

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

2024

Year in Review

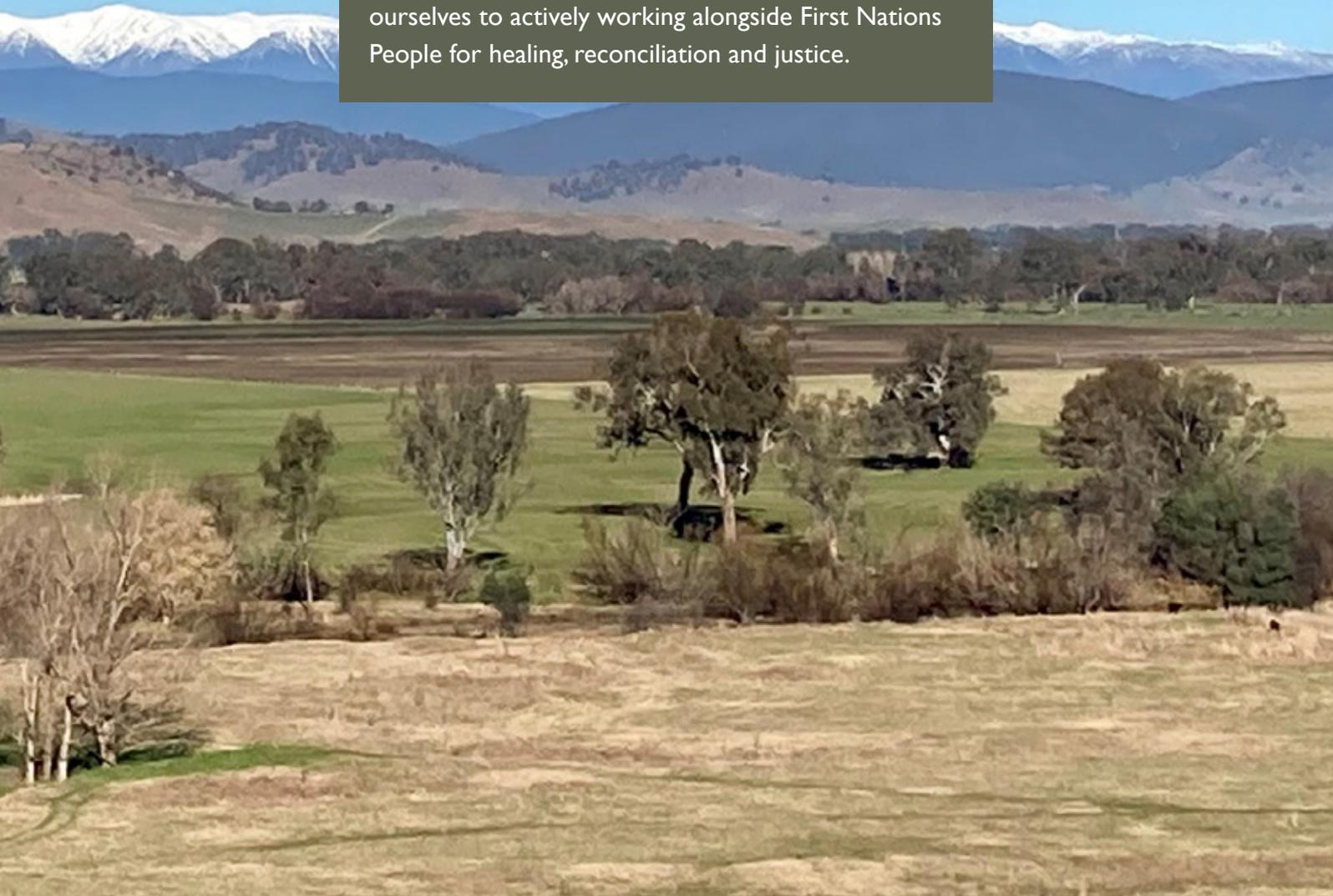




Acknowledgement of Country

The Diocese of Sandhurst recognises the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we live, serve and worship. We acknowledge the people of the Northeastern regions of our Diocese, Djilmathang, Minjambuta, Duduroa and Waywurru. We acknowledge the people of the Southern regions of our Diocese, the Dja Dja Wurrung and the Taungering. We acknowledge the people of the Northern regions of our Diocese, the Yorta Yorta and Bangerang. We acknowledge the people of the Western regions of our Diocese, the Baraparapa peoples.

We respectfully honour and acknowledge their ongoing custodianship and their connections to the land, waters and animals. We pay our respects to their culture, their Elders, past, present and emerging, for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of their peoples. We express our gratitude in the sharing of this land, our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing and commit ourselves to actively working alongside First Nations People for healing, reconciliation and justice.





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NAGAMBIE PARISHIONERS APRIL 1899

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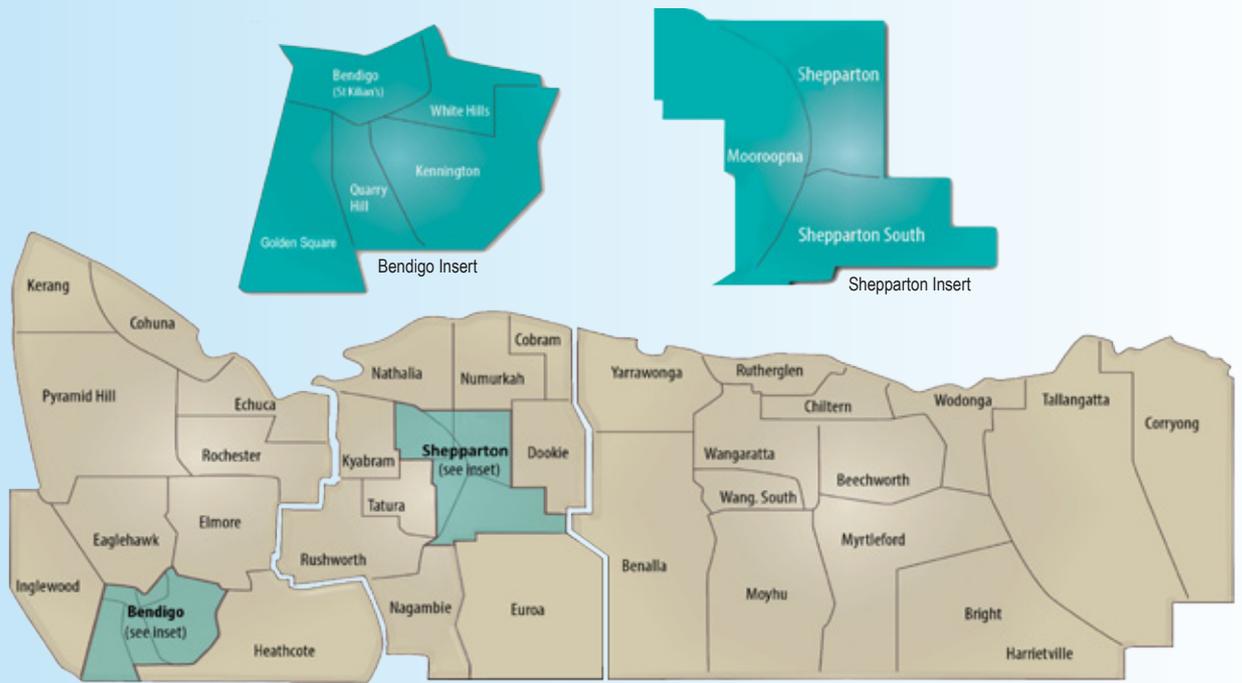
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ON THE COVER

Marguerita Goggin, St Joseph's Quarry Hill parishioner and Fr Henry Onyirioha at the Mass of the Holy Oils and 150th celebration of the establishment of the Sandhurst Diocese.



The Diocese of Sandhurst was established in 1874. It represents the Catholic Church in a region in Victoria bounded on the north and east by the Murray River, extending from Kerang to Corryong and as far inland as Euroa and Bright, covering 45,196 square kilometres.

A diocese is simply a community of Christ's faithful – it represents a portion of the people of God in a particular area, which is entrusted to a bishop. In the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, Bishop Shane Mackinlay is the pastoral leader of more than 84,000 Catholics. He is assisted by priests who minister in 38 parishes within the Diocese. The parishes are grouped into three Deaneries, the Western, Goulburn Valley and North Eastern.

Our Diocese's vision is **'that every person's heart be inflamed by the love of God'**. We welcome all who would like to join our communities or be guided by the principles and teachings of Christ.

Diocese of Sandhurst

409,994 Total Population

84,607 Catholics in region

48 Clergy

9 Religious Congregations

34 Religious

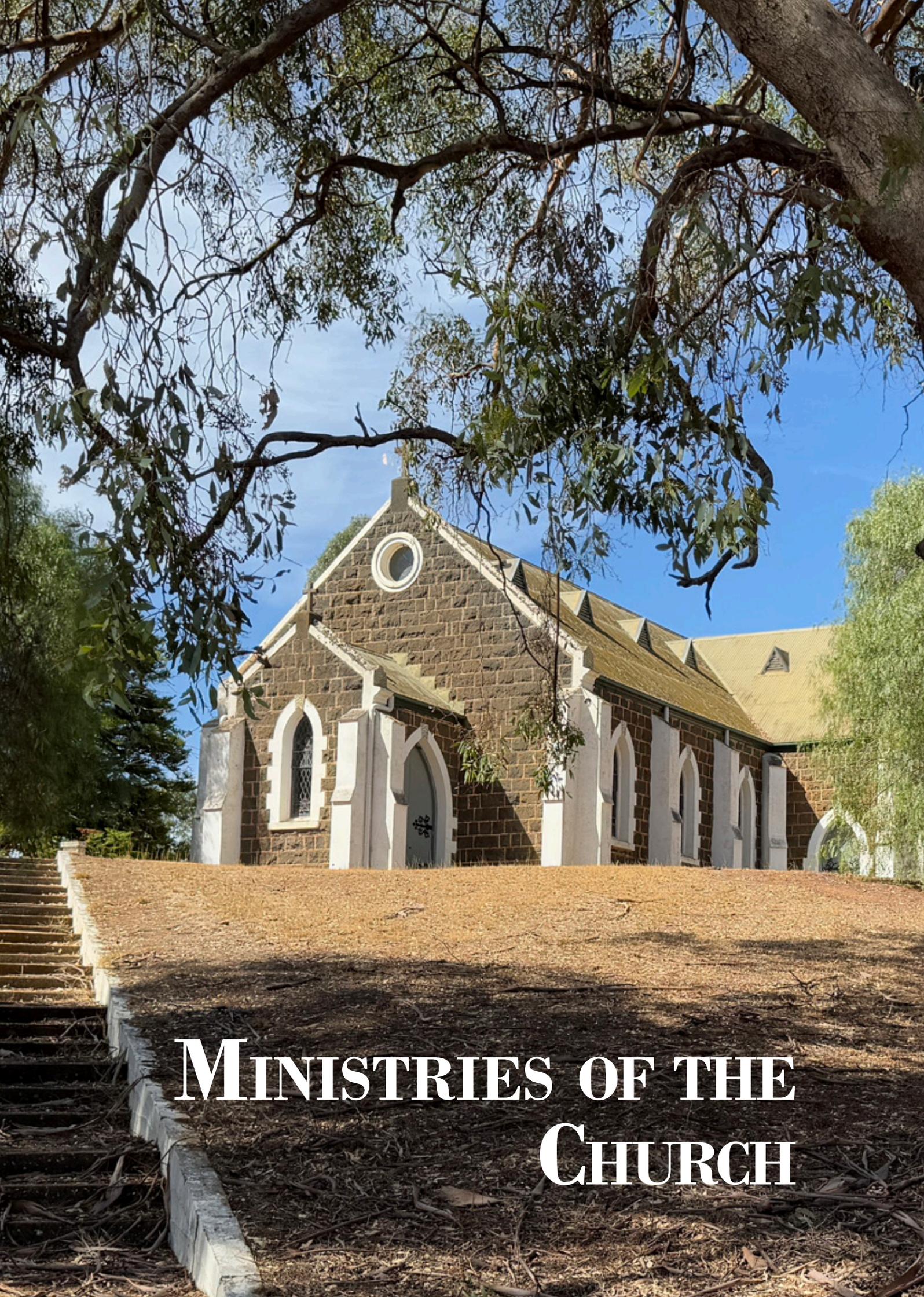
38 Parishes

56 Catholic Schools

19,751 Students in Catholic Schools

1 Catholic Hospital

6 Catholic Aged Care Facilities



MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Our Organisation

- Bishop's Office
- Caritas Australia
- Catholic Charismatic Renewal
- Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd
- Catholic Mission
- CatholicCare Victoria
- Clergy Life and Ministry
- Communications
- Council of Priests
- Diocesan Archives
- Diocesan Consultors
- Diocesan Development Fund
- Diocesan Finance Council
- Diocesan Social Justice Committee
- Diocesan Vocations Ministry
- Mission and Pastoral Life
- Priests Retirement Foundation
- RCIA Forum
- Roman Catholic Trusts Corporation for the Diocese of Sandhurst
- Safeguarding
- Sandhurst Clergy Health and Wellbeing
- Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council
- Sandhurst Publications
- Sandhurst Youth Ministry



We are committed to the
NATIONAL CATHOLIC
SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS



From

BISHOP SHANE MACKINLAY

“2024 has been a milestone year in the life of our Diocese: 150 years ago, on 3 March 1874, the Diocese of Sandhurst was established.”

In 1874, the Diocese of Melbourne, which had been established in 1848, was elevated to an Archdiocese, with Ballarat and Sandhurst established as its suffragan dioceses. These changes occurred largely because of the huge population growth in Victoria's interior, following the goldrushes of the 1850s.

The transformation over the 150 years since Bishop Martin Crane became the first Bishop of Sandhurst is extraordinary. What began as five missions – Bendigo, Beechworth, Wangaratta, Heathcote and Echuca – ministered to by seven priests, has now grown to thirty eight parishes served by around thirty-five priests in full-time ministry, with fifty-six Catholic schools, three early learning centres, and a range of Catholic health, aged care and other services.

We are blessed by the ministry of our priests, both those appointed to parishes and those who continue their service after retiring from full-time parish ministry. A significant number of these priests have come to us from overseas. Having visited the families of our priests from India last year, this year I visited the Philippines for the first time and met the families and religious communities of our Filipino clergy: Monsignor Cris Manongas and Fathers Junjun Amaya, Dean Bongat, Ruel Desamparado, Novelito Lim, Junray Rayna, Rene Ramirez, Jinjo Solis, DJ Suguitan and Nathan Verallo. Experiencing the warm and generous hospitality of their families and communities renewed my sense of gratitude to these priests and to their families, who

so generously support their sons and brothers ministering far away in Australia.

This year has seen a number of changes in our clergy. Our oldest priest, Monsignor Frank Hickey, died peacefully in May at the age of 97, after 73 years of faithful ministry as a priest – the longest serving priest in the history of the Diocese. We also welcomed four new priests to our Diocese. In March, Fr Henry Onyirioha joined us from Nigeria and was appointed Assistant Priest in the parish of Kennington, returning after an initial period of ministry in Yarrawonga in 2022. In August, we welcomed Fr Addin Doe RCJ as Assistant Priest of Mooroopna, who becomes the third member of the Rogationist community in the Diocese. Fr Arun Korlakanti SHS came to us from India and is working with the Wangaratta Ministry Team in the northeast. Finally, in October, we welcomed back Fr Boniface Kamulegeya from Uganda, following his earlier ministry in Rutherglen and Chiltern.

In June, Fathers Junjun Amaya and Junray Rayna, having completed their seminary studies here and served in the Diocese since their ordinations, chose to make an ongoing commitment to ministry in Australia. They were originally ordained as priests of the Archdiocese of Cebu in the Philippines, and each felt called to make a permanent commitment to the Diocese of Sandhurst, due to their sense of fulfilment, contentment and connection to the people of this Diocese. I celebrated their formal welcome in moving

ceremonies in their parishes and was delighted to see the joy that was so obviously felt by all who were there.

This year, the Diocese has welcomed two young men as seminarians: Jhunel Mendez from Cebu City in the Philippines and Ryerson de Lai from Mooroopna in Victoria. Both of them come to formation after long periods of prayer and discernment. I know that you join me in praying for their development, both academically and spiritually, as they learn more about the priesthood and open themselves to where God might be calling them.

The Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council, made up of parishioners and priests from our three deaneries, met throughout 2024 and 2023 and have prayerfully formulated practical strategies and actions to address the four strategic directions identified at the Diocesan Assembly in 2023. I have now promulgated these ten strategic mission and pastoral goals to guide, encourage and inform our missionary and pastoral initiatives and activities at the Chancery, in parishes and schools, and other movements and entities throughout the Diocese for the next four years.

In July of this year, I commenced a new program of pastoral visitation to parishes, beginning with Eaglehawk, Inglewood-Marong, Wangaratta, Wangaratta South and Moyhu. This renewed approach to visitation assists communities to engage in a reflection on all aspects of their parish life, with my visit giving an opportunity to discuss this and set future goals with the community. I was able to meet with parishioners in both formal and informal settings and hear their concerns, hopes and aspirations for our Church while attending and presiding at parish liturgies, or visiting schools and health services. I was moved by the dedication of the People of God in Sandhurst who are deeply committed to their parish communities and long to share this gospel experience with others. Some of our communities are facing difficult decisions about the continued use of small churches, and ways in which parishes can collaborate more effectively with one another. I look forward to visiting three more parish groupings in 2025 and plan to complete the visitation of all parishes in the Diocese over the next four years.

A major focus of my year has been to discuss and explain the fruits of the first session of the Synod for a Synodal Church that I attended in October 2023. I met with a wide range of groups in seminars and meetings across several states and I was very encouraged by the interest and engagement shown by so many for this significant process in our Church. In October, I returned to Rome for the second and final session of the Synod. Being a member of the Synod was a great privilege, as we were asked to discern together on what God is asking of our Church today, to respond to the contemporary world in all its complexities. I was able to dialogue with others from around the world on what were often very challenging and difficult issues. At the Synod, I was elected as the Oceania representative on the Commission for the Final Document, which was responsible for overseeing the drafting of the Synod's concluding document. This set

out conclusions arising from the discussions that have taken place over the four years of the synodal process. It contains important proposals on decision making within the Church, the importance of greater welcome and participation, especially for and by women, the collaborative exercise of responsibility,

processes for enhanced accountability, and a commitment to formation and mission. I believe the work of the Synod will bear much fruit as our Church moves forward, inspired by the Holy Spirit, with a greater ability to listen to each other and work together to build up the kingdom of God.

In closing, I extend my gratitude to all who contribute to the life of our Diocese. It is thanks to your involvement that we have so much to give thanks for in 2024. As we look back on the first 150 years of our Diocese, I am confident that the commitment and faith of our communities will continue to be a strong foundation for the Diocese's growth over the next 150 years.

Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay DD
Bishop of Sandhurst





From

MICK CHALKLEY

Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council

“Each member of the Council was encouraged and challenged by the vision and task of being and becoming a Church on the journey together: the people of God proclaiming and living communion, participation and mission.”

In this Jubilee year for Sandhurst, the Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) gathered in Shepparton for meetings in February, April, July and November. Our work plan included: a focus on the strategic directions which had arisen from the preparation and consultation meetings and the Diocesan Assembly conducted in 2022-2023; ongoing listening and learning about the structures and financial situation of the Diocese; and providing advice regarding the development of programs, events and the exercise of various diocesan ministries including a proposed partnership for Sandhurst Youth Ministry.

The Council decided at its February meeting to forgo the development of a detailed Strategic and Pastoral Plan, refocusing its energies on proposing a set of broader priorities and goals. This decision was significant as it reflected the fact that the Council is continuing to mature in its self-understanding of its purpose: a body that listens, discerns and acts on behalf of the whole Diocese in service of the Church on mission. By mid-year the members, with Bishop Shane, had agreed on ten Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals, grouped under three strategic directions: Gospel mission and pastoral outreach, belonging and sense of community and, life-giving and empowering formation.

The Goals were promulgated by Bishop Shane in a special edition of the Sandpiper e-News, on 22 November. The

Goals provide direction for the activities of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Life Office, parishes, schools and other diocesan entities and movements for the next four years. The Council’s task will be to monitor, review and evaluate progress towards the Goals.

Ms Gabby Downie chaired the February, April and July meetings of the Council, which included expertly guiding us through the various processes that led to the development of the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals. In June Gabby announced that she was stepping aside from the position of Chair and stepping down from the Council. I was appointed to the role by Bishop Shane on 20 July following a process of prayerful discernment by the members of the Council. I am grateful to Gabby for her strong and thoughtful leadership of the Council as its inaugural Chair. She has laid strong foundations for the Council to exercise co-responsibility for leadership of the Church on mission in our Diocese in a synodal key.

The casual vacancy created by Gabby’s decision to step down from the Council was filled in October by Mrs Libby Dowling (Yarrowonga). Both Libby and Ms Kate Fogarty, Executive Director Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd were commissioned as members of the Council by Bishop Shane during the celebration of the Eucharist on Saturday 23 November in Shepparton.

The Council's formation agenda for the year has been largely taken up with reflection on resources and documentation from the XVIth Ordinary Synod for a Synodal Church. At the February meeting Bishop Shane presented the Council with an 'up close and personal' insight into the first General Assembly held in Rome in October 2023. Bishop Shane shared his experience and broke open the Synthesis Report — A Synodal Church in Mission. Each member of the Council was encouraged and challenged by the vision and task of being and becoming a Church on the journey together: the people of God proclaiming and living communion, participation and mission. And, at the November meeting of the Council, having just returned from the second General Assembly (October 2024) Bishop Shane provided the members of the Council with insights into the Final Document of the Synod. Bishop Shane highlighted the significance of the fact that Pope Francis had decided not to promulgate a customary post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, asking all the faithful to accept the Final Document as the part of the ordinary teaching Magisterium of the Successor of Peter. This decision by the Holy Father was not only a break with tradition but also an endorsement of the listening, dialogue and discernment of the delegates and the consultative processes of the Synod over three years.

“a body that listens, discerns and acts on behalf of the whole Diocese in service of the Church on mission.”

Three key points of the Final Document stand out for me: that baptism is the sacrament of membership of the people of God; that each member of the baptised is called to ongoing conversion; and that all the baptised have the responsibility to get on with the work of renewal for communion, participation and mission at every level of the Church. On behalf of the Council, I ask for your continued prayerful support as we strive to be true to this calling. Let us pray with Pope Francis: “[Mary] Mother of the Church ... teach us to be a people of disciples and missionaries walking together, to be a synodal Church” (XVIth Ordinary Synod for a Synodal Church, Final Document n.155).

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank Bishop Shane for his leadership and all members of the Council for their valued and dedicated service in 2024. Thanks also goes to our dedicated officers, Leslie Cooper and Dr Chris Cotter for their tireless administrative and organisational support during and between meetings.

Mick Chalkley
Chair
Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council

Members of the

SANDHURST MISSION AND PASTORAL COUNCIL

Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay, Bishop of Sandhurst
Rev. Joe Taylor VG
Ms Kate Fogarty, Bishop's Appointment
Mr Jean-Marie Mupenda, Bishop's Appointment
Rev. Stephen Bolling, Western Deanery
Mr Mick Chalkley, Western Deanery
Mrs Christine Sebire, Western Deanery
Mr Miggy Podosky, Western Deanery

Rev. Vijay Bandanadam ALCP/OSS, Northeast Deanery
Mrs Libby Dowling, Northeast Deanery
Mr Stephen McKinley, Northeast Deanery
Mr Michael McLinden, Northeast Deanery
Rev. Jackson Saunders, Goulburn Valley Deanery
Mrs Angela Finn, Goulburn Valley Deanery
Mrs Jobelle Collier, Goulburn Valley Deanery
Mrs Alana Brennan, Goulburn Valley Deanery

OFFICERS: Dr Chris Cotter, Executive Officer
Mrs Leslie Cooper, Minute Secretary and Administrative Support.



From

DR CHRIS COTTER

**Director
Mission and Pastoral Life**

“Every new step in the life of the Church is a return to the source. It is a renewed experience of the disciples’ encounter with the Risen One in the Upper Room on Easter evening.” XVIth Ordinary Synod for a Synodal Church, Final Document n.1

On Palm Sunday, more than one hundred and seventy ordained and lay faithful of our Catholic community gathered in St Kilian’s Church Bendigo to begin the Jubilee to celebrate 150 years since the establishment of the local Church of Sandhurst. The present St Kilian’s church is on the site where Mass was celebrated in a tent by early Catholic settlers, as well as the site of the pro-Cathedral.

Bishop Shane blessed a newly commissioned Processional Cross, in the style of the Paderborn cross, and we followed the Cross in a short pilgrimage procession from St Kilian’s to the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. As Bishop Shane remarked in his Palm Sunday homily, the track between St Kilian’s and the Cathedral follows the path of the Bendigo Creek and has been walked by humans for tens of thousands of years.

It was a simple and fitting way to open a year of celebrations, a reminder of our identity as the pilgrim people of God, of the steps we take in our lives, and the encounters we have with Christ on the road and in holy places. The Processional Cross now has its home in the Cathedral and has also been loaned to the twelve foundational churches of the Diocese for their celebrations of the Jubilee. At the Annual Mass of Holy Oils (Chrism Mass) on the following Tuesday, each parish was presented with a specially engraved cruet for the storage of Chrism oil to commemorate the Jubilee year.

It has been my pleasure to provide support as Executive Officer to the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests over the year. This involves working with the Chair and Bishop Shane to develop the work plan, prepare the agenda, draft minutes and ensure continuity and follow-up between meetings. An achievement of the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council was the development of ten Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals, through a process of listening, dialogue and discernment. The Goals were promulgated by Bishop Shane on 22 November and will provide direction for the activities of the Office for Mission and Pastoral Life, as well as parishes, schools and other diocesan entities for the next four years.

The 2020 ‘Go Forth’ Report recommended formalisation of the Bishop’s pastoral visitations to parishes. Commencing in November 2023 the Office of Mission and Pastoral Life, with the aid of a dedicated working party of priests, Chancery staff and parishioners, developed and piloted the Parish Visitation Program (PVP). The PVP is an opportunity for parishes to reflect on all dimensions of their life and activity with the assistance and guidance of Chancery staff, to undertake planning for the future and to set goals to guide their endeavours. The PVP is also intentionally designed as an opportunity for Bishop Shane to listen deeply to our pastors and communities of faith, to understand their strengths and challenges, and to discover

new ways of providing pastoral and missionary outreach.

It is our hope that the PVP will encourage and support the ongoing renewal of our parish communities, and provide an experience of what it means to be a synodal Church in mission. Two parish groupings participated in PVP pilots between May and September: Eaglehawk and Inglewood-Marong parishes, and the Wangaratta, Wangaratta South and Moyhu parishes. The pilot visitations were positive experiences for these parishes and have assisted the working party in their efforts to refine and improve the PVP documentation and processes.

I am especially grateful to Rev. Stephen Bolling PP (Eaglehawk and Inglewood-Marong) and Rev. Nathan Verallo (Moderator for Wangaratta, Wangaratta South and Moyhu), and the pastoral council members, parishioners and staff of these faith communities who participated in the



pilots. I also thank the members of the PVP Working Party: Mrs Leslie Cooper (Executive Assistant to the Director, Mission and Pastoral Life), Mr Tim Nolan (Executive Assistant to the Bishop), Rev. Adi Indra (Assistant Priest, Wodonga), Rev. Stephen Bolling, Mr David Walker (Parishioner, Numurkah) and Mr Simon White (Senior Accountant at the Chancery). Dates have been assigned in Bishop Shane's calendar for visitations with all parishes in the Diocese over the next four years and will be finalised in consultation with each parish community.

It has been my privilege to lead the Mission and Pastoral Life Team in 2024: Ms Katrina Strong (Communications Coordinator) and Mrs Leslie Cooper. In 2022 and 2023 Leslie worked in a part-time capacity as a Project Support Officer but, in the light of the needs of the team and our commitment to providing services to support and grow the various ministries in our parishes, the position held by Leslie was reviewed and reconfigured as a full-time Executive Assistant. Leslie continues to support diocesan projects as well as being a first point of contact for the Office of Mission and Pastoral Life. Katrina has exercised a key role in promoting the Sandhurst 150th Anniversary events and celebrations throughout the year, in addition to editing the Sandpiper e-News, producing videos and providing updates to our social media channels. Mary Pianta (Disability Contact Coordinator) has continued to

offer information to parish communities about practical ways to foster understanding and inclusion.

Two new Mission and Pastoral Life roles have been developed and approved by Bishop Shane: Assistant Director, Mission and Pastoral Life and Youth Ministry Team Leader. The Assistant Director will work closely with me, managing the day-to-day operations of the Mission and Pastoral Life Team, as well as developing and implementing plans to achieve the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals relating to formation. The Youth Ministry Team Leader role

emerges directly from a partnership proposal developed by the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group. The Team Leader will shape and lead a new Youth Ministry Team and assume responsibility for the effective implementation of the Sandhurst Youth Ministry partnership. The Sandhurst Youth

Ministry partnership is an agreement to actively collaborate in and exercise co-responsibility for the provision and leadership of Youth Ministry in the Diocese of Sandhurst. The partnership will be between the diocesan Chancery, parishes, priests and Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd. In late December Bishop Shane appointed Mr Geoff Gowdie as Assistant Director, Mission and Pastoral Life and Mrs Claire Spinelli as Youth Ministry Team Leader. Both Geoff and Claire will commence at the Chancery in early 2025.

Following a request from the Council of Priests, in 2023 and 2024 the Office for Mission and Pastoral Life convened three Liturgical Formation Seminars based on the Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter on Formation in the Liturgy *Desiderio Desideravi*. The first was hosted by the Wangaratta South Parish on Saturday 14 October 2023, the second in Shepparton on Wednesday 18 October 2023 and the third in Bendigo on 21 May 2024. Each seminar took the form of a keynote address on *Desiderio Desideravi* expertly delivered by Professor Clare Johnson (Director of the Centre for Liturgy at Australian Catholic University) followed by workshop choices of Reading the Word, Music for the Liturgy and Extraordinary Ministers of Communion. Our workshop presenters included Dr Paul Taylor (Director of Music, Sacred Heart Cathedral Bendigo) Ms Lyn Breen (Parishioner, Cathedral Cluster of Parishes), and myself. More than one hundred and forty lay



faithful and several priests attended the seminars, with the overwhelming majority of those who responded to surveys reporting that they found the keynote and workshops beneficial to the exercise of their ministry as readers, extraordinary ministers of holy communion and musicians.

The Sandhurst Theology Scholarships have continued in 2024, providing access to financial support for parishioners and those engaged in ministry to study courses in post-graduate level academic theology, spiritual leadership and clinical pastoral education.

On 6 September Bishop Shane led the celebration of

Mass to launch the Season of Creation with our diocesan community at the Huntly Streamside Reserve, just to the north of Bendigo city. The Season of Creation is celebrated annually between 1 September and 4 October by Orthodox and Latin Rite Catholics, and the World Council of Churches. Students and staff from our Sandhurst schools joined parishioners and priests in a morning of prayer and action for our common home, planting over one hundred saplings as part of an effort to restore the native tree population in the Reserve. The launch event concluded with a sausage sizzle lunch and was organised by the diocesan Care for Creation Team, ably led by Kerry Stone, Sandhurst

2024 Reports

Caritas-Justice Coordinator. Throughout the year the Care for Creation team has continued to develop and refine a Laudato Si' Action Plan for the Diocese. Team members include parishioners Ms Lyn Breen (Cathedral Cluster) and Mrs Marie Bonne (St Kilian's Bendigo).

Thank you to all who have contributed to the mission and pastoral life of our Diocese this year. We have learnt a lot about the challenges of putting the synodal way into

practice and what it means to exercise co-responsibility for the mission. We have much to look forward to in 2025 as we continue our journey as the pilgrim people of God in Sandhurst.

Dr Chris Cotter
Director
Mission and Pastoral Life
Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst



Pictured above: Geoff Gowdie Assistant Director of Mission and Pastoral Life and Claire Spinelli Youth Ministry Team Leader. Other pictures: 150th Celebration pilgrimage walk. Liturgical Ministry Seminar workshop. Parish Visitation Program. Annual meeting of the Diocesan Mission Directors of the Province of Victoria.



From

CAMERON FRASER

Diocesan Business Manager

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11:

Planning for the future of the Diocese is an essential undertaking that warrants careful discernment of interwoven considerations, many unique to the diocesan context. The responsibility of stewarding temporal goods, and balancing the needs of Christ’s faithful now, and in the future, demands prudence and foresight. We must remain ever mindful of how we “cut our cloth”, acting within our means while upholding our sacred duty to support the mission entrusted to Christ’s faithful.

In 2024 we successfully pursued approvals for the construction of a new building, “Cathedral Square”. This legacy project will be a worthy neighbour to Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo and aims to meet several objectives, including: optimisation of our property assets; workplace efficiency; and reduction of our environmental footprint. The project is being funded by the rationalisation of existing assets and income to be generated by future tenants of the building. The project is due for completion in 2026 and there will be much to report when construction commences in 2025.

DDF: The Diocesan Development Fund has enjoyed its strongest year on record with a surplus of \$6.3m. In the 2023-2024 financial year, the DDF approved 14 loans supporting parish, school and agency works to the value of \$15m. Future growth projections are strong, and this will support the continued renewal of diocesan property assets for many

years to come. The Fund therefore continues to build on its solid foundation, playing a vital role in securing the long-term sustainability of the Diocese. The DDF embraces change and consistently offers new products and services to meet client needs and expectations while meeting, or exceeding, all compliance requirements. I am very grateful for the professionalism and expertise of the team committed to the service of our clergy, parishes, schools, and agencies connected with the DDF.

THE CHANCERY: Service to parishes continues to be an area of key focus. The Chancery assists with Human Resources, Payroll, Accounting, Project Management, Archives and Legal advice. These services are provided by people experienced in the church and charity concessions, to ensure we remain good stewards of the resources entrusted to us. Please reach out and we will assist you wherever possible. A highlight of the past year was the Parish Administrators Conference, which provided relevant content and perhaps, most importantly, a forum for connection and sharing.

CRIS: A recent initiative in the Diocese was the establishment of Catholic Risk and Insurance Services Ltd (CRIS) in 2024. This entity was created to assist the Australian Church and its agencies with insurance procurement and improving the management of risk. Why is Sandhurst involved in such a pursuit? Well, the Church



is not a monolith. It is made up of thousands of separate agencies of varying sizes, charisms and pursuits. This can be a great strength and a great weakness. When a circumstance requires scale to deliver the best outcome, such as with the procurement of insurance, the structure of the Church is a weakness. CRIS is setting about reaggregating the Church in a post Catholic Church Insurance Ltd landscape. CRIS is not an insurer; instead, it is a group purchasing body that seeks to achieve better pricing and terms of cover so we can better manage risk. Sandhurst, Ballarat and Sale Dioceses have been early adopters and tested the CRIS model, which has delivered savings approaching \$3m in the 2024 renewal year, reduced deductibles and improved policy terms.

Just as our governments struggle to support initiatives for the Common Good across borders – think of environmental and energy policies as examples – so does the Church. Let's hope we can build on the early leadership that these regional dioceses are demonstrating to the Australian Church and that, in working together for the Common Good, everyone becomes a beneficiary.

SAFEGUARDING: The Diocese continues to foster a culture of safeguarding in Sandhurst and is diligent to ensure that the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (NCSS) and Victorian Child Safe Standards are met and exceeded. I am grateful for the tireless work of Parish

Safeguarding Teams and Diocesan staff whose often thankless work ensures that parishes across the Diocese are safe and welcoming environments for all.

The Diocese of Sandhurst acknowledges that preventing abuse requires proactive approaches across policies, procedures and practices within parishes, agencies, and entities, consistent with the requirements of the following:

- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- National Catholic Safeguarding Standards (edition two) (Australian Catholic Safeguarding Ltd)
- Victorian Child Safe Standards and the Reportable Conduct Scheme (Commission of Children and Young People Victoria)

Finally, in my view, there is nothing that compares to working in a for-purpose Diocese when compared to a for-profit company. Together, with the team of committed people I lead, I am proud of our achievements over the past year and the service we have provided. In delivering on our plans across the Diocese and beyond its borders, we are playing a part in the grand plan to give hope and a future.

Cameron Fraser
Diocesan Business Manager
Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst



From

KATE FOGARTY

**Executive Director
Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd**

“The future of Catholic education in our Diocese is bright, and we are dedicated to nurturing a community that values faith, knowledge and service. Our commitment to providing a high-quality education remains steadfast.”

As I reflect on my first year as Executive Director of Catholic Education Sandhurst, I am filled with gratitude and optimism. This past year has not only marked a return to the Diocese for me, but it has also reinforced my confidence in the incredible people who make up our schools, early learning centres and parishes.

This year was particularly notable as we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Catholic Education Sandhurst Office (photos page 44). This milestone coincided with the 150th anniversary of our Diocese, creating a unique opportunity to reflect on our shared history and achievements. Over the past five decades, the Catholic Education Office has played a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape, and I am proud to stand on the shoulders of those who came before me. We took this opportunity to honour our previous Directors, whose leadership, vision and dedication have laid the groundwork for the vibrant educational community we enjoy today. Their contributions have been invaluable, and it is crucial that we recognise and celebrate their efforts.

The history of our Diocese is rich and inspiring, steeped in a tradition of faith, service and commitment to education. Over the past 150 years, we have seen the establishment of numerous schools, parishes and community initiatives that have transformed lives and empowered generations. This

deep-rooted history serves as a foundation for our ongoing mission and inspires us to continue building upon the legacy of those who have gone before us.

A key highlight of this year has been the introduction of a new learning and teaching program, Magnify Sandhurst. This initiative is designed to improve learning outcomes for all students. It aims to raise the standard of results while empowering and resourcing our teachers. The implementation of this program is an ambitious undertaking, and I am excited about the possibilities it presents. Our teachers have been eager to embrace this new approach, and I have witnessed firsthand the enthusiasm and commitment they bring to their work. By investing in our educators, we are ultimately investing in our students, ensuring they receive the best possible education rooted in our Catholic values.

In addition to these developments, I was pleased to announce the appointment of Deputy Director of Mission and Educational Development. This role has been designed to enhance our support for schools, allowing us to address their unique needs more effectively. The Deputy Director will work closely with school leaders, teachers and the wider community to ensure that our educational vision is realised at every level. This collaborative approach will



strengthen our ability to support schools and help them navigate the challenges they face in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

The future of Catholic education in our Diocese is bright, and we are dedicated to nurturing a community that values faith, knowledge and service. Our commitment to providing a high-quality education remains steadfast, and we are determined to ensure that our schools and Early Learning Centres are places where students can grow, learn and flourish.

We firmly believe that every student deserves an excellent education. This means not only meeting their academic needs but also nurturing their spiritual and emotional wellbeing. As we move forward, we will continue to foster a culture of inclusivity, where every student feels valued and empowered to reach their full potential. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion will be at the forefront of our efforts as we strive to create a welcoming environment for all. Our mantra of 'Every Student, Every Teacher, Every School, Every Day' confirms our commitment to provide the best resources and educational programs to promote healthy and productive schools.

Over the past year I have received extraordinary support from our school boards and from Bishop Shane who is deeply committed to Catholic Education. To the staff, students and broader school communities. I particularly want to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to our journey this year. Your passion, dedication, and support make our educational community exceptional. As we move forward, let us continue to work together, grounded in our faith and committed to the mission of Catholic education. Together, we can achieve great things, and I am excited to see what the future holds for our schools, our Early Learning Centres, our students and our Diocese.

Kate Fogarty
Executive Director
Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd





From

JULIE COBBLEDICK

Sandhurst Catholic Early
Childhood Education & Care Ltd

“The Board has continued to lay strong foundations for strengthening and growing the provision of early childhood education and care within the Diocese of Sandhurst.”

INTRODUCTION

The vision of Sandhurst Catholic Early Childhood Education and Care Ltd (SCECE&C) is to create high quality environments, where each child and family is accompanied on their journey of development, supported by the pastoral ministry of our Church as embodied in our Sandhurst communities. The authentically Catholic nature of diocesan early childhood education and care, where young children will experience being part of God’s family, combined with the awe-inspiring mystery and wonder of creation, will nurture and influence significantly an holistic approach for the development of each child.

NEW ELCs OPENING

In 2024, the Board has had oversight for the opening of the MacKillop Early Learning Centre located at St Joseph’s Primary School, Nagambie. This is an exciting development and, despite some of the external challenges presented, we are confident of a vibrant and engaging service for our children and families as they experience Catholic Education in the early years.

Extensive work in 2024 has led to the anticipated opening of Brigid’s Light, Echuca West and McAuley, Wodonga West Early Learning Services in January 2025. These centres will provide both education and care, as we offer services to children from 0 to 5 years.

2023/2024 STRATEGIC PRIORITY GOALS

The following has been achieved in support of the priority goals:

- Approval and implementation of Shared Mission Framework
- Staff formation in Catholic Identity
- Approval and implementation of Quality Framework for early childhood education and care
- CatholicCare Victoria Services being accessed by families within centres
- Board formation in Child Safeguarding
- Ongoing implementation of Risk Management Framework and Risk Appetite Statement
- Formation and development for staff in Early Learning Centres.

CAPITAL GRANTS AND PROJECTS

Projects supported with grants allocated by the Victorian School Building Authority in 2024 included Brigid’s Light Early Childhood Centre, Echuca (\$4,909,000.00), St Mel’s Kindergarten Expansion (\$372,133.00) and St Mel’s Internal Renovations (\$98,000).

The installation of a 2-modular Kindergarten facility is currently in progress at MacKillop Early Learning Centre in Nagambie. The modular is owned by the Victorian School Building Authority and rented to SCECE&C Ltd at a peppercorn rate.

REGULATORY INFORMATION

The National Quality Framework (NQF) provides a national approach to regulation, assessment and quality improvement for early childhood education and care across Australia, including SCECE&C Ltd and the services under our governance.

The Board has approved all prescribed policies and several non-prescribed but best-practice policies. To support the Board and the SCECE&C Unit with the large number of policies that need to be continually updated and/or reviewed, the Board has approved a new operating model to support SCECE&C with a clear set of Governance Policies that are aligned with the key areas of the Strategic Plan. This model ensures that policies requiring Board approval and oversight are identified, distinct from operational policies that can be attended to by the leadership and management of the organisation. At all times SCECE&C adheres to the regulatory requirements in relation to policy, procedures, guidelines and frameworks.

At a governance level, the Board has approved and or reviewed the following key documents:

- Risk Management Guidelines and Risk Register
- Board Charter Review
- Communication Plan Review
- Shared Mission Framework and Commitment Statement Review

CONCLUSION

This year has been an important period for SCECE&C as the Board has continued to lay strong foundations for

strengthening and growing the provision of early childhood education and care within the Diocese of Sandhurst. The ongoing rigour to policy development and approval is ensuring that our current services are compliant with the National Quality Framework and our new services are supported at a high standard to implement policy and procedures at time of opening.

The work of the Board has been supported by our new Executive Director, Ms Kate Fogarty. Kate has been most generous with her time, expertise and support as the Company has built the solid foundations to ensure the ongoing and future provision of early childhood education within the Diocese of Sandhurst.

The ongoing work of Ms Carla Jeffrey, Chief Early Childhood Officer is to be commended. Of note is her capacity to build sound working relationships with agencies and government bodies who are pivotal to the future growth and development of SCECE&C Ltd. Carla's professional approach to communication with the Board has ensured that effective decisions are made in the best interests of the organisation. Her oversight of staff within the Unit and our current services continues to provide a high level of early childhood education and care for our children and their families.

Julie Cobbledick
Chair

SCECE&C Ltd Board





From

REV. JAKE MUDGE

**Director
Diocesan Clergy Life and Ministry**

“The term ‘ongoing formation’ is a reminder that the one experience of discipleship of those called to priesthood is never interrupted.”

Each year, Clergy Life and Ministry Sandhurst coordinates a February gathering and a September gathering for clergy in the Diocese. Every second year, a retreat is conducted in June for the entire presbyterate.

Along with “initial formation” (that which occurs formally in the seminary) priestly training, in keeping with other professions, is considered lifelong or “ongoing”. Documents on priestly training remind us:

“The term ‘ongoing formation’ is a reminder that the one experience of discipleship of those called to priesthood is never interrupted. The priest not only ‘learns to know Christ’ but, under the action of the Holy Spirit, he finds himself within a process of gradual and continuous configuration to Him, in his being and his acting, which constantly challenges the person to inner growth. One must constantly feed the ‘fire’ that gives light and warmth to the exercise of the ministry, remembering that, ‘the heart and form of the priest’s ongoing formation is pastoral charity’. Ongoing formation is intended to ensure a continuing journey of conversion, in order to rekindle the gift received at ordination. This journey is the natural continuation of the process of building up priestly identity begun in Seminary and accomplished sacramentally in priestly ordination, in view of a pastoral service that causes it to mature over time.”

(USCCB Ongoing Formation, 72, foll. Ratio, 82.)

In 2024, those priests born overseas and ministering in the Diocese gathered in Moama from the 19-22 February to share rest, conference time and ongoing formation. We were fortunate to have Robyn Abbott (St Therese’s Parish, Kennington) and Diane Teitzel (St Brendan’s Parish, Shepparton) to assist with the program, which included updates on parish administration and life. Peter Trendos and Cameron Fraser shared with the clergy including an update on the life of the Diocese and the many ways that the Chancery supports parishes.

In September, staff from Catholic Education Sandhurst, led by Sam Dowling and Tanya Mullane, facilitated a workshop titled “Crucial Conversations” for the entire presbyterate. The program, established in America, assists participants in reflecting on strategies for difference levels of conversation required in professional, pastoral and personal interactions.

In 2025, the clergy of the Diocese will be fortunate to have three opportunities to meet: in February 2025 some of the newly ordained members of the Diocese will gather; followed by whole-presbyterate retreats and conferences in June and September. In 2025, Clergy Life and Ministry will also work to incorporate the newly promulgated Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals for the Diocese.

Rev. Jacob Mudge
Director
Diocesan Clergy Life and Ministry



Seminary Liaison Report

Following the completion of my six-year term on the seminary staff in January 2024, Bishop Shane invited me to continue in the role of providing a contact point between the seminary and our Diocese. The seminary, Corpus Christi College, is the “Regional Seminary” for the dioceses of Victoria and Tasmania and is governed by the bishops of these two states, who form a Board of Trustees. The seminary has traditionally also provided training for the priesthood for guest dioceses from South Australia, Northern Territory, the Syro-Malabar Eparchy and other dioceses. The seminary formation program comprises a seven-year course, which often includes extra time of study and discernment in addition to this basic program. At this time students for the priesthood live in community, have a daily rhythm of prayer and reflection, and engage in formal tertiary studies at the nearby Catholic Theological College, University of Divinity, in East Melbourne. Seminary formation traditionally focuses on the spiritual, human, intellectual and pastoral education of those training for ministry and takes place in seminary, parish and other places of formation.

“There are four dimensions that interact simultaneously in the iter of formation and in the life of ordained ministers: the human dimension, which represents the ‘necessary and dynamic foundation’ of all priestly life; the spiritual dimension, which helps to shape the quality of priestly ministry; the intellectual dimension, which provides the rational tools needed in order to understand the values that belong to being a pastor, to make them incarnate in daily life, and to transmit the content of the faith appropriately; the

pastoral dimension, which makes possible a responsible and fruitful ecclesial service.” (Ratio Fundamentalis, 89.)

In recent years, Pope Francis has emphasised the need for the training of priests to have not only a missionary focus, but also to involve the entire church community; not just those formally engaged in priestly formation.

We are very fortunate in 2024 to have had two students for the priesthood enrolled in the college: Jhunel Mendez and Ryerson de Lai. We are also excited to be able to welcome Aaron Baulch and Mason Crosier into the first-year program in 2025. We wish our Sandhurst students, and all involved in formation for ministry, our best wishes and prayers for 2025.

Rev. Jacob Mudge
Coordinator of Seminarians
Corpus Christi College
Regional Seminary
Victoria and Tasmania





From

REV. NATHAN VERALLO

Vocations Director

“Lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God”. Ephesians 4:1

The year 2024 started with much enthusiasm and optimism. We were blessed with two seminarians who commenced Seminary Formation. Ryerson De Lai began his propaedeutic year while Jhunel Mendez started his fourth year. I am glad to say that both men have settled well in the house of formation at Corpus Christi College and we look forward to getting to know them better during their parish placements and pastoral engagements. We also continue to pray that, in God’s Grace, other young men will commence seminary formation in the 2025 academic year.

This year, our Vocation Office worked hand-in-hand with parish Youth Ministry to engage young people across our Diocese. Moving forward, we aim to deepen this collaborative spirit, ensuring that future events and functions are joint efforts between Youth Ministry and the Vocations Office. Together, we strive to help young people live their faith and find their purpose. While providing opportunities to consider the priesthood or consecrated life is our key focus, we recognise that there are many pathways for missionary discipleship, and we aim to help young people with their discernment.

As I reflect on the past year, I am inspired to share an aspect of my personal discernment journey, guided by the theme from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, which is quoted above.

All of us share one calling. All of us are invited to respond to God’s call to love Him in the way we live our lives. Pondering on the gift of vocation, my first thought is of my unworthiness. As we continue and aspire for greater things, wanting to soar high in all we do, we often slip back to the reality of our own limitedness. It leads me to ask: Is perfection a requirement to marry someone? Do I need to be a perfect person to be a parent? Do I need to be perfect to become a priest? I love to think that you can reason with me in saying with a humble heart that the answer is “No” ... let us allow ourselves to reflect for

a minute on our own commitments.

To all our parents – I thank you for giving yourself in moulding our children and young people, a life that springs from the commitments you share as parents. As Pope St John Paul once said, the family is the seedbed of vocation. I humbly ask our parents that as you prepare your young children in their pathways to careers and professional choices, please help them to consider a vocation to the priesthood or to consecrated life. There is joy in priesthood. There is joy in serving the church.

To all church ministers – I thank you for your dedication in giving your time and talent. All that you do is a sharing in the gift of vocation – in your ministry to prayer; in bringing the Eucharist to the sick; even in cleaning in our churches; in proclaiming the Word of God in our liturgical celebrations and more. Your ministry enriches our parish communities; you give life to our church.

To all my brother priests – thank you for sharing your priestly ministry. We are living vocation promoters in our parish communities. The gift of ordination is best lived out when we immerse ourselves in prayer, in the life and ministry of our community.

I thank Fr Adi Indra and Fr Jackson Saunders who worked as a team with me to facilitate discernment sessions for our young people each quarter throughout the year.

If you know of someone who is considering becoming a priest or a missionary, please do not hesitate to contact me.

It is my hope that we, as a Church, will continue to pray for church ministers and for our young people to consider the priesthood, consecrated life or life as a missionary as their calling. Adelante ...

Rev. Nathan Verallo
Vocations Director
Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst



MICHAELA BROOKS

Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group

The Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group (SYM-RG) was established by Bishop Shane Mackinlay in late 2023. The membership consists of seven lay people and two priests, and our purpose is to provide support and advice to the Office for Mission and Pastoral Life, Bishop Shane and the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council (SMPC) in the visioning, development, planning, implementation, and review of ministry with young people today.

In 2024 the key task of the SYM-RG was to recommend a direction and pathway for ministry with young people in 2025 and beyond. The Reference Group members themselves brought significant knowledge, skills and experience to this task, but other groups and consultative processes made contributions that should not be overlooked. For example, surveys of the young people who joined in the Sandhurst 2023 World Youth Day pilgrimage to Lisbon provided important baseline data, and Rev. Jackson Saunders led consultation sessions with young people regarding the Synod on Synodality. Advice was also sought from the SMPC about the strategic direction and goals of the Diocese.

These sources were drawn into a larger process of discernment that was undertaken by the Group under the leadership of Gen Bryant and Dr Chris Cotter. On 4 July, Gen facilitated a formation day designed to support the development of the Reference Group and its members, and the cultivation of a pathway forward for Youth Ministry by proposing the development of a partnership between key bodies considered critical to the success of youth ministry in Sandhurst: the diocesan Chancery through the Office of Mission and Pastoral Life; priests and parishes and Catholic Education Sandhurst Ltd schools and office.

The formation day brought clarity and impetus to the partnership idea, resulting in the shaping of a Detailed Proposal for a Formalised Sandhurst Youth Ministry

Partnership. This document outlines a clear vision and goals for ministry with young people in the Diocese, describes the various partners and their roles and strengths, and the types of paid and voluntary positions that may be required to bring the goals to fruition. Ultimately, the partnership proposal was endorsed by Bishop Shane and the SMPC which set the stage for the development of position descriptions for a new Sandhurst Youth Ministry Team. The purpose of this Team is to establish and grow strong connections with the aspirations and hopes of young people and our Sandhurst parishes, priests and schools, as well as operationalising the Sandhurst Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals as they relate to ministry with young people.

I am very pleased that Bishop Shane has appointed Mrs Claire Spinelli as Youth Ministry Team Leader, and I look forward to the recruitment of additional team members in early 2025. Claire will be well supported by the SYM-RG when she embarks on this recruitment and develops a work plan for the Team.

We also look ahead with hope and optimism to a range of exciting opportunities for young people in 2025 and beyond, including the Australian Catholic Youth Festival which will be held in Melbourne in late 2025.

Finally, I would like to thank the Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group members for their time and service. They have been invaluable in helping to shape the future of Youth Ministry here in Sandhurst: Mason Crosier, Jasmine De Lai, Georgia Gordon, Hannah Gundry, Brendan Lindsay, Miggy Podosky, Rev. Jackson Saunders, Rev. Nathan Verrallo and the wonderful support and guidance we received from Dr Chris Cotter and Leslie Cooper.

Michaela Brooks
Chair

Sandhurst Youth Ministry Reference Group



From

AGNES SHEEHAN

**Chief Executive Officer
CatholicCare Victoria**

‘At CatholicCare Victoria, we empower people of all backgrounds to build resilience and thrive, so that they may go on to ‘live life to the full’ JOHN 10:10.

In 2024 the CatholicCare Victoria (CCV) team provided care, support and guidance to 3,144 individuals within the Diocese of Sandhurst.

The top three presenting issues for these individuals were Family and Relationships (76.46%), Mental Health (39.34%) and Family Violence (14.39%), with the majority of these individuals were aged between 25-44 and 0-18 respectively.

CCV provides compassionate social services in the Diocese of Sandhurst from two main offices – Bendigo and Shepparton – but also provides outreach support and programs to families and individuals.

These programs include counselling; Family Services (in-home support); family and property dispute resolution, focusing on children’s needs and wellbeing; parenting programs and workshops; school counselling and chaplaincy; Communities for Children program which funds local projects and services for families; youth justice programs; and a professional support network for practitioners working in the family law space.

CCV is committed to contributing to and supporting local communities, and partnering with others is essential for this to build thriving communities.

In 2024, CCV engaged at Executive level with additional key networks, including Goulburn Family Violence Executive

and Goulburn Mental Health and Wellbeing Executive, to respond to the presenting issues we are witnessing from clients.

CCV, via the Greater Shepparton Communities for Children program, co-funded the Goulburn Valley Family Violence Executive Committee training activities in 2024 as part of this commitment.

Further to this and as part of our Family Law Pathways Network, CCV facilitated a Greater Shepparton Bendigo Family Law Pathways Conference to continually grow family law practitioners’ skills and knowledge in the region.

CCV was successful in receiving a Connecting Carers grant of \$40,000 which supported activities for our carers, and we also received a subcontract from VMCH for the delivery of Carer Support in Loddon, and further funding of Additional Respite.

One example of the valuable work being done by the CCV team, is from the Children’s Contact Service (CCS) in Wangaratta. The CCS had received a referral for a closed Child Protection case, which they had been unable to progress. The mother had an extensive history of poor mental health, resulting in multiple hospitalisations due to poor medication compliance. As a result, her daughter was removed from her care and placed with her father. Over the course of 13 weekly contacts, staff were able to work with

the mother and her mental health team to guide her to medication compliance, which resulted in a positive change in her presentation. The outcome has been that both parents came to a mutual arrangement for self-management of contact with their daughter, guided by a transition plan developed with them by the service.

CCV engaged with six schools in the Diocese, providing a free presentation on the mission and services of CCV, which was tailored to the local community and the age group of the students. The Engagement team hopes to

engage with more school communities in the future and promote participation in CCV's Family Week and Carry a Can activities, which encourage students to connect with their families and local communities.

The CCV team is committed to working with integrity, compassion, inclusivity, respect and collaboration as we work to build a more connected and supported community within the Diocese of Sandhurst.

Agnes Sheehan
Chief Executive Officer
CatholicCare Victoria

To learn more about CCV, please visit our website:
<https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/>

To support CCV in building thriving communities, please donate today:



CatholicCare
VICTORIA

Strengthening families & communities

COMMEMORATING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST



150th Anniversary

WE CELEBRATE OUR DIOCESE

For tens of thousands of years, the First People of what we now call Victoria, lived on and cared for the land and waterways, fashioning a culture and spirituality that endures to this day.

For more than 170 years, our faith has been lived out and handed on in the part of Victoria that became the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst. Our Diocese grew from five Catholic missions (Bendigo, Beechworth, Echuca, Heathcote and Wangaratta) established between 1852 and 1874. In late 1851, the discovery of gold in Bendigo triggered a rush of migration into the region. Despite isolation and harsh conditions miners, pastoralists and others formed faith communities and soon after pioneering priests arrived to minister to the people, many of whom were living far away from their homelands.

Initially, Mass was celebrated on the banks of waterways, under trees, in tents and in family homes. Later, settlers worked and fundraised to build churches and the church communities themselves attracted more people to the mission areas. The growth of the missions led to the formation of our Diocese in March 1874 and influenced the building of our nation. Our Catholic communities

have also contributed significantly to the health and education of our broader society through the ministries of Catholic education, health and social services. Often it was the women and men of religious congregations who led these ministries.

Through drought, fire, flood, war and pandemic, the people of God in our Diocese have gathered to share sorrow and celebrate in joy, grateful for the generations of the faithful who built the foundations for our living faith today.

From the beginning, the Spirit of God has been present with us. May the Spirit renew us in our commitment to proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ entrusted to us.



Foundation of the Diocese **SANDHURST ANNIVERSARY**

150th anniversary celebrations of the Diocese of Sandhurst

2024 marked the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Sandhurst which was established on the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel in March 1874. Many events were held across the Diocese to commemorate this significant anniversary, starting with a Pilgrimage from St Kilian's Church to Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo on 24 March and the Chrism Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral on 26 March.

BISHOP SHANE'S CHRISM MASS HOMILY

26 March 2024

For most of us, this is not the first Chrism Mass that we have participated in. These are familiar patterns, as we gather year after year as part of our annual preparations for Easter, moving from Ash Wednesday at the beginning of Lent through Palm Sunday at the beginning of Holy Week, to today's Mass where we bless the oils that will be used in sacraments across the Diocese throughout the coming year. At this stage, plans are well advanced in communities across the Diocese for the Easter Triduum, which we will celebrate in a few days' time. That pattern of our liturgical life has been going on now in the Diocese for 150 years. It might feel like there's something very stable about that, and in one sense there is. But, as we look back over the 150 years that we mark this year, the pattern has changed dramatically, and much more so than in the particular experience of any of our lives.

When Bishop Crane – whose ring, pectoral cross and crosier I use today – arrived as the first Bishop of the Diocese in 1875 with a handful of fellow Augustinian priests who he brought with him from Ireland. They were met by Dr Henry Backhaus here in Bendigo (or Sandhurst as it was known then) and the pioneering priests from the other three original missions of the Diocese, in Beechworth, Wangaratta and Heathcote. At that stage, the communities weren't called parishes, but missions, each encompassing enormous territories with a number of chapels and a rapidly growing number of Catholics.

These mission communities were fairly scattered and disconnected from one another, without much sense of being part of a Diocese as such. So, we can imagine that the Diocese's first Chrism Mass, celebrated in the pro-Cathedral of St Kilian's, would have been a fairly small affair, even though in some respects, the Christian community in this region was well established. It was more than twenty



150th Chrism Mass Homily

years since the first Mass was celebrated beside the Bendigo Creek in 1852; and at St Kilian's itself, the original church of 1852 had already been replaced by a new church in 1857, which was itself to be replaced after thirty years when it was discovered that it was too heavy for its foundations and was replaced by something lighter while a permanent solution was developed. After nearly 140 years, we're still all very attached to that temporary solution, I must say!

But at the time of that first Chrism Mass, travel was still very arduous and time-consuming, and it's unlikely that priests from the communities of the northeast or places other than Bendigo would have attended. It would have been a very small celebration indeed.

Up until then, the oils used in the celebrations of the sacraments would have been blessed by Bishop James Alipius Goold, who had been appointed as the first bishop of the new Diocese of Melbourne in 1847. I'm not sure how the priests were resupplied, but they certainly would have used the oils with great abundance, and in great quantities. Dr Backhaus alone celebrated over 4,000 baptisms in his first decade here in the Bendigo Goldfields, and there would have been similar efforts by pioneering priests in other parts of the Diocese like William Tierney, John Kennedy, George Galen and Nicholas Bassetto.

In the decades after that, the gold rush ended here and in the north-east, and the various activities associated with gold mining were gradually replaced by farms, vineyards, orchards and businesses. As towns developed, scattered right across this vast area, churches and schools were built

too, culminating in the building of this extraordinary Cathedral that we are so fortunate to have as part of our Diocese, opened in 1901 and completed in 1977.

We should be particularly proud of the schools in our Diocese, that have resulted from the commitment of communities across many generations, who were determined to ensure that there is a quality, Catholic education available for all our young people. Through most of that time, this was without the government support that is so integral to our operations today. So in earlier times, Catholic schooling was only possible because of the commitment and generosity of local communities, who often literally built the schools themselves, and because of the extraordinary contribution of generations of religious women and men from a variety of religious congregations.

We have been blessed throughout our history as a Diocese by the arrival of migrants. From the earliest days of the Diocese, migrants came from Ireland and England. In the first half of the twentieth century, people came from many countries of Europe, and then in the 1970s, beginning with people from Vietnam, we have welcomed an extraordinary diversity of people from various countries of Asia, India, Africa and the Middle East. We've been enormously enriched by people of those cultures and the priests who have come with them or alongside them, by the culture that they bring, and the faith that they share with us. That has been highlighted for me personally over the last year as I visited the families of many of our priests in India and in the Philippines.



150th Chrism Mass Homily

So, across those 150 years that we've been a Diocese celebrating Chrism Masses, the face of the Diocese has actually looked very different at different times. Through all that change, there have been three constants, which we are reminded of in today's readings, which we hear each year at this Chrism Mass.

In the first reading from Isaiah and in the Gospel of Luke, where Jesus quotes that text from Isaiah, we hear the mission of Jesus that he announces when he enters the synagogue at Nazareth: to bring good news to the poor; to bind up hearts which are broken; to bring liberty to captives – to those who are bound up, restrained and held up; to bring sight to the blind – those who can't see the way forward; to set the downtrodden free – bringing care and encouragement for those who are struggling. That has always been the mission of the Christian people. It has been the mission of the local Church in this place throughout our history, and it continues to be our mission today.

The second constant is about change, about living out our mission in a way that responds to the particular blessings and challenges of each generation – through experiences of war and peace; through pandemics; through times of prosperity and times of hardship. In our own time, one of the challenges that we face are the decline of smaller communities, at the same time that we see growth in larger centres. So there are increasing challenges to provide services, including Church services, for those who live in small communities. Paradoxically, in this time when communication and travel is so much easier, some of our community are perhaps facing a new experience of isolation, remoteness and disconnection.

We also live amidst a growing polarisation across our communities – certainly politically, and also to an extent in our Church experience. This polarisation is taking place in a context of growing secularisation and focus on individuals, with less interest and engagement in religious experiences and institutions.

Another challenge is the increasing need to take shared actions to protect our environment and care for our common home.

And we live in a time when we are struggling to find ways for meaningful recognition and justice for our indigenous people, whose ancient bond with this land and its waterways stretches back countless generations, way before European settlement in this land. We profess our commitment to reconciliation, but making progress towards that is something that still eludes us as a community. After the very clear failure of last year's referendum on the Voice, efforts to pursue reconciliation and justice have become even more

difficult, and there is much healing needed for those who had such high hopes at the prospect of formal recognition and a structure where they could be heard.

Finally, we live in a time where Pope Francis has called us to continue our mission as Jesus' followers in a way that renews us synodally, in a way where we grow in our commitment to walk together and move forward on our shared journey as followers of Jesus – through our living out his mission, our participation in co-responsibility for our shared life, and our building up the communion of the People of God. At a diocesan level, we have taken significant steps towards this by establishing our Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Council, which was commissioned at this Mass last year. Responding to the Pope's call to become more synodal is also prompting renewal and conversion in the life of our parish communities, and also in the way that we shape and govern the work of our school communities and of our social services.

So, that is the second constant: in living out and pursuing the ongoing mission of Jesus, we have always sought to recognise and respond to the particularities

of the situation in which we find ourselves.

The third constant is one that we heard proclaimed in the second reading, which is that we are people of hope. We are called to respond to the challenges of our own time with confidence and hope, which we profess and renew today. We look towards God's future, confident that, whatever occurs, all our achievements and all our disappointments are part of God's plan, which goes far beyond what we can imagine. In that plan, Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, as we heard in the reading. He is the Alpha: the beginning of all of our beginnings, the beginning that underlies and makes possible anything that we attempt. And he is the Omega: the end of all that we pursue, the end that lies beyond anything that we might achieve and that brings our works and our efforts to a fulfilment that goes beyond what we could have ever imagined – the fullness of God's plan and God's love for us and all of creation.

And so, as we look back with thanks on the first 150 years of our Diocese, and look forward with confidence and hope in the future that God is building in us, I now ask each of you to recommit yourselves to your path in the Christian life: to renew your commitment to living as baptised followers of Jesus, as professed religious, or as ordained ministers of God's Church.

Most Rev. Shane Mackinlay DD
8TH BISHOP OF SANDHURST

Plenary Indulgence
FOUNDATIONAL CHURCHES OF THE DIOCESE

150th anniversary celebrations of the Diocese of Sandhurst

In celebration of the 150 years of the establishment of the Diocese of Sandhurst the gift of a plenary indulgence was granted by His Holiness Pope Francis to accompany us during this year of grace. Eleven foundational churches of Sandhurst Diocese, where we trace the roots of our local Church, were designated as Jubilee churches.



ST KILIAN'S BENDIGO 1852



ST JOSEPH'S BEECHWORTH 1854



ST PATRICK'S WANGARATTA 1863



ST AUGUSTINE'S MYERS FLAT 1864



ST MARY'S INGLEWOOD 1864



ST MALACHY'S NAGAMBIE 1872



ST MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS
HEATHCOTE 1874



ST MARY'S ECHUCA 1875



ST JOSEPH'S BENALLA 1876



ST MARY'S MYRTLEFORD 1877



ST BRENDAN'S SHEPPARTON 1879



CATHEDRAL SITE BENDIGO 1896

Foundation of the Diocese 2024 ANNIVERSARY YEAR

150th anniversary celebrations of the Diocese of Sandhurst

JANUARY

Bishop Shane's tour of the Philippines visiting with the families of our CDOS Filipino Priests.

Annual clergy social gathering.



MARCH

Kyabram and Tatura PP Installation Masses.

St Peter's Primary School building opening.

CDOS Student Leaders meeting.

Pilgrimage on Palm Sunday from St Kilian's to Sacred Heart Cathedral commemorating the 150th Anniversary of the Diocese and Jubilee Door opening

Chrism Mass 150th Anniversary celebration.

CDOS Deanery SYNOD consultation.



MAY

Liturgical Ministry Seminars.

CDOS longest serving Priest Monsignor Hickey's funeral.

Vocations week.

St Patrick's Church, Wangaratta 150th celebrations Bishop Shane ceremonial Jubilee Door opening.

Jubilarian Mass for Fr Joe Taylor 50 years.



FEBRUARY

Shrove Tuesday CARITAS launch.

Rite of Election.

CDOS Schools' Opening Masses.

Processional Cross presentation.

Inservice for Priests born Overseas.

SMPC meeting.

APRIL

Opening of the 'Ready to Launch' House in Wangaratta.

L'Arche 10th Anniversary.

Plans submitted for the Cathedral Square.

Fr Rob Galea — video game launch.

St Mary's Church Avenel closing Mass after 132 years.

ANZAC commemorations.

KSC Barney's Mass and Picnic.

JUNE

Reconciliation Mass.

Fr Junray Rayna Incardination.

Shepparton Youth Festival.

St Joseph's Church Benalla 150th celebrations and opening of the Jubilee Door.

Fr Junjun Amaya Incardination.

JULY

Teams of Our Lady meeting in Italy.
SMPC induction of new chair.

Unveiling of the Bishop's portrait at the Cathedral.

Parish Visitation to the Eaglehawk and Inglewood - Marong Parishes.



AUGUST

Parish Admin Conference.

Catholic Education Sandhurst 50th anniversary.

John Moore awarded Papal Knighthood for services to the Catholic Church.

St Brendan's Shepparton 150th celebrations with the St Alphonsa Syro-Malabar Community.

SEPTEMBER

Parish Visitation to Wangaratta, Moyhu and Wangaratta South Parishes.

Bishop Shane attends MERCIC meeting in Seoul, South Korea.

Clergy Inservice.

Season of Creation Mass and tree planting with Bendigo schools.



NOVEMBER

St Augustine's, Myers Flat celebrated 160th anniversary of their Church and 150th anniversary of the Diocese and blessing of the new Marian Shrine.

Beechworth Parish celebrates the 150th anniversary with a Triduum of Masses.



DECEMBER

Opening of St Mary MacKillop garden Numurkah.

Publication of CDOS Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals.

St Mary's Inglewood Parishioners marked the 150th anniversary.

St Mary's, Echuca Mass celebrating the 150th anniversary.

Establishment of Christ the King Parish, incorporating Wangaratta, Moyhu and Wangaratta South.

St Patrick's Primary School Pyramid Hill closing Mass.

OCTOBER

Bishop Shane attends the Synod for a Synodal Church in Rome.

50th annual Marian Festival.

Sandhurst Diocese
PROCESSIONAL CROSS

The eight-foot-high cross led the 150th Anniversary Pilgrimage from St Kilian's Church to Sacred Heart Cathedral and has travelled to foundational parishes for anniversary celebrations of the Diocese.



To mark the 150th anniversary of the Diocese, master joiner Martin Coman created an exquisite Processional Cross that embodies the origins of the Diocese. Formed in the shape of the Paderborn Cross, the eight-foot-high Cross led the 150th Anniversary Pilgrimage from St Kilian's Church to Sacred Heart Cathedral on Palm Sunday and travelled to foundational parishes for anniversary celebrations of the Diocese over the year.

Martin, a St Joseph's Quarry Hill parishioner who also created the Ambry for the Cathedral, was honoured to undertake such an important project. He carefully selected two distinct timbers; sugar pine, a soft blonde wood, and blackwood, a dark hardwood. The sugar pine, used as an exterior moulding to cap the Cathedral's rafters, was salvaged from leftover materials stored by the original carpenter, Paul Coppock, since the Cathedral's completion in the 1970s. Blackwood, a prominent feature of the Cathedral's interior, including its pews, is indigenous to the Diocese, with some of the timber sourced from Martin's own property.

The Processional Cross features a long sugar pine post with vertical blackwood inlays forming eight sides, to symbolise creation. The Paderborn Cross, constructed in four mitred sections with solid circular pieces on both sides, carries deep spiritual meaning. Martin interprets the vertical element as representing heaven and earth, with the horizontal signifying the life of Jesus and the Holy Spirit at the intersection.

The Cross' inaugural journey from St Kilian's to the Cathedral is particularly fitting, because St Kilian's was originally intended to be the site of the Diocese's cathedral and served as the pro-Cathedral of the Diocese for many years.

The Diocese is grateful to the Knights of the Southern Cross who donated funds to create the Processional Cross, presenting Bishop Shane with a cheque at their annual Barney's Picnic.



From Pancakes to Purpose CARITAS PROJECT COMPASSION

The theme for Project Compassion 2024 was, "For All Future Generations". It has been drawn from the story of the burning bush in Exodus 3:1-20.



Parishes and schools in the Diocese raised an impressive \$424,847 for Caritas' Project Compassion in 2024, reflecting the incredible generosity of the people of Sandhurst. Diocesan Social Justice Coordinator, Kerry Stone, said she was grateful to contributors who have helped change lives in many impoverished countries for generations to come.

The Campaign was launched around the Diocese with the now traditional pancake festivities on Shrove Tuesday,

calling on participants to take action to fundraise for Project Compassion over the Lenten season. Schools and parishes held walkathons (Caritas Ks), pancake stalls, cake stalls, raffles and other ventures to raise funds for Project Compassion – compassion in action.

During Lent, we are called to fast, pray and give alms so supporting Project Compassion is a great way to proclaim our faith and help those in need. Participating in fundraising campaigns benefits, not only the recipients of the funds, but also enriches the lives of the fundraisers, fostering a sense of community, purpose, and fulfilment through their generous efforts.



As well as fundraising, Project Compassion aims to raise awareness of social justice issues impacting people who are living in vulnerable communities – plighted by war, natural disasters, or poverty.

In 2024, Caritas Australia featured the stories of three different women, revealing their struggles and hopes for their future. Ronita, in the Philippines is a 22-year-old mother of two who has returned to school to complete her education with the help of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, securing a brighter future for her family.

Memory, in Malawi was selected by local community leaders to be a candidate for a vocational skills course. She now works for one of Malawi's largest power companies and

is a role model and trailblazer for other young women.

Leaia in Samoa is a mother of five children. She built her home herself by upcycling scrap building materials. Thanks to a new water tank, provided by Caritas, Leaia now has a consistent water supply and is better able to care for her children and regularly sends them to school.

Kirsty Robertson, Caritas Australia CEO, said, "During Lent, we are invited to take up the call to fast, pray and give alms. From natural disasters to widespread conflict, the events of the past year mean that many communities need your support. Supporting Project Compassion is a way for us to proclaim the faith that is in our hearts and help our sisters and brothers in need."



Half a Century of Service
JUBILARIAN

“To love God and to love God’s people is at the very centre of a priest’s existence. To live that out in prayer and service, is the way that priests make sense of their life and find meaning.” Most Rev. Leslie Tomlinson

1974 Golden Jubilee Fr Joe Taylor

In 2024 Fr Joe Taylor V.G. marked fifty years since he was ordained a priest of Sandhurst. Reflecting on his journey, he expressed a profound sense of “deep, deep gratitude” to God, and to the people he has the privilege to serve and minister alongside.

Fr Joe’s service in Sandhurst has been shaped by ten appointments across eight parishes, including a six-year stint in the Diocese of Mendi in Papua New Guinea. He’s now enjoying his longest tenure yet, as Parish Priest in Shepparton, a role he’s held for twelve years. He credits the people of Shepparton for their vibrant energy and commitment to the mission of the Church. One of the most meaningful aspects of his ministry has been accompanying people as they grow in faith. Fr Joe takes particular joy in supporting adults through the RCIA Program and witnessing their embrace of the Catholic faith. The sacramental baptism of adults continues to be one of the most fulfilling parts of his priesthood.

Like any walk of life, the path of a priest also brings challenges; Fr Joe humorously admits that his greatest challenge over the years has been crafting homilies. Although he is known for his insightful and heartfelt sermons, he confesses that delivering them was never initially easy. Yet, through dedication, he has grown more

confident in this aspect of his ministry, particularly in sensitive situations like funerals.

Fr Joe feels that transition has been a central theme of his journey: from a childhood on a farm near Lockington, then a move to Echuca, and later to boarding school at Salesian College Sunbury; from the introspective life of the seminary to the dynamic responsibilities of parish life; and from his missionary work in Papua New Guinea to returning to Australian parishes. He recalls the early struggles in the seminary, questioning his purpose but, in time, he found great relevance in his studies and a deeper sense of mission. His formative years in Papua New Guinea were particularly transformative. Serving in remote, diverse communities, he learned to navigate language barriers and adapt to a very different cultural context, an experience that deepened his empathy for migrants and refugees.

The 50th anniversary of his Ordination was celebrated with multiple events, including a special diocesan Jubilee Mass at St Mary’s in Echuca, where Fr Joe had been ordained in 1974. As Fr Joe looks back on half a century of service, his gratitude and dedication remain strong; “I’d do it all over again”, he says. Optimistic about Pope Francis’ vision of synodality and a return to a more scripture-centred, community-oriented “village” Church; his optimism inspires those around him to feel at home in the Church.

PARISH ADMINISTRATION CONFERENCE

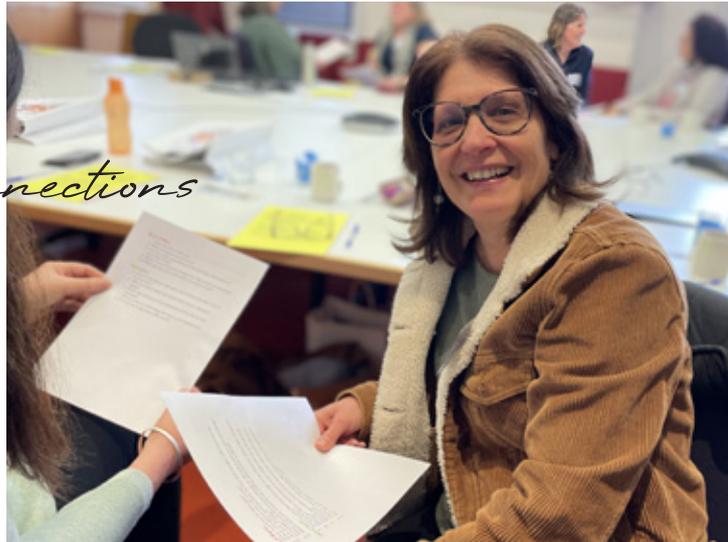
Learning & Heartfelt Connections

The Chancery was a hub of activity on the 20 and 21 August as Parish Administration Staff gathered to enhance their professional skills and foster valuable connections at the ninth annual diocesan Parish Administration Conference.

A key focus on the first day of the conference was networking, with ice-breaking activities helping participants from parishes of the Diocese, including eight newcomers, to connect. Later, sessions covered essential topics such as employment, risk management, finance and legal compliance, with presentations from Chancery experts. Staff also had the opportunity to meet and engage with Bishop Shane Mackinlay during a Q&A session.

Prayer and Mass at St Kilian's Church provided moments of reflection, and parish reports offered insights into shared challenges and successes. Attendees appreciated the chance to build relationships and gain practical knowledge, with many highlighting the importance of face-to-face interactions with Chancery staff. For some, it was an opportunity to see their parish in a broader diocesan context and understand their relationship with the mission of the universal Church.

Diocesan Business Manager, Cameron Fraser, who instigated the annual Conference with the help of Executive Assistant, Sally Holmes commented, "This conference is a tremendous opportunity to strengthen relationships with parish staff and recognise their vital role in our parishes."





A Lasting Tribute: UNVEILING BISHOP SHANE'S PORTRAIT

On Sunday 7 July 2024, the official portrait of Bishop Shane Mackinlay was unveiled after 11:00 a.m. Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Now displayed in the Cathedral transept alongside portraits of Sandhurst's seven previous bishops, it represents an enduring link between past and present and the Church's journey towards the future.

A bishop's painted portrait is a vital part of the Church's patrimony, a lasting tribute reflecting the Church's leadership, mission and unbroken line of apostolic succession. It captures not only the likeness of the bishop but also his spiritual essence, reminding us of his role in guiding and nurturing the Diocese, and ensuring that his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

Artist, Gabrielle Martin, approached this work with a deep commitment to staying true to Bishop Shane's character and her artistic vision, emphasising that a successful portrait

must evoke presence and warmth, offering a depth beyond physical resemblance.

To create the portrait, Gabrielle immersed herself in Bishop Shane's world, spending time with him at the Chancery, at Sacred Heart Cathedral and in her studio. Through these encounters, she gained insight into Bishop Shane's connection with the sacred space, particularly his attentiveness to the light and architecture of the Cathedral. Inspired by past bishops' portraits displayed in the Cathedral, she wove elements of the Cathedral into the composition, blending historical tradition with contemporary expression.

The final painting is suffused with warmth, reflecting a sense of spiritual enlightenment. The softly illuminated background conveys a tranquil and ethereal quality, evoking serenity and divine presence. Notably, Gabrielle incorporated a statue of Mary, the Mother of God, from the Cathedral, bringing a subtle yet profound feminine presence to the piece.



L'ARCHE BENDIGO 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Together We Create

The L'Arche Bendigo Community marked its tenth anniversary with a fundraising lunch at St Kilian's Hall on Sunday 14 April; an opportunity for friends and families to share memories, tell stories and celebrate.

Bendigo L'Arche was the vision of Bernadette Ransom and the late Maureen Considine, who shared two important things in common: a child with down syndrome, and a desire for their children to live in a nurturing faith-filled community as they became adults. Bernadette recounted a conversation with Maureen. "In 1997 I read an article in 'Australian Catholics' about the L'Arche Community in Hobart and I thought 'I would like Andrew to belong to a L'Arche Community when he grows up'. I discussed this with Maureen and her reply was, 'This will take 20 years, so we had better get started'. So began our journey to establish a L'Arche Community in Bendigo."

Chair Jim Rolfe, Community Council of L'Arche Bendigo, captured the essence and spirit of the room. "Our families are the foundation of our community. They continue to place their trust in L'Arche for the care of their adult children. They are our best ambassadors and for that we are very grateful."



Catholic Education Sandhurst 50 YEARS STRONG

*Education Office Honours a Legacy of Quality and Dedication
'Every Student, Every Teacher, Every School, Every Day'*



On 18 August past and present members of the Catholic Education Sandhurst Office gathered to celebrate 50 fabulous years. Congregating in Bendigo for a commemorative Mass and luncheon, all five lay Directors, Bishop Shane Mackinlay and Bishop Emeritus Les Tomlinson were in attendance, a testimony to their dedicated leadership and commitment to Catholic education. The first Director of the CEO, the late Bishop Peter de Campo, along with Adrian Sexton, Dennis Higgins, Phil Billington, Paul Desmond and Kate Fogarty faithfully led the office for a combined fifty years.



Season of Creation

In a spirit-filled celebration of the Season of Creation, parish and school communities gathered in September at Huntly Streamside Reserve for an Outdoor Mass embracing this year's theme, "To Hope and Act with Creation."

Bishop Shane said "If we are to be people of hope, we must start with faith that this is God's world; it's not just us on our own here; we are all part of God's story, a story that goes back millions of years before us and will go on long after us." "This doesn't mean standing back and doing nothing ourselves, of course. It means being committed to looking for His presence around us ... listening for His wisdom; seeing the world in the way He sees the world; and doing what he calls us to do."

Bishop Shane presided over the Mass with Fr Joe Taylor, Fr Brian Boyle and Fr DJ Suguitan as concelebrants. After Mass, participants enjoyed a sausage sizzle and planted 100 seedlings, a tangible act of hope and renewal. Bishop Shane blessed the seedlings before they were planted, reinforcing the sacredness of caring for creation.



50 years of Devotion MARIAN FESTIVAL

On 12 and 13 October, Sacred Heart Cathedral dazzled in Marian blue as part of the 50th anniversary of the Marian Festival, commemorating the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Fatima apparitions.

There was standing room only at Sacred Heart Cathedral Bendigo on Sunday 13 October as Catholics from across the Province gathered for Mass on the day of the 50th annual Marian Festival, and the 107th anniversary of the Fatima Apparitions.

The Bendigo Marian Festival, organised by the Bendigo Apostolate of Fatima, is held every October. It has become

a much-loved event to honour Mary as an intercessor and role model, while preserving traditions and fostering community spirit. For many who were raised in devotional Catholic cultures, where public displays of prayer are more common, the Marian Festival provides an opportunity to connect with their faith in a familiar way. Mary represents a source of inspiration and strength. In a world entrenched





in conflict and division, the message of peace associated with Mary, particularly through apparitions such as those at Fatima, remains profoundly relevant. Mary's calls for prayer and penance in these apparitions resonate with many people today who seek peace in their personal lives and in the broader world.

In his Homily on the day, celebrant Bishop Emeritus Leslie Tomlinson, reminded pilgrims that at the heart of the Marian Festival is a call to prayer: "While the story of these apparitions has garnered attention for its secrets, prophecies and miracles, at its heart, the message of Our Lady of Fatima is a simple one: Pray." Reverend Fr James Nihill, launched the Apostolate and became the first Spiritual Chaplain, followed by Fr Peter

Dell'Avo and now Fr Stephen Bolling; over the last 50 years from Bishop Bernard Stewart, to Bishop Shane Mackinlay, all have given approval for this annual event in the Diocese of Sandhurst. This year as the 150th Anniversary of the formation of the Diocese coincided with being the 50th Anniversary of the Marian Festival, it was very memorable.

Wilma McCormack, Bendigo President of the Apostolate of Fatima expressed a sincere thankyou to all those who have been involved and donated to the Bendigo Apostolate of Fatima over the past half century, the many priests, who have heard confessions; the numerous guest speakers, including Bishop Peter Elliot and more recently Bishop Leslie Tomlinson, who have travelled long distances after their Sunday Masses to inspire us and to encourage us with our quest for the peace that Our Lady promised if we were faithful to her requests.



SYNOD FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH

Synod for a Synodal Church



Bishop Shane, attended the final phase of the Synod. Elected as an Oceania representative and one of only ten representatives from around the world commissioned to the final document oversight committee, ensuring accuracy reflecting the Synod's discussions and decisions. The Synod document project presented to Pope Francis, drew on consultation over the last four years and dove into themes like synodality, participation in Church life and decision making, accountability, renewing our witness to the Gospel,

the relation between local Churches and the whole Church, and how the Pope's ministry of unity is exercised. The discussions were organised into five modules: Foundations, Relations, Pathways, Places and Conclusion, with the latter focused on finalising the document for the Pope.

The aim is that these spirit-led discussions will pave the way for concrete actions and reforms, leading to a more inclusive, participatory, and missionary Church that truly embodies the spirit of synodality.

Teams of Our Lady XIII INTERNATIONAL MEETING

*Enhancing the spirituality of married couples
and recognising that all vocations
originate from the family.*



Turin's Inalpi Arena Italy was a hub of activity from the 15-20 July as 8000 Catholics from across the globe gathered to focus on marriage, faith and family at the XIII International Meeting of Teams of Our Lady.

Teams of Our Lady is a global Catholic lay movement that supports couples by fostering love and spirituality in married life. It offers couples opportunities to discover the presence of God in their marriage, to enrich their faith life together and to enjoy fellowship with like-minded couples.

Seven people from Sandhurst attended the event. Eaglehawk couple Jane and Phil Bretherton, Teams members for over forty years; Helen and David Gill, Teams members in Wodonga; Chaplain to the Teams group in Wangaratta, Fr Nathan Verallo and Shepparton, Fr Jackson Saunders; and Maria O'Donnell, a formator at Corpus Christi College. The Sandhurst contingency joined a group of thirty Pilgrims from Oceania to which Fr Jackson, Fr Nathan and Bishop Lowe, of Auckland New Zealand, were chaplains.

An array of inspirational guest speakers, including Cardinals, Religious and Lay people spoke on the key themes of synodality and co-responsibility. Whether we are ordained, religious or lay we are all called by God to walk together as people of God in faith.



Catholic Education Sandhurst

MACKILLOP ART AWARDS

The 15th annual MacKillop Art Exhibition featured over 300 artworks from 42 Catholic schools across the Diocese of Sandhurst at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Bendigo and online. Showcasing the artistic talents and spiritual insights of students, the Awards recognise that art thinking and art making are tangible ways for young people to explore their faith, society and even themselves and to give expression to this.

Since 2022, Bishop Shane has personally chosen a primary and a secondary school artwork which best embody, promote or inspire Christian values and spirituality. Awarded were;

Charlotte Seddon

St Anne's College, Kialla Year 11

WOMAN OF THE WOODS

Acrylic on Canvas Board; (pictured top)

"Depicted is the Woman of the Woods. A symbol of regrowth after fire, her burnt half slowly regrowing to match her beautiful natural self. A female form was chosen as 'Mother Nature'. The spiritual aspect of fire is explored, biblical stories often feature ashes and fire, Ash Wednesday. The regrowth is as spiritually significant as the destruction that comes before it. The idea that hardship is necessary to encourage positive change is one of great importance and as such great care was taken to not demonise the burnt side, as this is the catalyst to inspire beautiful things to grow."

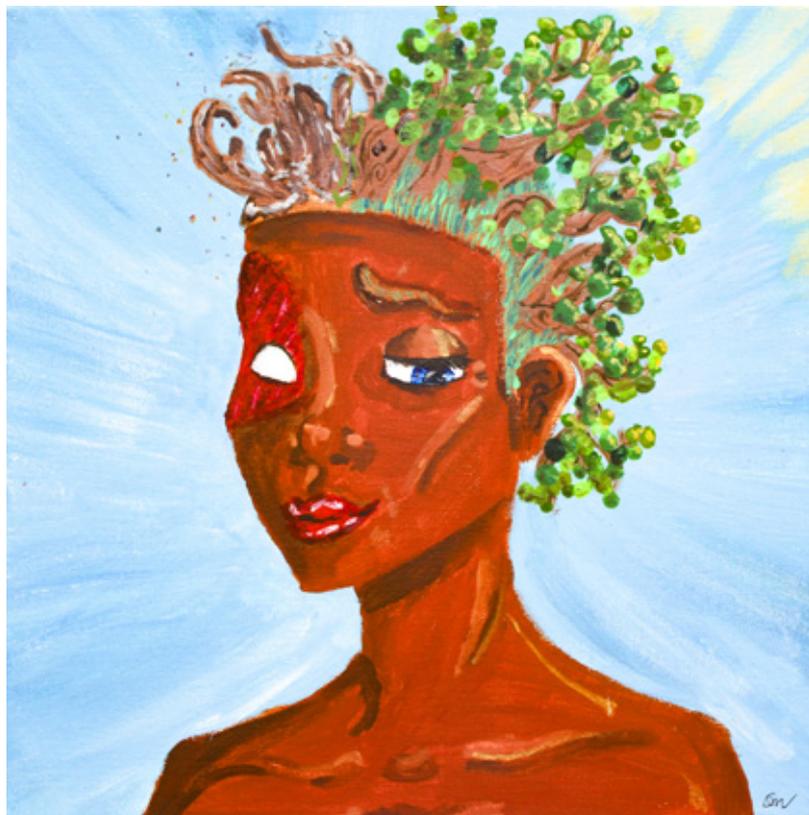
Isabella Lahm

St Anne's College, Kialla Year 5

NATURE'S HAND

Watercolour on Paper (pictured right)

"My painting is of a small baby bird on my hand from an experience I had camping with my family. My cousin and I came across some baby birds who had fallen from their nest. We picked them up and found their mother. My message in this artwork is about how we all have a part to play in taking care of God's creations."





Sandhurst Diocese KNIGHTS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Members of the KSC are committed to assist our Bishop and Parish Priests in any way possible, fostering the Christian way of life, supporting educational, charitable, religious and social welfare work.

For the Knights of the Southern Cross Bendigo Branch, 2024 was another busy year, actively supporting numerous initiatives in the Diocese. Wearing high-visibility vests as traffic control for the Season of Creation Mass; blue sashes as ushers at the Chrism Mass; Akubras at their annual picnic; suits at the Fundraising Dinner for the Priests' Education Fund and their Memorial Mass for past members; as well as aprons at a barbeque – the Knights have become a consistent support at Diocesan events.

Possibly the most experienced sausage sizzlers in town, the Knights ran barbeques after the Diocese's 150th Anniversary Pilgrimage, the Chrism Mass and the Apostolate of Fatima's Marian Festival. They have turned thousands of sausages outside Bunnings and at the Bendigo Football and Netball League Grand Final, raising funds to support their causes.

In 2024, the Knights made financial contribution towards:

- the 150th Anniversary Commemorative Processional Cross which was presented to Bishop Shane Mackinlay at their annual Barney's Picnic at Boorhaman North.

- the restoration of a Chalice used at Mass in the Loddon Prison Chapel, ensuring that the congregation of prisoners is given due respect and the Mass fulfils its purpose of being life-giving and hope-filled.
- Rochester Parish flood recovery projects.
- the Priests Support and Education Fund
- the Clergy Golf Day
- community and ecumenical events and programs such as FoodShare, MadCow and Dahlia and Arts Festival.
- presenting Rosary Beads to children in the Sacramental Program, sowing seeds for each child's prayer life.

The Order of the Knights of the Southern Cross was instituted by the Australian Catholic Hierarchy in 1919 to improve the wellbeing of Catholics in the wider community.

The Sandhurst Diocese Branch is now in its 102nd year; consistent examples of Catholic men committed to promoting the Christian way of life. The Knights are grateful for the spiritual guidance of their chaplain, Fr Peter Ferwerda.



Sandhurst Diocese **SERRANS VISIT SEMINARY**

The seminarians are all so full of joy; it's evident in the way they treat others.

On Sunday 10 March, members of Victorian Serra Clubs were warmly welcomed to Corpus Christi College, Carlton for a day of prayer and hospitality. The day provided Serrans and seminarians with a rare opportunity to pray together in gratitude for the support each affords the other.

Wilma McCormack, president of the Bendigo Serra Club, says she always finds the Serrans' annual visit to Corpus Christi College, Carlton incredibly uplifting. "The seminarians are all so full of joy; it's evident in the way they treat others. There is a certain charisma about them; I'm not sure exactly what it is, but it is there," she says.

The Serra Club is a global lay apostolate for vocations within the Catholic Church which supports vocations to the priesthood. For Wilma, who has been a member for many years, it has become a place to grow in faith with like-minded people, just as much as it is about supporting vocations to the priesthood. "Spiritual growth in Christ is one of the main elements of the Serra Club," says Wilma. "Serrans encourage church vocations; we pray for priests, raise awareness of vocations and we also facilitate religious education for the laity — because we all need continuous learning, and we also focus on our own relationship with God and our calling in our own lives".

As well as prayers and in-kind support, the Serra Club also assists vocations in practical ways with funds raised through the Serra Foundation. Tens of thousands of dollars have been donated and distributed through the Serra Foundation since it was established in 1982. Some examples of the ways the Serra Foundation supports vocations include: support for diocesan seminars and retreats for people discerning a vocation; study scholarships for seminarians; and financial assistance for seminarians and young men and women to attend World Youth Day.

There is no doubt that our parishes are deeply indebted to the men and women who commit to lives of prayer, service and ministry in the priesthood. The Serra Clubs provide a means to pray for them, and the Serra Foundation a means for financial and practical assistance. Membership of Serra Clubs is open to all practising Catholic laity and permanent deacons.



In Memoriam
MONSIGNOR FRANK HICKEY

“Our oldest priest, Monsignor Frank Hickey, died peacefully in May at the age of 97, after 73 years of faithful ministry as a priest – the longest serving priest in the history of the Diocese.” Bishop Shane Mackinlay



Monsignor Francis Hickey
14 February 1927 ~ 9 May 2024

Monsignor Frank Hickey was a priest of the Diocese for 73 years and served in seven parishes: Yarrowonga, Beechworth, Myrtleford, Kerang, Wangaratta, Wodonga, South Shepparton. He was also the Episcopal Vicar for education in the early 1980s and was Dean of the North East in the late 1980s.

He was a devoted priest whose beliefs were shaped by his early life and steadfast faith. Raised on a farm during the Great Depression as one of eight children, he developed the values of generosity, resilience and prayer from an early age. Despite feeling like an outsider because of his limited formal Catholic education, his experience receiving the sacraments profoundly influenced his calling to the priesthood. Overcoming doubts about his abilities, he persevered through eight years of seminary training and was ordained a priest of the Diocese in 1951.

Throughout his 73 years of ministry, Monsignor Hickey emphasised the importance of communal prayer and the presence of Christ in everyday life. His guiding belief came from St Paul: “For in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28), which he saw as the foundation of Christian life for everyone. Strongly believing that faith must be expressed in the home and community, he urged

families to rekindle the tradition of praying together, often citing Matthew 18:20: “For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them”. For Monsignor Hickey, faith was a shared experience that, not only strengthened individual families, but also the Church as a whole.

Monsignor Hickey witnessed much change during his 73 years of priesthood. He embraced the changes brought about by Vatican II, seeing them as a means to deepen real communication within the Church. He wholeheartedly supported Pope Francis’ vision of synodality, believing that Christ is everywhere and that the Church must remain open to encountering Him in new ways.

He was deeply concerned about the impact of modern technology on faith communities, observing that television and the internet had diminished personal relationships and a sense of “my sister my brother”. He lamented that many young people no longer saw themselves as part of a continuous Christian tradition and urged them to embrace their heritage as children of faith.

In his later years, Monsignor Hickey continued to inspire parishioners in Nagambie, where he spent 22 years in retirement. He remained a source of wisdom, humour and kindness, always giving his all to those he served. His legacy is one of unwavering faith, commitment to prayer, and a deep belief in the power of community to bring Christ into the world.

In Memoriam
SR ROSEMARY CROWE FCJ
SR MARY DUFFY RSM



Sister Rosemary Crowe
Faithful Companions of Jesus

20 August 1933 ~ 28 June 2024

Sr Rosemary Crowe FCJ, died at the age of 90 in the 70th year of her religious profession as a Faithful Companion of Jesus. Sr Rosemary spent much of her career in primary school education, teaching at Genazzano College FCJ in Kew, and later becoming the first Principal of St Jude's Primary School in Langwarrin. She dedicated much of her retirement to St Brendan's Parish in Shepparton, where she administered communion to the sick, visited the household, and worked with the Faith and Light community.

Born in August 1933, Sr Rosemary was inspired by the example of the FCJ Sisters at Vaucluse College in Richmond, where she studied, and entered religious life at the age of 20. Her missionary work in the Kimberley left a lasting impact, as she co-founded the 'Kimberley Program,' which fosters cross-cultural understanding and promotes Aboriginal culture between schools in Kew and Broome.

Sr Rosemary's thoughtful leadership and powerful advocacy for First Nations Peoples, combined with her joyful sense of humour, has left a lasting legacy.

A Funeral Mass was held for her at Genazzano FCJ College, Kew, on 9 July, followed by a Memorial Mass at St Brendan's Shepparton on 10 July.



Sister Mary Duffy
Religious Sisters of Mercy

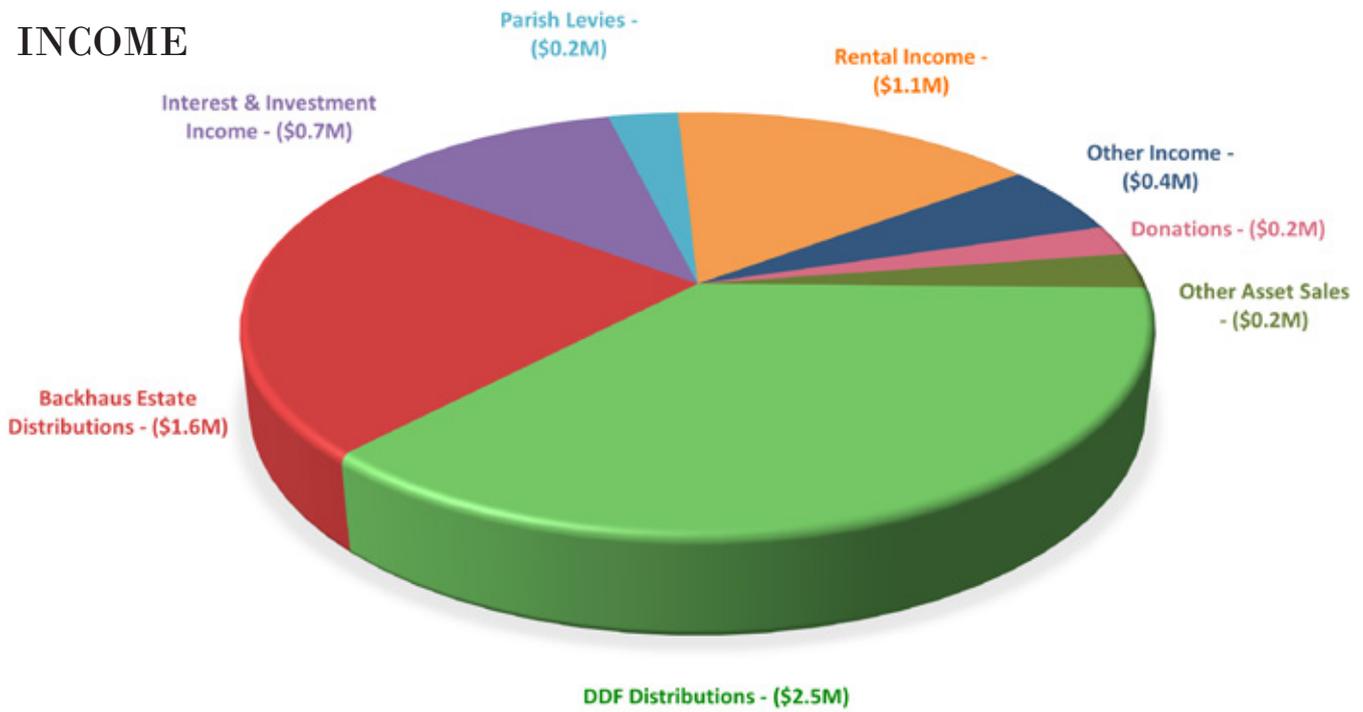
12 May 1937 ~ 16 September 2024

Sr Mary Duffy RSM, passed away on 16 September at age 87, in the 67th year of her profession. Born in Bendigo, she completed her education at St Mary's College, where she later became Principal.

Sr Mary was the inaugural Principal of Catholic College Bendigo and played a key role in its establishment, driving the amalgamation process, securing funding, increasing enrolments, and garnering community support — an achievement she regarded as one of her greatest.

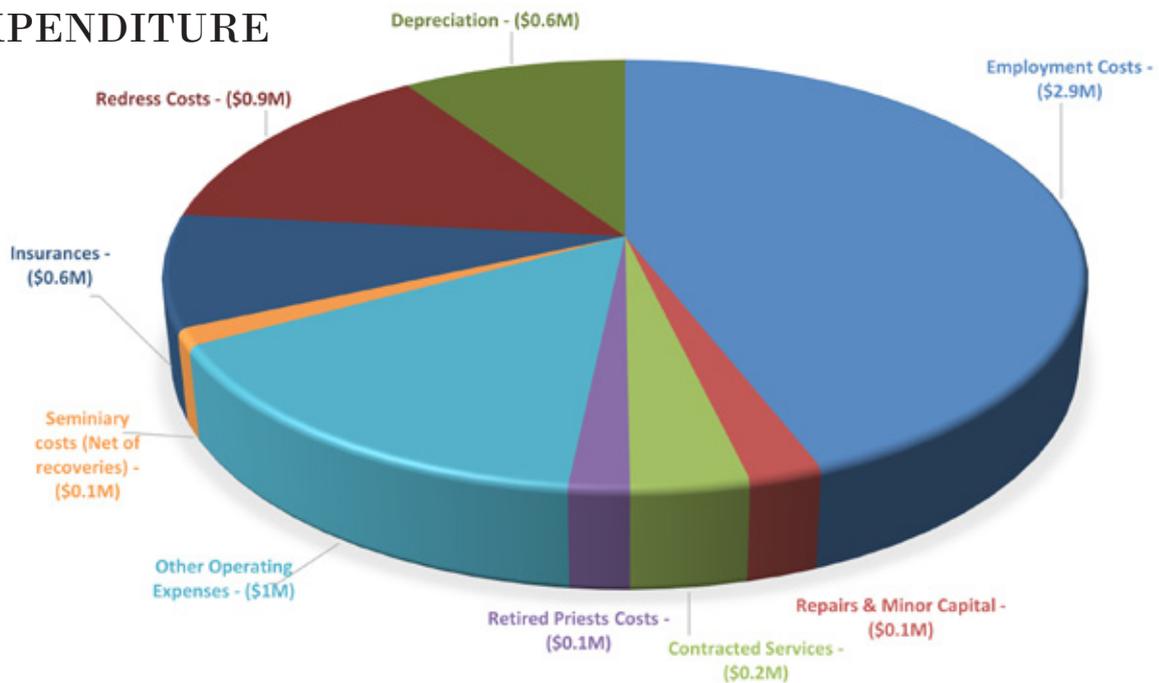
Sr Mary made lasting contributions to her Religious Order and its missions. She served as Chair of the Board of Mercy Works and was elected to the Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy Melbourne Congregation where she supported the welfare of the Sisters and the development of International Mercy Ministries. After completing this role, she became Vice Postulator for the Cause for Canonisation of Catherine McAuley, promoting Catherine's story and spirituality through seminars and retreats across Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Ireland.

INCOME



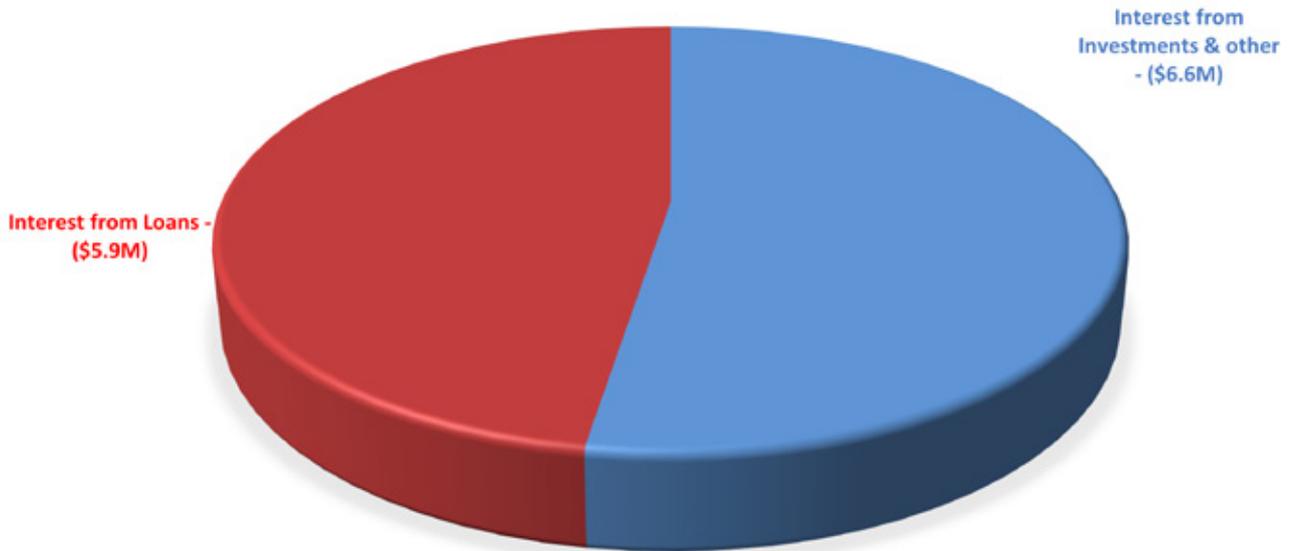
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

EXPENDITURE



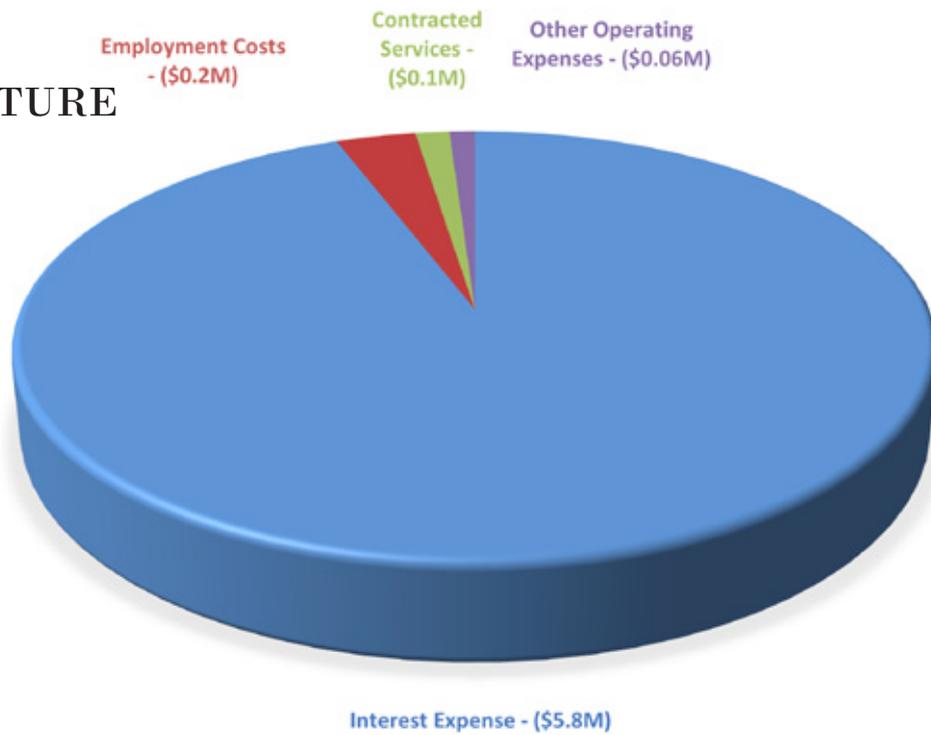
Financial Year Ended 30 June 2024

INCOME

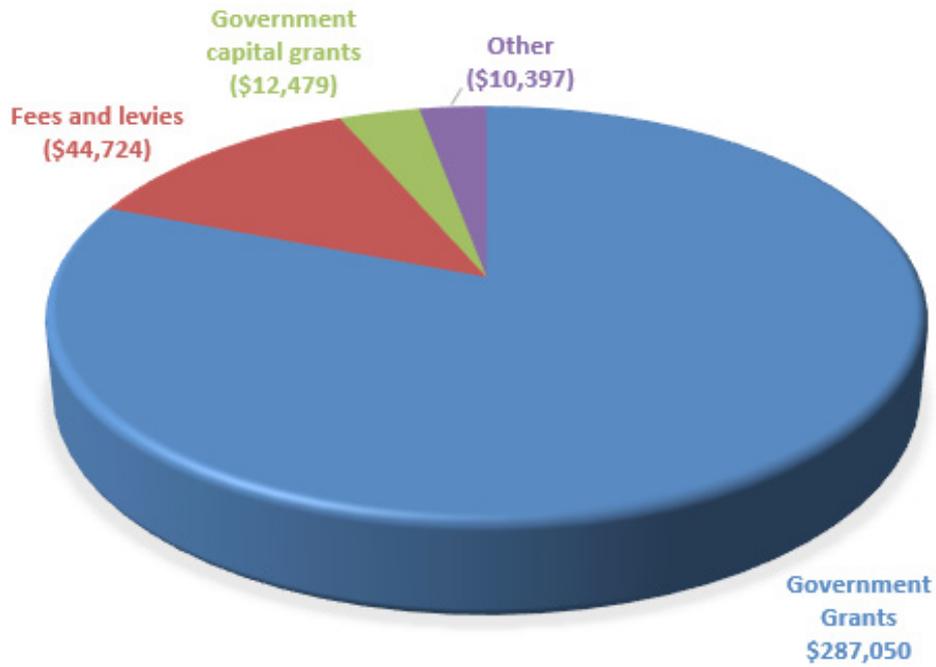


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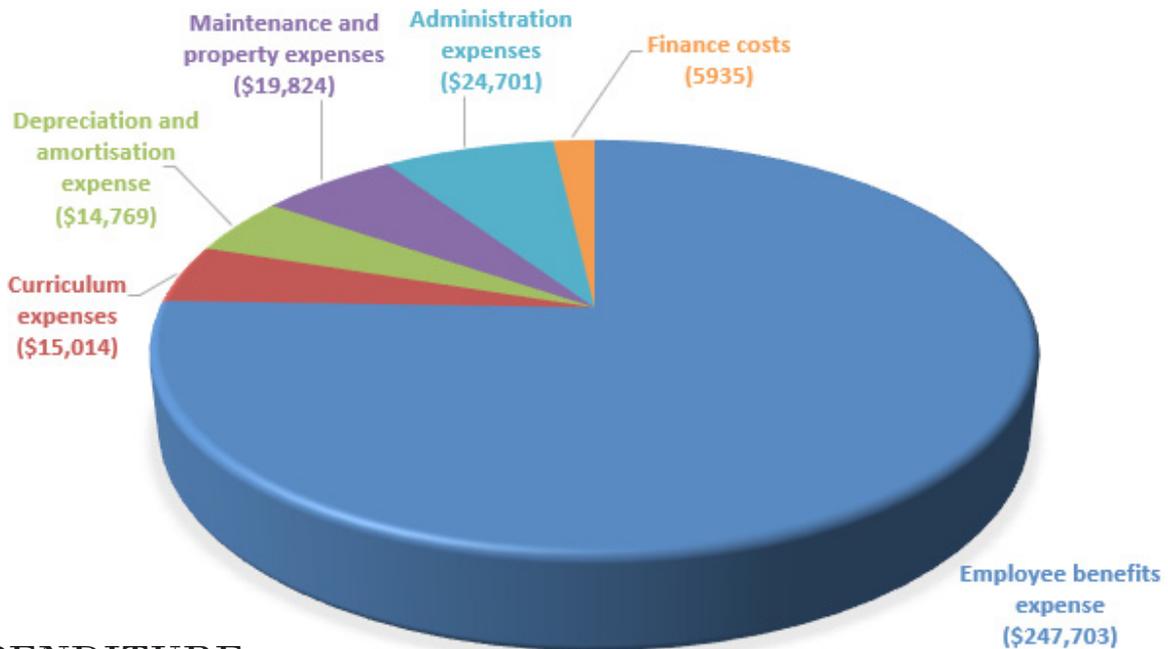
EXPENDITURE



INCOME



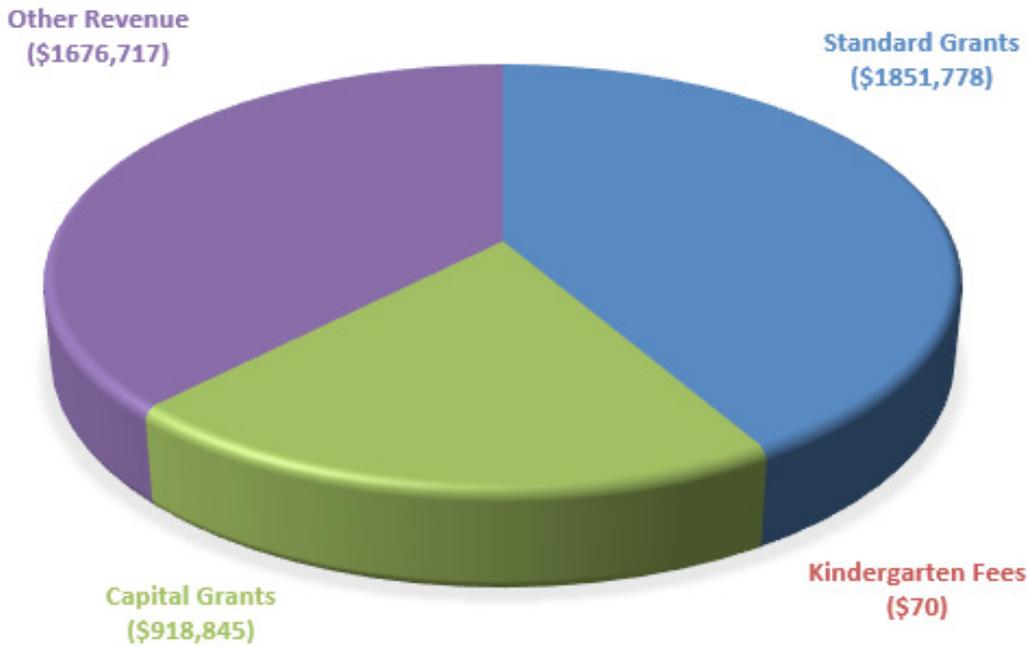
CATHOLIC EDUCATION SANDHURST LTD



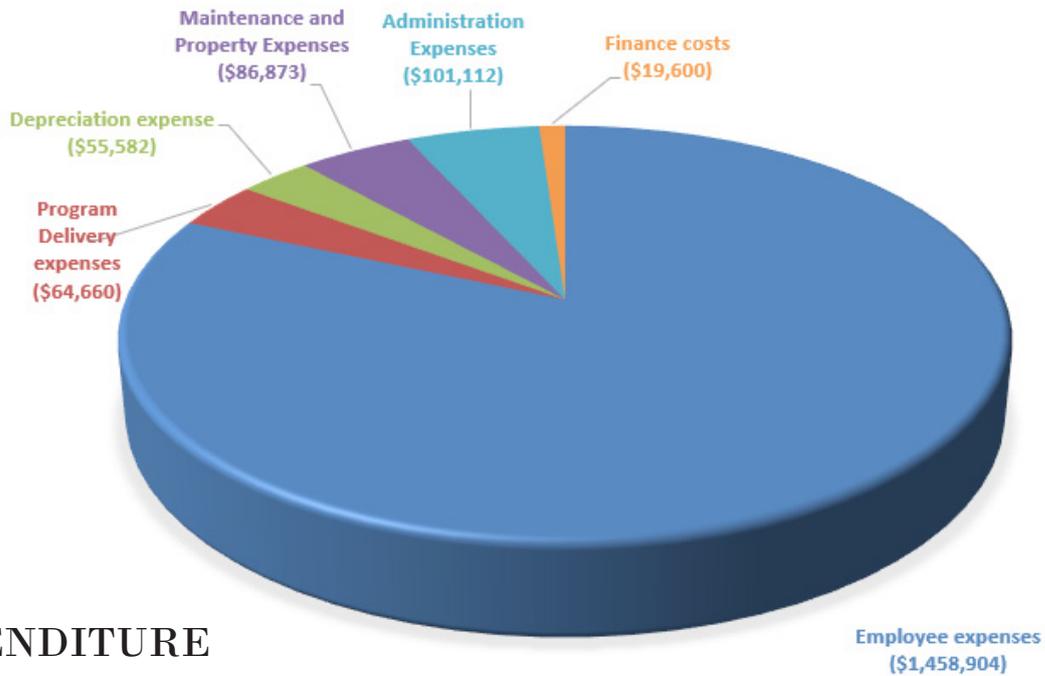
EXPENDITURE

Financial Year Ended 30 June 2024

INCOME



SANDHURST CATHOLIC EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION & CARE LTD



EXPENDITURE

PRAYER

FOR THE 150TH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE
DIOCESE OF SANDHURST



Gracious and loving God, source of all truth, goodness and beauty, we give thanks to you as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Diocese of Sandhurst.

United in the Body of Christ, through your Holy Spirit, we give thanks for the generous love and care that you have bestowed on us since the foundations of our local Church. We ask for your guidance, under the patronage of Our Lady of Good Counsel. In union with the whole Church, may we work to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel, and to build up faith communities inspired by justice, peace and love. Strengthen your Holy Spirit in us as we renew our commitment to proclaiming and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ entrusted to us.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Pray for us. St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, Pray for us.





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Diocese of Sandhurst 1874 - 2024



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SANDHURST