experience
 - Nurture a contemplative stance to life
 - Establish spiritual companionship

As the Diocese has expressed the desire for a Spirituality Centre with a rural outreach, the following suggestions are to be taken into account in discerning the way forward:

- *Providing monthly updates via email and or website, resources to be accessed physically or available online to overcome rural and remote costs and limited access*
- *Borrowing from Spirituality Centre (box of resources to tour Parishes or online borrow system set up, flyers, add to Diocesan Update ENews, emailed to Parishioners)*
- *Diocesan spirituality team/personnel to provide input/ online training*
- *Inserts in Parish bulletins (information and formation) re retreat days or PD*
- *Sessions/topics/ articles/online articles/items to borrow or buy (synopsis provided)*
- *Annual calendar provided of Diocesan spirituality events, not all in Toowoomba or larger centres*
- *Rural and remote access to PD and resources*
- *Free Parish spirituality modules (like Lenten Program) for individuals, small groups or whole Parishes provided by diocesan representative or with training*

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Establish a Spirituality Centre appropriately resourced to assist Parishes and individuals	Investigate other Spirituality Centres, particularly in rural dioceses, and come up with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parameters and a vision for a Spirituality Centre with a rural outreach that meets the needs of our Diocese. • draft plan for the gradual development of this vision and a suggested initial programme, base venue for the Spirituality Centre etc. 	Diocese	To establish a flexible Spirituality Centre that meets the varied needs of a rural diocese
	Investigate property and plan financial support	Diocese	To ensure adequate funding and personnel to make the Spirituality Centre viable

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Integrate faith and life experience Nurture a contemplative stance to life	Continue to make reflection days/spiritual enrichment days available to Parishes	Diocese	To make spiritual development as accessible as possible to all parts of the Diocese
	Promote small faith-based groups	Parish	To provide support on the faith journey
	Encourage Parish or Deanery retreat days/reflection days	Deanery/Parish	To deepen an appreciation of the contemplative dimension
	Include spiritual content for people to ponder at home in Parish newsletters/bulletins	Parish	To deepen spiritual awareness
	Identify spiritual needs in the Parish and proactively seek support from the Diocese or elsewhere to address these needs/ Take advantages of opportunities offered	Parish	To be self-empowered, proactive in fostering the spiritual development of Parishioners <u>and</u> To empower Parishioners by providing support on the faith journey and deepening appreciation of the contemplative dimension of life
	Be active in advertising and promoting prayer and faith-sharing groups, retreat and reflection days; spiritual book clubs etc.	Diocese/ Deanery/Parish	To highlight the importance of spiritual development
Establish spiritual companionship	Educate people over a period of time to the value of spiritual companionship by encouraging faith-sharing groups and the possibility of group or individual spiritual direction/companionship	Diocese	To prepare people for the possibility of taking on a future role of spiritual companion
	Provide training in spiritual companionship	Diocese	To provide the Diocese with suitably trained personnel to assist others on their faith journey

Parish Leadership

We commit ourselves to the discernment and development of leadership gifts within the community so that the work of being stewards of the Gospel can continue for generations to come. We are called to work collaboratively in a spirit of communion.

We will:

- ❖ Promote the formation of current and future parish leaders
- ❖ Ensure proper agreements and remuneration for recognised leadership positions
- ❖ Develop governance strategies to assist parishes into the future
- ❖ Provide support to small rural parishes as they deal with possible structural changes.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Promote the formation of current and future leaders	Appoint a group to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate and establish a Diocesan programme for the training of Parish Leaders. Establish content of Courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Theological & Liturgical ➢ Diocesan Regulations & Administration etc • require each Parish to have trained personnel 	Bishop/Diocese/ Parish	To have trained and responsible leaders in each Parish to ensure the Pastoral Plan is implemented
	Actively promote and pray for members to accept the calling to leadership.	Parish	Parish members accepting the call to active leadership
Ensure proper agreements and remuneration for recognised Leadership positions	Establish a Diocesan Agency to set proper agreements and oversee appropriate and consistent remuneration throughout the Diocese commensurate with the level of education achieved	Diocese	That suitable people will undertake appropriate study knowing that adequately remunerated positions will be available to them
Develop governance strategies to assist Parishes into the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what is a viable Parish • Consider and implement provision of administration both Canon and Civil Law to be from a neighbouring larger Parish 	Diocese	To ensure rural Parishes are fulfilling their legal obligations and Parishes can remain viable for longer
	Assist in provision of training, spirituality, liturgy	Diocese/ Parish	To have adequately trained personnel to meet our needs
Provide support to small rural parishes as they deal with possible structural changes	Monitor situations in rural Parishes to ascertain <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viability of Parish • How to serve non-viable • To ensure sacramental help without overtaxing limited numbers of Parishioners and clergy 	DPC/Council of Priests/ Deaneries/ relevant Parishes	To ensure small rural Parishes are realistically provided for and not neglected

Liturgy

We are committed to exploring ways to enhance the quality of worship and prayer so that it is vibrant, meaningful and inclusive into the future.

We will:

- ❖ Train Parish liturgy teams to ensure life-giving liturgies
- ❖ Train and authorise lay people to lead reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals outside of Mass according to Diocesan guidelines
- ❖ Provide strategies for lay people to complement the homily by sharing their faith experience
- ❖ Educate Parishioners in the role of lay-led liturgies in Parish life.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Train Parish liturgy teams to ensure life-giving liturgies	Provide programs to train Parish leaders, liturgy teams and other personnel in liturgical structure and best practice in liturgical ministries	Diocese	Available training in liturgy for parish personnel
	Conduct Parish liturgy training programs regularly	Diocese	Parishes develop awareness of best liturgical practice
	Consult with specific groups (e.g. youth, young adults, newcomers) to identify their needs and desires in the celebration of liturgy	Parish	Full access and engagement for all
	Establish a cross-representative liturgy committee bringing together appropriate Parish members to provide balance and inclusion	Parish	Full access and engagement for all
	Explore and adopt digital technologies to maximise participation	Parish	Full access and participation for all

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Train and authorise lay people to lead reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals outside of Mass	Develop Diocesan guidelines for conduct of lay-led reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals	Diocese	Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines published
	Identify skilled and motivated persons to lead Parish reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals	Parish	Register of 'approved' Parish celebrants
	Encourage the sharing of experiences across Parishes for those involved in reflections, liturgies, baptisms and funerals	Deanery	Sharing practices becomes usual aspect of Deanery meetings
	Commission laity for liturgical ministry	Diocese	Affirmation of lay liturgical involvement
Provide strategies for lay people to complement the homily by sharing their faith experience	Identify and support persons willing and able to provide reflections during liturgy	Parish	Recognition of the importance of meaningful breaking open of the Word
Educate Parishioners in the role of lay-led liturgies in Parish life	Update Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines to accommodate lay-led services	Diocese	Updated Diocesan Liturgical Guidelines
	Identify Parish liturgical needs over the next five years	Parish	Parish leadership plan
	Provide regular resources for the implementation of lay-led liturgies	Diocese	Assistance readily available for liturgy preparation
	Provide forums for Parishes to discuss transition to lay-led liturgies	Diocese	Planning effectively for a changing Church

Creating a Safe and Welcoming Church

We embrace the mission of Jesus to create an inclusive society, one in which everyone is welcomed, respected and able to experience a sense of belonging.

We will:

- ❖ Build relationships through improved communication and collaboration within and amongst Parishes, deaneries and all diocesan agencies
- ❖ Develop a culture of listening and ‘seeing’ people where they are
- ❖ Listen to all with respect, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised
- ❖ Affirm the dignity and ensure the safety of all, mindful of the recommendations of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd (CPSL) and other official bodies.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Build relationships through improved communication and collaboration within and amongst Parishes, deaneries and all diocesan agencies	Update Diocesan and Parish websites for greater functionality	Diocese/Parish	To make it simpler to access information relating to upcoming events, spiritual enrichment opportunities, best practice liturgy, leadership team and Parish council development etc.
	Review current IT infrastructure in parishes with a view to recommending appropriate updates	Diocese	To ensure that more isolated areas in particular have suitable communication capabilities
	Make use of modern technology - Parish priests and pastoral councils to communicate via email, working towards elimination of snail mail	Parish	To speed up dissemination of communication and ensure that pockets of the Diocese are not left uninformed
	Ensure that each Parish and Mass centre has nominated a contact person, other than the Parish priest or priest director, to take responsibility for disseminating information relating to the Diocese or the Parish to Parishioners	Parish	To ensure effective communication

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Build relationships through improved communication and collaboration within and amongst Parishes, deaneries and all diocesan agencies <i>Continued</i>	Inform the diocesan office of changes of contact persons, members of Parish Pastoral Councils etc.	Parish	To ensure information from the Diocese or other Parishes are received by those for whom they are intended
Develop a culture of listening and ‘seeing’ people where they are	Cultivate a church that is welcoming, non-judgmental, and respecting of all people, including people of all faiths and ethnicities, same-sex couples, divorced and single people	Diocese /Parish	To enable people to experience God as mercy and love and to create a sense of belonging
	Make an effort to invite and not just welcome; reach out to those who do not come to church	Parish	To build bridges in reaching out to those who have been alienated or do not feel welcome
	Engage in conversation with others after Mass, greeting visitors, not just regulars	Parish	To help all feel at home and welcomed in the church community
Listen to all with respect, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised	Appoint a group to review our churches according to available practical guidelines (the principle of <i>Universal Design</i>) to assess how welcoming our churches and diocesan centres actually are to those with disabilities, the aged, those who are visually or hearing impaired	Diocese	To explore what inclusion in our churches would look alike (in contrast to exclusion, segregation and integration) and to recognize Equitable Use, Flexibility, Simplicity and Tolerance of Error as key elements of an inclusive community
	Work towards making our church centres truly welcoming and inclusive to those with mobility issues (not only people with disabilities but also aging clergy and Parishioners) by installation of handrails and other aids to enable people to contribute to the Parish liturgy through reading the Word etc.	Parish	To address barriers of inclusion into church, enabling all to participate as fully as possible in church life

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Listen to all with respect, particularly the vulnerable and marginalised <i>Continued</i>	Raise awareness of how the visual and hearing impaired do not experience a welcoming church at Sunday liturgy and seek to address this situation	Parish	To create awareness of situations which isolate or exclude people as a necessary step towards inclusion
Affirm the dignity and ensure the safety of all, mindful of the recommendations of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd (CPSL) and other official bodies	Ensure all Parishioners are familiar and compliant with diocesan policies regarding Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults	Diocese/Parish	To create a culture which discourages abuse of any kind
	Provide alternative ways (online and hard copy) for those involved in church ministry (including volunteers) to become familiar with safeguarding policy	Diocese	To cater for the varied circumstances of our widespread and largely rural diocese

Social Justice

We embrace inclusion and endeavour to serve people of all races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, genders, ages, socioeconomics, physical challenges, sexual orientations, backgrounds or life experiences.

Through the Diocesan Social Justice Commission, we will:

- ❖ Establish social justice groups at the parish level to provide education and develop response to local and global issues
- ❖ Recognise the vulnerable, the poor and the marginalised and the excluded in our midst
- ❖ Involve youth in parishes and schools in social justice outreach
- ❖ Investigate support relationships between eastern and western parishes.

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Establish Social Justice Groups at the Parish level to provide education and develop response to local and global issues	Diocesan Social Justice Commission to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance to Parishes to establish local groups. • Education including listening to those most affected by injustice locally, nationally and internationally. • The tools of social analysis through Catholic Social Teaching 	Diocesan Social Justice Commission /Parish Pastoral Councils	To ensure all Parishioners have the opportunity and knowledge to work for social justice at all levels
Recognise the vulnerable, the poor, the marginalised and the excluded in our midst	Parishes work to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that those without a voice including Creation, Australia’s First Peoples and Refugees and Migrants are a part of local pastoral plan • Build networks with other people and organisations of good will advocating on behalf of those without a voice • Ensure that respectful relationships are built and that actions move beyond a charity model to one of advocacy and solidarity 	Parishes/ Social Justice Groups/ Diocesan Social Justice Commission	So that the wider community can see that the Toowoomba Diocese always strives to be a Poor Church for the Poor (Pope Francis)

Goal	Strategy	Who	Outcome
Involve youth in Parishes and schools in social justice outreach	At the invitation of schools (and parishes where applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the riches of Catholic Social Teaching exposing the youth of our Diocese to the needs of the poor (including Mother Earth) in our local, national and global communities • Facilitate immersion experiences where young people gain a deeper understanding of the concerns of the poor in our World 	Parish Pastoral Councils/ Parish Social Justice Groups/ Diocesan Social Justice Commission	To enable our youth to see social justice as a central part of their faith
Investigate support relationships between eastern and western Parishes	Parishes in the Eastern part of the Diocese adopt a preferential option for the poor by building respectful relationships with Western parishes	Diocesan Pastoral Council	To ensure the needs of those parishes suffering hardship are seen as the needs of the entire Diocese

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