



Goulburn Valley Deanery Forum

Round 2 Report

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Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst
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Item 2: What Was Shared, Heard and Acted Upon from Deanery Forum 1

Stand Outs from Deanery Forum 1

1. **Deanery Forums are highly valued**
Participants see the Deanery Forum as beneficial, particularly for fostering collaboration, shared learning, and a stronger focus on mission across parishes.
2. **Mission is the primary focus**
There is strong appreciation for the emphasis on mission, both at a diocesan level and within individual parishes. Participants recognise that structures and institutions exist to support, rather than overshadow, the Church's mission.
3. **Collaboration between parishes is encouraged**
Suggestions included greater sharing between parishes through joint committee meetings and rotating meeting locations to strengthen relationships and exchange ideas.
4. **Key diocesan documents need simplification**
The Strategic Mission Plan (SMP), Parish Visitation Program (PVP), and Synthesis Report are seen as difficult to understand. Participants expressed a need for clearer, simpler language and more practical guidance to support implementation.
5. **Volunteer compliance requirements are creating significant challenges**
Administrative and compliance obligations are perceived as excessive, particularly for ageing volunteer groups with limited technical skills. Some participants reported resistance or even verbal abuse when discussing safeguarding and compliance requirements with prospective volunteers, highlighting the need for clearer communication about their purpose.
6. **The overall process is logical when understood**
Participants acknowledged that the various initiatives connect well and make sense as part of a coherent process once they are explained.
7. **Deaneries have improved understanding of synodality**
Many participants were previously unfamiliar with the deanery model and initially perceived it as distant or corporate-style management from the Chancery. Through participation, they have come to recognise it as a genuinely synodal approach that supports collaboration and shared discernment.

Overall Insight

The feedback demonstrates strong support for the diocesan emphasis on mission, collaboration, and synodality, particularly through the Deanery Forum model. However, there is a clear need to reduce complexity by simplifying key strategic documents and easing the administrative burden on volunteers. Better communication about the purpose of compliance and safeguarding requirements, together with more accessible resources, would help parishes engage more confidently and effectively in the diocesan mission.

Comments on the Tablemat Description of Deanery Forum 1

1. **Networking and relationship-building are highly valued**
Participants appreciate the opportunity to connect with Chancery staff and people from other parishes, recognising that these relationships make collaboration and parish development easier.

2. Communication back to parish leadership needs improvement

Participants noted that information and discussions from the Deanery Forums are not consistently communicated back to Parish Pastoral Councils (PPCs), limiting the wider benefit of the forums.

3. Participants value both direction and tangible outcomes

The forums provide a clear sense of diocesan direction and reinforce that meaningful work is taking place. At the same time, participants would like to see more concrete outcomes resulting from the discussions.

4. The collaborative process is becoming clearer

Participants understand that each stage builds on the previous one in a flexible, collaborative way rather than following a rigid process. They also appreciate the broader context the forums provide and see the deaneries as connected to the wider mission of the Church rather than operating in isolation.

5. More support is needed to communicate broader Church developments

Participants expressed interest in understanding significant developments beyond the Diocese, such as messages and priorities from Pope Leo, and how these connect with local initiatives.

6. Forum scheduling should be reviewed

There was a strong request to consider holding Deanery Forums outside standard office hours or on weekends to enable greater participation, particularly from those who work during the day. Participants noted that this feedback has been raised multiple times and would like it acted upon.

7. Targeted invitations for parish leaders are needed

Participants requested greater assistance from the Chancery to ensure Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and Parish Finance Council (PFC) members receive direct invitations to Deanery Forums. This would reduce the burden on parish secretaries and improve participation by key parish leaders.

8. Strong appreciation for the Deanery Forum model

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the forums, with participants valuing the opportunity to share ideas and concerns in a well-facilitated environment. They also appreciated that discussions consistently align with the Strategic Mission Plan (SMP) goals and recognised that the forums will become more effective and natural as the process continues.

Overall Insight

Participants continue to express strong support for the Deanery Forums as a collaborative, mission-focused initiative that strengthens relationships, provides strategic direction, and aligns parish life with the Strategic Mission Plan. The key opportunities for improvement relate to ensuring information flows back to parish leadership, increasing participation through more accessible scheduling and targeted invitations, and providing clearer connections between diocesan initiatives and the wider mission of the Church.

Items 3–5: Table conversation about updates from Chancery on a range of matters raised in Deanery Forum 1

- 1. Youth ministry remains a significant challenge**
Participants noted the lack of young people engaging in Tatura, with many attending Kyabram instead. There is also a need for people who can champion and implement new initiatives at the parish level.
- 2. Strategic Focus Initiative (SFI) resources are highly valued**
Participants described the SFI resources as exciting and practical, with particular appreciation for the Chancery staff contact sheet, GST information, and the introduction of a fundraising resource.
- 3. Practical resources from the Chancery are making a positive impact**
The Chancery contact sheet was consistently identified as one of the most useful resources, helping parishes better understand where to seek assistance. Planning resources, fundraising support, and parish unpacking sessions were all viewed as valuable and relevant.
- 4. Parishes recognise the importance of sharing information locally**
Participants acknowledged that while the Chancery provides helpful resources, parishes have an important responsibility to communicate this information effectively within their own communities.
- 5. Strong engagement with diocesan events and learning opportunities**
Participants expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming August event and appreciated that recordings would be made available for those unable to attend. The high level of disappointment from those who could not attend reflects the perceived value of these opportunities.
- 6. Parish unpacking sessions are highly effective**
Those who attended the parish unpacking sessions found them extremely beneficial, describing them as practical and helpful in understanding and applying diocesan initiatives.
- 7. Questions remain around parish financial oversight**
Some participants raised questions about why parishes are not financially audited, indicating an interest in greater understanding of diocesan financial governance and accountability processes.

Overall Insight

Participants expressed strong appreciation for the practical resources, support, and formation opportunities being provided by the Chancery. Resources such as the Chancery contact sheet, fundraising guidance, and parish unpacking sessions are clearly meeting parish needs and building confidence. At the same time, challenges remain around youth engagement, local implementation of new initiatives, and understanding aspects of diocesan governance, suggesting opportunities for continued support and communication.

Item 6: What's Working Exchange

1. **Strong collaboration between parishes and schools**

Participants highlighted the positive collaboration between parish priests, parishioners, and school principals across the parish area. They also emphasised the importance of ensuring all Catholic schools are engaged with parish initiatives and diocesan priorities.

2. **Communication and awareness need strengthening**

There was strong appreciation for the Chancery contact list as a way of putting faces to names and improving accessibility. However, participants identified significant communication gaps, including inconsistent dissemination of Strategic Focus Initiative (SFI) information to schools and parishes, limited awareness of parish ministries, and a broader sense of frustration with communication throughout the Diocese.

3. **Volunteer capacity is limiting parish mission**

A shortage of committed volunteers continues to be a major obstacle to parish life. Participants expressed concern that many initiatives are difficult to sustain without sufficient volunteer support and leadership.

4. **RCIA is recognised as a vital pathway for discipleship and leadership**

The RCIA presentation was highly valued, with participants highlighting its role in fostering lifelong discipleship, developing future parish leaders, and creating opportunities to connect with families through the Sacraments of Initiation. There was strong support for establishing adult faith groups for RCIA graduates, reintroducing diocesan RCIA forums, and strengthening parish RCIA teams.

5. **Faith formation and evangelisation require renewed focus**

Participants stressed the importance of engaging families in parish life beyond sacramental preparation, creating welcoming communities, and helping people encounter Christ through authentic relationships. Examples such as parish feast days, mentoring young people, and welcoming non-Catholic visitors were seen as positive models for evangelisation.

6. **Youth ministry remains a key priority**

Participants agreed that young people require intentional support and opportunities to engage in parish life. Mentoring was identified as particularly effective, and there was a call to ensure schools receive information about diocesan youth events and initiatives.

7. **Practical resources and diocesan support are highly valued**

Participants appreciated diocesan support in areas such as finance and requested continued practical assistance. Suggestions included developing a glossary of diocesan terms and acronyms (e.g. OMPL, PVP, SMP), providing additional sacramental formation resources, and clarifying parish insurance arrangements.

8. **Greater transparency and clarity are requested**

Participants sought clearer communication regarding safeguarding requirements, including altar server tracking, and expressed interest in understanding how the parish levy is used. These discussions reflected a broader desire for transparency and practical guidance.

9. **Fundraising remains an ongoing challenge**

Participants observed that parish fundraising opportunities have declined significantly. Traditional activities were remembered positively, and there was interest in practical support to help parishes develop sustainable fundraising initiatives.

10. **Mission requires collaboration, creativity, and perseverance**

Participants recognised that everyone shares responsibility for the Church's mission. Despite ongoing challenges, they encouraged a prayerful, collaborative, and creative approach to finding solutions and remaining committed to parish renewal.

Overall Insight

The discussion reflected a strong desire to build vibrant, mission-focused parish communities through collaboration, discipleship, and practical support. Participants value the resources and direction provided by the Diocese but identified volunteer shortages, communication gaps, and the need for clearer information as ongoing challenges. RCIA, youth ministry, faith formation, and stronger partnerships between parishes, schools, and the Chancery emerged as key opportunities to strengthen evangelisation and sustain parish life into the future.

Item 7: Priority Discernment - What Matters Most in the Deanery Now?

1. Leadership and clergy capacity are the highest priorities

Across almost every table, participants identified clergy capacity and the need to prepare for fewer resident priests as a major concern. There was strong support for developing shared leadership models, increasing lay leadership, and exploring sustainable parish models that enable mission to continue despite changing clergy availability.

2. Young people and middle-aged adults are significantly underrepresented

The absence of teenagers, young adults (20s), and adults aged 35–60 consistently ranked among the highest concerns. Participants recognised these demographics as critical to the future vitality of parish communities and highlighted the need for intentional strategies to engage and retain them.

3. Strengthening the connection between parish and school is a key opportunity

Building stronger partnerships between parishes and Catholic schools emerged as one of the most frequently identified priorities. Participants see schools as essential partners in evangelisation, family engagement, and strengthening parish life.

4. Volunteer sustainability is an increasing challenge

Participants expressed concern about the long-term sustainability of parish volunteers. Recruiting, supporting, and retaining volunteers was recognised as essential for maintaining parish ministries and responding to future needs.

5. Intercultural formation is essential for thriving parish communities

There was strong support for mutual intercultural formation between clergy and parishioners. Participants emphasised that formation should foster shared understanding and collaboration rather than expecting adaptation from only one group.

6. Greater connection across diverse parish communities is needed

Participants identified opportunities to strengthen relationships between different cultural groups within parishes. Building inclusive communities where diverse cultures are known, valued, and actively connected was seen as an important priority.

7. Shared mission across the Deanery is valued

Several groups expressed support for identifying one or two common mission priorities across the Deanery. A shared focus was seen as a way to strengthen collaboration, align efforts, and make better use of available resources.

8. Social and faith-building opportunities strengthen parish life

Participants recognised the importance of joint social gatherings and shared faith formation opportunities in building relationships, fostering belonging, and strengthening community across parishes.

9. Financial and administrative sustainability require continued support

Financial sustainability was identified as an ongoing concern, alongside requests for greater Chancery assistance with parish administration and compliance requirements. Participants value practical support that enables parish leaders to focus more effectively on mission.

Overall Insight

The rankings reveal a strong awareness that the future of parish life depends on sustainable leadership, stronger partnerships, and intentional evangelisation. Participants consistently prioritised preparing for changing models of ministry, engaging younger and middle-aged generations, strengthening parish–school relationships, and fostering intercultural communities. Alongside these mission-focused priorities, there is a clear desire for practical support in volunteer development, financial sustainability, and parish administration, reflecting a commitment to building resilient and mission-oriented parish communities across the Deanery.

Item 8: Complex Issues Presentations

- **Strong interest in developing sustainable youth ministry models** Participants were encouraged by the proposed youth model and appreciated the growing involvement of clergy in local schools. They also sought greater clarity around how small faith groups would operate, including group size, mentor selection, training, and the intended outcomes of accompaniment.
- **Clergy capacity and parish models remain significant concerns:** Participants expressed concern that priests are spread too thin across multiple parishes, limiting their ability to provide pastoral care and celebrate Masses. There was interest in exploring shared clergy coverage and sustainable parish leadership models to better meet local needs.
- **Parish sustainability extends beyond clergy:** Financial pressures, ageing infrastructure, and the ongoing burden of property maintenance were identified as major challenges. Combined with declining attendance and limited volunteer capacity, participants questioned how parishes will remain viable into the future.
- **Ongoing faith formation and leadership development are essential:** Participants highlighted the need for continued formation of parish leaders and active parishioners, emphasising that leadership should be grounded in a deeper personal encounter with Christ rather than simply fulfilling parish roles.
- **Greater support for newly arrived clergy is needed:** While acknowledging the importance of clergy adapting to Australian culture, participants felt there was insufficient discussion about how parish communities can actively support overseas-born priests as they adjust to local culture and ministry.
- **Prayer remains central to parish life:** Participants recognised that parishioners can continue to strengthen their faith and community through prayer, Eucharistic adoration, and other forms of spiritual gathering, regardless of clergy availability.
- **Questions were raised about future clergy recruitment:** Participants expressed interest in understanding the Diocese's approach to recruiting priests from overseas, including why recruitment is not occurring more broadly, such as from Europe.
- **Youth engagement is the greatest pastoral challenge:** There was considerable frustration about the absence of young people in parish life, particularly in rural communities. Participants expressed concern about the long-term future of

parishes if younger generations are not successfully engaged and retained, identifying youth ministry as an urgent priority.

Overall Insight

Participants expressed a strong desire to develop sustainable models of parish life that address the realities of limited clergy, ageing congregations, and declining youth participation. While they welcomed emerging initiatives in youth ministry and clergy engagement with schools, they also sought clearer guidance, stronger formation for parish leaders, and greater support for overseas clergy. The discussion reflected a shared commitment to deepening faith, strengthening community, and finding practical, mission-focused solutions for the future of rural parish life.

Item 9: Progressing Action around Priorities: Self-selected groups gathering around a displayed Priority Issue

Summary

The consultation demonstrates that participants are primarily focused on **building sustainable parish communities for the future**. The strongest priority is the development of **new parish leadership models** that respond to declining clergy numbers by embracing shared leadership, greater lay participation, and renewed discipleship.

The second strongest theme is the **urgent need to reconnect with teenagers and young adults**, with participants recognising that the long-term future of parish life depends upon intentional youth engagement supported by diocesan resources, mentoring, and formation.

Participants also identified the importance of **supporting volunteers, strengthening collaboration between parishes**, and **building intercultural understanding** between clergy and parishioners. Across all five priorities, a consistent message emerged: the Church's future depends upon shared responsibility, stronger relationships, ongoing formation, and a willingness to embrace new models of mission while remaining grounded in prayer and discernment.

Parish Models and Leadership: Shared Leadership, Lay Leadership and Preparation for Fewer Resident Priests

Summary: This was the most comprehensive area of discussion. Participants acknowledged the growing pressure on priests and recognised that the Church must prepare for fewer resident clergy by embracing shared leadership and greater lay responsibility. There was strong support for formation, education, renewed liturgy, surveying parishioners about future needs, and creating opportunities for lay leadership. Participants repeatedly emphasised that all the baptised share responsibility for the Church's mission and called for leadership models that free priests to focus more on pastoral ministry.

Minimal or No Presence of Teenagers and Young Adults (20s)

Summary: Participants viewed youth engagement as essential to the future of the Church. They recognised that parish-school connections have weakened over time and expressed concern that young people no longer see parish life as relevant. There was a strong request for diocesan support through practical youth ministry resources, mentor

training, evidence-based approaches, regional youth events, and collaboration between neighbouring parishes to build sustainable youth communities.

Volunteer Sustainability

Summary: Participants described volunteers as the backbone of parish life but expressed concern that excessive compliance requirements, uncertainty, and lack of confidence discourage new volunteers. They recommended reducing barriers where possible, providing mentoring and formation, assisting with volunteer screening processes, and creating diocesan-wide volunteer training opportunities that build both practical skills and community.

Common Mission Focus and Joint Social Activities

Summary: Participants highlighted the importance of strengthening relationships both within and between parishes. Shared meals, multicultural celebrations, educational evenings, joint parish initiatives, faith formation, and collaborative ministry were all seen as ways of building stronger communities. There was also recognition that cultural differences, generational attitudes, and parish isolation can hinder collaboration and require intentional effort to overcome.

Intercultural Formation for Communication Between Clergy and Parishioners

Summary: Participants strongly affirmed the value of overseas-born clergy while recognising the need for greater mutual understanding between priests and parishioners. Rather than expecting adaptation from one side alone, participants called for two-way communication, collaboration, cultural awareness, clearer explanations of decisions, social opportunities to build relationships, and practical support such as English language assistance where required.

Overall Topic Insight

The Church is preparing for a different future. Participants recognise that fewer resident priests require new parish leadership models centred on shared responsibility and empowered lay leadership.

Youth ministry is the greatest long-term pastoral priority. Participants consistently called for practical diocesan support, mentoring, and collaborative approaches to reconnect younger generations with parish life.

Formation is the common solution across every priority. Whether developing leaders, supporting volunteers, strengthening intercultural relationships, or building youth ministry, participants repeatedly identified education and ongoing formation as essential.

Relationships are as important as structures. Building welcoming communities, strengthening parish-to-parish collaboration, improving intercultural understanding, and investing in social connection were viewed as critical for sustaining mission.

Participants are seeking practical action. Throughout the consultation there was a clear desire to move beyond discussion by implementing concrete initiatives, providing resources, investing in leadership development, and creating opportunities for greater collaboration across the Diocese.

Item 10: Follow-Through and Feedback

Overall Reflections

The feedback indicates that participants continue to value the Deanery Forums as a meaningful opportunity for dialogue, collaboration, and shared discernment. There was clear appreciation for the way participant feedback from the first forum shaped the second, reinforcing that contributions are being heard and acted upon. The smaller group discussions, skilled facilitation, and opportunities to hear from other parishes were particularly well received. At the same time, participants expressed a desire for more practical outcomes, balanced discussions across all priority areas, and stronger attention to emerging generations, leadership development, and faith formation.

What Worked Well

- Collaborative sharing between parishes: Participants highly valued hearing the experiences, challenges, and successes of other parishes, gaining broader perspectives on parish life across the Deanery.
- Participant feedback was acted upon: There was strong appreciation that feedback from Forum 1 clearly influenced the content and structure of Forum 2, demonstrating that participants were listened to and their input valued.
- High-quality preparation and resources: The booklets and supporting materials were recognised as being well prepared and contributing positively to the day's discussions.
- Greater understanding of parish ministry: Participants found it beneficial to reflect on their own parish within the wider context of the Deanery, helping them see shared opportunities and challenges.
- Smaller discussion groups encouraged deeper conversation: Reduced group sizes enabled more participants to contribute and allowed conversations to move beyond surface-level discussion.
- Effective facilitation: Table facilitators were praised for encouraging participation and fostering discussions in the spirit of synodality.

Key Concerns and Challenges

- Language and terminology: Some participants felt the language used remained overly familiar or institutional, leading to concern that genuine change may be difficult to achieve.
- Need for more practical support: While discussions were valuable, participants would like more practical guidance, examples, and tools to help address the issues identified.
- Competing discussion topics: Where multiple priorities were discussed together, dominant topics—particularly financial matters—sometimes limited meaningful discussion of equally important issues such as youth ministry.
- Time management within discussions: Some groups found it difficult to allocate sufficient time to each topic, reducing opportunities for balanced participation.

Suggestions for Future Forums

- Provide greater focus on young people: Include dedicated discussions that explore the hopes, expectations, and needs of young people to better inform parish ministry.
- Share parish success stories: Invite participants to present initiatives and programs that have been successfully implemented in their own parishes, encouraging practical learning between communities.
- Continue formation opportunities: Include sessions focused on faith formation, multiculturalism, and intercultural understanding as ongoing priorities.
- Strengthen facilitation and time management: Encourage facilitators to provide regular time reminders, helping groups work systematically through each discussion topic.
- Create more opportunities for prayer and reflection: Participants suggested beginning each table discussion with prayer and incorporating moments of silence throughout the day to strengthen the synodal process.
- Continue exploring leadership and synodality: Further discussion around parish leadership models and the connection between synodality and the Deanery Forums was strongly supported.
- Retain the clustered priority model: Participants felt that grouping priorities into a smaller number of significant themes worked well and should continue in future forums.

Overall Insight

The feedback reflects growing confidence in the Deanery Forum process and demonstrates that participants increasingly see the forums as a genuine opportunity for listening, collaboration, and shared discernment. Participants value being heard and appreciate seeing their previous feedback influence future forums. Looking ahead, there is a clear desire to complement rich discussion with practical implementation, stronger facilitation, deeper formation, and intentional focus on leadership, youth, and parish renewal. The overall sentiment suggests that the forums are building momentum and trust, with participants eager to continue the journey in ways that are increasingly practical, prayerful, and mission focused.

Part 2: Table Notes

Item 2: What Was Shared, Heard and Acted Upon

Is there anything standing out to me (good idea, really like that, something missing, implications...) from *Deanery Forums Round 1: Various Categories of Needs/Issues Raised?*

Great value to the Deanery Forum. Focus on Mission (wide and narrow-my parish) is appreciated. Institution is there to serve the mission.

Sharing between parishes. Joint committee meetings, alternating the parish location.

The SMP Goals, PVP, Synthesis report need to be simplified, they don't understand what they are. Many items are too complicated to understand and execute. The compliance tasks needed for volunteers are exhausting, too much stuff with no people to do it and the folks trying are older with minimal technical skills. Parish people can be verbally abused when they raise the topic of requirements to potential volunteers. People find it hard to understand the reason for compliance documents, especially for safeguarding.

All things connect and makes sense; it is a logical process. The group had never heard of deaneries before, it has always felt like micro-management from afar, like from a corporate office (Chancery). This is a synodal process.

The Tablemat: Diagram depicting the nature and dynamic of the Deanery Forum?

Opportunity to catch up and know staff from other parishes. The information is not going back to the parish councils. It makes sense and is helpful. We also want concrete outcomes. It shows direction/dynamic – reinforces that things are happening. Priests feel it is hard to develop when you don't know the people, everyone needs to work together. All need to come together and work together. Sharing with other parishes. Each step informs the next step, not a rigid process, much more concrete. Give context of what's happening more broadly, not insulated. Multi-dimensional. Scaffolding on meeting one, chancery-deanery-forum. Now can filter through important information, what Pope Leo is saying. Consider another schedule for Deanery Forums, outside office hours on weekdays so that more people can attend. This has been raised several times. We need help from the Chancery to ensure that PPC/PFC members are specifically invited to Forums. For someone working in the parish it is challenging to attend and then explain everything again to them. Positive comments about Forums, genuinely appreciative that the Chancery is providing and facilitating space for parishes to share ideas and concerns. Pleased that all topics fall into an SMP goal so we are always consistent.

Items 3, 4, 5: Chancery matters raised in Deanery Forum 1

There is no youth in Tatura, they all go to Kyabram. We still need someone to implement new ideas.

SFI: Exciting. Helpful handout on Chancery staff contacts and also the one on GST. Fundraising Officer: appreciated and needed.

Reinforces what Chancery is doing. Very useful and helpful, particularly the Chancery staff contact sheet. They realise that parishes need to get the information "out there". The parish has PACEM already. The fundraising resource is very necessary and will be fantastic. Planning resources are excellent, and the unpacking sessions are great too.

Very appreciative of the information provided, found it very useful. Especially the Chancery contact sheet. They are excited about the August event; 2 people will be unable to attend and were very disappointed. They asked about recordings and were informed that recordings would be made available.

Three of four table participants attended the Parish unpacking session and loved it, found it very helpful. Some wondered why parishes are not financially audited?

Agenda Item 6: What's working exchange: A substantial initiative from Kyabram Parish on a challenging issue was presented. The idea of Deanery Forum 2 was to find an initiative that shows promise and share it as an example.

All the school principals within the parish coverage area come together to work together, with the priest and parishioners. Interest in putting face to names, re: Chancery Contact list. There are limited opportunities for fundraising, we used to do cake stalls that were very successful. There is no fundraising currently undertaken in parishes.

Check on schools and make sure all schools know about the SFI, especially the youth events, contact teachers and leaders. St Anne's does not have any information yet. Check with parishes to ensure they have disseminated the information about SFI.

Does every parish have its own insurance policy? A glossary of terms would be very helpful to distribute to all. (OMPL, PVP, etc. etc.)

The PPC members from Kyabram indicated that the adult faith group spoke of during the presentation is not listed in the parish bulletin and the PPC knows nothing about it. (It was suggested that Mary Zobec could be invited to speak to the PPC about it)

Questions that arise for our parish from the "What's Working Exchange": Does this have relevance for our Parish? Does it stimulate thinking about what we might do in this or another area? Is there a follow-up discussion we can have with the presenting parish? Can our parish leverage this? Is there momentum for a Deanery project here?

We do not have sufficient volunteers and are unlikely to do anything because of this. Need committed volunteers.

Uplifting story from RCIA presenter. Discipleship: Living faith each day should be the fruit. Catechumens often take up leadership roles after becoming Catholic. Opportunity to connect with families. When children present for sacraments of initiation.

Important to engage with Mass, never see families and kids. CathEd is part of the parish and commit and engage socially. People always go to socialize but do not want to visit the church. Filipinos: Use their language, be aware they have cultural issues and take this into account. Clergy is so busy, no time to socialize, unable to connect as much as parishioners wish. Youth: Need something or else they will fail, mentoring works. Finance: Very beneficial to have the support of the diocese.

Create an adult faith group out of your RCIA "graduates". A new direction is needed. St Brendan's has a fest day (combined with school), Sunday after Mass. All are included; it is well advertised. Youth area in the parish is working hard and getting things moving. Need clarity on altar server tracking (safeguarding). Levy: It is important to know where the money goes.

There should be an RCIA Forum within the diocese. This used to happen.

What do we have that attracts others to Christ? Pope Leo has brought the church into daily life. Nagambie had some youth visit but they were too passionate, they put bread on their tongue.

Nagambie has great volunteer participation. A lot of non-Catholic visitors to Mass. Be welcoming to attract. Mooropna has the stability of the same priest on weekends.

You must have an RCIA team. Share programs about steps in faith (sacraments), there used to be a program run by the diocese prior to COVID. More resources from the Chancery. Sacraments do not seem to be a priority any longer.

It is necessary for all of us to understand that we all need each other in this mission and problems are always present, but we should prayerfully be creative in looking for solutions by always trying and not giving up.

There was a lot of conversation about a lack of communication. There was a great deal of frustration expressed.

Agenda Item 7: Priority Discernment, What Matters Most in the Deanery Now?

Table 1

Ranking	Topic
1	Clergy capacity//multi-parish models
1	Parish models and leadership: shared leadership models, lay leadership & preparation for fewer resident priests
2	Key missing demographics 35-60
2	Connection between parish & school
2	Minimal/no presence of teenagers and young people (20s)
3	Common mission focus or two across the Deanery
3	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way

Table 2

RANKING	TOPIC
1	Parish models and leadership: shared leadership models, lay leadership & preparation for fewer resident priests
2	Minimal/no presence of teenagers and young adults (20s)
3	Volunteer sustainability
4	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
5	Key missing demographic 35-60
6	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way
7	Connection with and between diverse cultures within parish communities
8	Common mission focus or two across the Deanery
9	Connection between parish and school
10	Joint social and faith gatherings
11	Financial sustainability
12	Chancery assistance with Parish Administration compliance matters

Table 3

RANKING	TOPIC
1	Minimal/no presence of teenagers and young adults (20s)
2	Key missing demographic 35-60
3	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way
4	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
5	Connection between parish and school

Table 4

1	Parish models and leadership, shared leadership models, lay leadership & preparation for fewer resident priests
2	Connection between parish and school
3	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way
4	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
5	Key Mission demographic 35-60

Table 5

1a	Minimal/no presence of teenagers and young adults (20s)
1b	Key missing demographic 35-60
1c	Connection between parish & school
2a	Connection with and between diverse cultures within parish communities
2b	Joint social and faith gatherings
3	Volunteer sustainability
4	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners-mutual, not one way
5	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
6	Financial sustainability
7	Parish models and leadership: shared leadership models, lay leadership preparation for fewer resident priests
8	Chancery assistance with Parish Administration Compliance Matters
9	Common mission focus or two across the Deanery

Table 6

1	Connection between parish and school
1	Key Missing demographic 35-60
1	Minimal/no Presence of teenagers and young adults (20s)
2	Volunteer sustainability
3	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
3	Parish models and leadership, shared leadership models, lay leadership & preparation for fewer resident priests
4	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way

Table 7

Ranking	Topic
1	Clergy capacity/multi-parish models
1	Parish models and leadership, shared leadership models, lay leadership & preparation for fewer resident priests
1	Intercultural formation for clergy and parishioners – mutual, not one way
2	Connection with and between diverse cultures within parish communities
2	Connection between parish and school
2	Minimal/no presence of teenagers and young adults (20s)

2	Key missing demographic 35-60
2	Joint social and faith gatherings
3	Chancery assistance with Parish Administration Compliance Matters
4	Financial stability
4	Volunteer sustainability
4	Common mission focus or two across the Deanery

Agenda Item 8: Presentations on more complex issues

Youth model was very interesting, working through this model. Need priest representation, Fr Ruel is working with the schools. Fr Addin is starting to work with the schools as well.

Youth document: What do small groups look like? How many people in the group? Age? What age for the mentor? Is there training for the mentor? What are the end goals of accompaniment?

Can clergy share coverage between parishes and allow more time for Masses? Clergy are spread too thin. Buildings are deteriorating and the parishes are financially strapped, in addition to cleaning and maintenance. There are so many missing people, no young people, what happens when the older people are gone. Parish Models, leadership, ongoing formation for those that are actively involved to experience Christ in our lives. Can we get deeper?

There is a lot of discussing of culture and priests needing to adapt to Aussie culture but not a lot of discussion on how to support newly arrived clergy.

Parishioners can always meet for prayer and adoration.

There were questions about overseas recruiting of priests and a question why we are not recruiting in Europe.

The parish feels they are rural and that young people don't want to come to the parish. There was so much frustration expressed over young people and how to attract and sustain youth in the parish.

Item 9: Progressing Action around Priorities: Self-selected groups gathering around a displayed Priority Issue.

Parish Models and Leadership: Shared Leadership Models, Lay Leadership and preparation for fewer resident priests

1. Why did I select this Priority?

Huge burdens and expectations of "we want a priest". Trusting Lay Leadership. There is a large change in demographic and a burden on priests. We knew this was going to happen, focus on "shared leadership" Bp Joe. Different gifts with shared responsibilities. Married priests? Ordained women? Liturgy of the Word with communion. Exhausted people and those that will not commit.

2. What is this group identifying as key issues within this Priority?

The administrative burden on priests. Pastoral leadership of parishioners in lacking. Ownership, participation. Build a sense of community. Why have we lost so many people? We need to ask this question of ourselves. Create spaces for worship of a different kind. What do young people want?

3. What do we want? What is the outcome we desire? Do we believe this is the same as what the Holy Spirit desires? IS this the “fruit that will last” that Jesus speaks of (Jn 15:16)?

Active Christians are needed. Communion, Participation, Mission. The church will survive this crisis; are we open to hearing what the spirit is calling us to do? Less Masses to free the priest up.

4. How do we go about this? What do we need to know?

What do young people want? Talk less, do more. Do something! Baptised are co-responsible, priesthood of all, disciples. Formation and education. Which leadership model works? Ask parishioners what they want.

5. What do we need to do? What are the next steps?

Pray, be love. Listen to the spirit. “Beyond the Parish” by Fr James Fallon. Survey parishioners: What do you want? Opportunities to lead. Liturgy needs renewal. Funding for people to study theology. Attend SFI in August.

6. Do we have the momentum for a Priority-Focused Working Group? (Enter Convenor and participant information if yes)

Yes, Patrick Kempton, Dorothy Farratn, Gabrielle Cameron, Dev Cortese, Fr Uday, Fr Andrew, Fran Smullen.

Common Mission Focus/Joint Social Activities

1. Why did I select this Priority?

Interparish connections rather than deanery. Important: parish lunches. Clergy need to have time after Mass to interact with parishioners. We need well-formed lay leaders. Cultural shyness, reading etc. Conflicting mindsets based on age.

2. What is this group identifying as key issues within this Priority?

Empowerment: baptismal promises. Cultural, personal contact. Lack of welcoming. Need for an intercultural/multicultural” formation. (Patrick Fox). Masses at the same time in neighbouring churches splits attendance. Old fashioned mindset maintains the status quo. The dynamics between parishes are poor.

3. What do we want? What is the outcome we desire? Do we believe this is the same as what the Holy Spirit desires? IS this the “fruit that will last” that Jesus speaks of (Jn 15:16)?

We want to be able to manage personalities. We want to be able to overcome generational cultural differences.

4. How do we go about this? What do we need to know?

Have educational evenings with different presenters, the diocese could bring this to parishes.

5. What do we need to do? What are the next steps?

Engage with the Chancery through the PPC.

6. Who or what people/resources can we connect with? Perhaps, start with Chancery...

Share priests across parishes. Connect with other parishes – partnered parishes for multicultural Masses/functions. Shared luncheons. Deepen your own prayer life, mentor others, spiritual direction. Shared responsibilities and a sense of brother/sisterhood between parishes. Faith – gospel discussions. Liturgy of the Hours, more singing and prayer. Invitations. Investing in faith formation of parishioners, ongoing, focuses on young people.

Intercultural Formation for Communication between Clergy and Parishioners

1. Why did I select this Priority?

We have so many different cultures. It is important to have overseas priests.

2. What is this group identifying as key issues within this Priority?

To relate to each other. Being flexible is important. We need to know each other's approaches so that we can work together.

3. What do we want? What is the outcome we desire? Do we believe this is the same as what the Holy Spirit desires? IS this the "fruit that will last" that Jesus speaks of (Jn 15:16)?

Two-way communication. Everyone needs to have explanations as to why a decision is made. More collaboration, the priest is assigned to all, not just their own culture.

4. How do we go about this? What do we need to know?

Communication and collaboration.

5. What do we need to do? What are the next steps?

Organise social activity to welcome priest. Provide help with the English language.

6. Who or what people/resources can we connect with? Perhaps, start with Chancery...

7. Do we have the momentum for a Priority-Focused Working Group? (Enter Convenor and participant information if yes)

Volunteer Sustainability

1. Why did I select this Priority?

Too much red tape to get volunteers. Don't wait for them to come to you. Keep volunteers active, they are the backbone of the parish.

2. What is this group identifying as key issues within this Priority?

Lack of commitment, they are not reliable.

3. What do we want? What is the outcome we desire? Do we believe this is the same as what the Holy Spirit desires? IS this the "fruit that will last" that Jesus speaks of (Jn 15:16)?

Reduce the barriers, people are unsure if they are qualified. New volunteers are worried about stepping on the toes of the long-time volunteers.

4. How do we go about this? What do we need to know?

5. What do we need to do? What are the next steps?

Training, mentoring, encouragement.

6. Who or what people/resources can we connect with? Perhaps, start with Chancery...

Performing or helping with online volunteer checks. General Catholic training before the current volunteer's train newcomers. A gathering of all volunteers across the diocese for training on social interaction. Training on Children's Masses.

7. Do we have the momentum for a Priority-Focused Working Group? (Enter Convenor and participant information if yes)

Minimal/No Presence of teenagers and young adults (20's)

1. Why did I select this Priority?

To have direct involvement with young people. The connection was lost, probably because the priests are not in charge of school anymore. We need the young people for the church to keep on existing and surviving.

2. What is this group identifying as key issues within this Priority?

3. What do we want? What is the outcome we desire? Do we believe this is the same as what the Holy Spirit desires? IS this the "fruit that will last" that Jesus speaks of (Jn 15:16)?

4. How do we go about this? What do we need to know?

Training and technical guide for mentorship and youth ministry.

5. What do we need to do? What are the next steps?

I hope the diocese could help us with resources and scientific approaches for young people.

How to bring them in and keep them, this is not just a parish priest responsibility). Extend invitation to young people across the parishes of Greater Shepparton. Schedule youth nights or events to different parishes with the area. Continue to develop plans and initiatives for our young people.

6. Who or what people/resources can we connect with? Perhaps, start with Chancery...

Item 10: What happens next? Follow-through (Detailed comments from participants)

- **My thoughts...**
- **My notes...**

My feedback on the Content, Structure, Rhythm of the Day...

- **What I appreciated/worked well for me...**

The valuable input from all parishes, the discussions in sharing of that input.

The amount of work that went into preparing the booklets/handouts and the fact that Forum1 had influenced the content of Forum 2, we were listened to in Forum 1 and issues were addressed.

I got a better look at my pastoral ministry in relation with the other parishes.

A smaller group in the arvo discussion that enabled us to have more inputs and go deeper.

Small group conversations, the table facilitator of each conversation, this ought to follow conversations in the spirit.

- **What didn't work well for me or frustrated me...**

I feel this language is more of the same, by more of the same "oldies", so I do not feel confident about change or for that matter improvement.

Perhaps some practical help in addressing issues raised would have been beneficial.

In some group discussions there were 2 like topics (examples: Diocesan levy/Youth ministry) and some of the people at the table got very particular about financial topics so there was very little time to talk about youth.

I thought the day worked well.

- **In the next Deanery Forum I would do more of...**

Discuss young people to learn more of their wishes.

Hearing from participants about ideas/programs they had implemented in their parishes.

It is good to have a faith formation or multiculturalism or interculturality.

The facilitator at each table to keep reminding us how much time we still have and how many topics are left to discuss to keep things organised. It would have also given more time to prayer- perhaps at each table -at the beginning of each discussion/some silence.

Leadership models, making connections between synodality and the deanery forums.

The four individual priorities focus in the group were distilled into four areas= each of these cluster areas were significant and could remain.

- **In the next Deanery Forum I would do less of...**

Conclusion and Next Steps

This report forms part of the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst Deanery Forum Round 2 consultation series and is intended to support ongoing discernment, planning, formation and pastoral action across the Diocese.