

Deanery Forums Round 2 Executive Synthesis Report



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

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Purpose

To provide the Bishop, Chancery, clergy, parish leaders, and diocesan ministries with a consolidated analysis of the key messages from all Round 2 Deanery Forum Reports.

Executive Summary

Despite significant geographic and demographic differences between deaneries, participants consistently identified the same core pastoral, leadership, demographic, and organisational challenges. The strongest themes concerned youth engagement, leadership succession, volunteer sustainability, parish-school partnerships, intercultural inclusion, clergy capacity, and the need for practical diocesan support.

These themes suggest that many current challenges are systemic across the Diocese rather than isolated within individual parishes. Participants demonstrated a desire to move beyond identifying issues and towards coordinated action, formation, and implementation.

Diocesan-Wide Features

1. Youth and Missing Generations

The most frequently identified concern across all deaneries was the absence of:

- Teenagers
- Young adults
- Young families
- Adults aged 35-60

Participants consistently viewed this demographic challenge as the greatest long-term threat to parish sustainability.

2. Parish-School Partnerships

Schools were consistently identified as the Diocese's strongest connection with younger families.

Participants viewed parish-school relationships as the most practical pathway for:

- Evangelisation
- Family engagement
- Youth formation
- Future leadership development

3. Volunteer Sustainability

All deaneries reported concern regarding:

- Ageing volunteers
- Volunteer fatigue
- Difficulty recruiting new volunteers
- Compliance burdens

Volunteer sustainability is increasingly viewed as a significant risk to future parish viability.

4. Leadership and Clergy Capacity

Participants demonstrated growing awareness that future parish life will require:

- Shared leadership
- Greater lay ownership
- New governance models
- Formation of leaders
- Adaptation to fewer resident priests

5. Intercultural Formation

All deaneries expressed strong support for:

- Mutual cultural understanding
- Two-way communication
- Inclusion of culturally diverse communities
- Better support for overseas-born clergy

6. Administration and Support

Participants consistently expressed a desire to:

- Reduce administrative burden
- Simplify compliance requirements
- Increase practical diocesan support
- Access resources more easily

Priority Concerns across the Deaneries

1. Youth and Young Family Engagement.
2. Leadership Formation and Development.
3. Sustainable Parish Models.
4. Volunteer Recruitment and Succession Planning.
5. Parish-School Partnerships.
6. Intercultural Formation and Inclusion.
7. Administrative Simplification and Parish Support.
8. Stronger Communication Across the Diocese.

Overall Synthesis Conclusion

The strongest message emerging from all three deaneries is that parishes share a common set of challenges and opportunities.

Participants are not asking for more consultation alone; they are seeking practical implementation, leadership formation, resource support, and coordinated action.

While concerns regarding demographics, clergy capacity, volunteers, and parish sustainability remain significant, the overall tone across all three forums was hopeful, collaborative, and mission focused.

Participants consistently expressed confidence that renewal is possible when supported by strong leadership, shared responsibility, and a commitment to ongoing formation and collaboration.