

TERMS OF REFERENCE DIOCESAN COUNCILS

1.0 ESTABLISHMENT

- 1.1 The Diocesan Councils find their origins in the establishment of Diocesan Commissions at the 1992-93 Diocesan Synod. In 2007 the decision was made to rename the Commissions as Councils in line with Australian practice for similar bodies.

2.0 REPORTING

- 2.1 The Councils are advisory to the Bishop and the Catholic Community of the Diocese through the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Vice-Chancellor (Pastoral Ministries).

3.0 COMPOSITION

- 3.1 If appropriate a member appointed by the Bishop as a delegate to the Council (ex officio);
- 3.2 A minimum of five (5) persons and an upper limit of 12 persons including clergy and religious appointed by the Bishop on the recommendation of the Council;
- 3.3 Such other persons who may be appointed by the Bishop to ensure the adequate functioning of the Council;
- 3.4 The Chair may invite additional members, with rights of audience and debate only, to particular meetings as required.
- 3.5 Terms of office for all members shall be those set out in the Protocols for Councils.

4.0 EXECUTIVE

- 4.1 The Council shall, at its last meeting in each calendar year, elect from amongst its members a:
 - 4.1.1 Chair
 - 4.1.2 Deputy Chair
 - 4.1.3 Secretary
- 4.2 The Executive shall set agendas and make any determinations associated with the work of the Council between meetings.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 5.1 The Council consults with parish, regions and the apostolic groups of the Diocese, within their field of expertise, to identify issues, areas of concern or needs that require attention.
- 5.2 The Council informs the Bishop, through the Diocesan Pastoral Council of these issues, areas of concern or needs and recommends appropriate action/responses to these realities.
- 5.3 The Council has links to "like" bodies and organisation in other dioceses (both national and international), to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and to the Congregations and Pontifical Councils of the Vatican, to be aware of issues, projects, resources etc that might need to be brought to the attention of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
- 5.4 The Council informs the Bishop, through the Diocesan Pastoral Council, of issues, projects, resources etc that come from outside the diocese, and recommends appropriate action/responses to these matters.
- 5.5 The Council co-operates, with the other Councils and the Diocesan Pastoral Council, to develop long term and short term goals and plans for the development of the life of the Church in the Diocese, and to provide formation and education to achieve said goals.
- 5.6 The Council communicates with and provides ongoing support for "like" bodies that exist at the parish or regional level.
- 5.7 The Council provides advice within its area of expertise, when requested

6.0 FUNCTIONING

- 6.1 The Council shall function according to the Protocols for Councils as determined from time to time by the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

PROTOCOLS FOR COUNCILS

1.0 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Ex-officio and other direct appointees of the Bishop shall be appointed at the Bishop's discretion alone and with a term of office as determined by the Bishop.
- 1.2 Ordinary members of the Council shall be appointed according to the following procedure:
 - 1.2.1 Nominations and/or expressions of interest accompanied by an outline of the nominee's background, experience and interest in matters relevant to the Council shall be called for by the Council and discerned.
 - 1.2.2 Alternatively, the Council may invite persons to join the Council who are suitably qualified and willing to participate in its work.
 - 1.2.3 The Council shall then make a formal recommendation to the Bishop who may appoint those recommended. The Bishop may request further recommendations.
- 1.3 Ordinary members shall be appointed for a term of three (3) years, renewable with a maximum term of six (6) years served consecutively.
- 1.4 In making appointments to the Council, due regard should be paid to ensuring that terms of office are staggered to ensure some continuity of membership.
- 1.5 A member who has served for six (6) consecutive years shall not be eligible for re-appointment until a period of one (1) year has elapsed.
- 1.6 A person ceases to be a member of the Council if:
 - 1.6.1 The member resigns office by written notice to the Bishop; or
 - 1.6.2 The member fails to attend two (2) consecutive meetings of the Council without tendering an apology; or
 - 1.6.3 The member ceases to be a member of the diocesan community; or
 - 1.6.4 Being an ordinary member, she/he has served for six (6) consecutive years; or
 - 1.6.5 The member's appointment is revoked in writing by the Bishop.
- 1.7 A casual vacancy shall be filled by the Bishop upon the recommendation of the Council and the appointee shall hold office for the rest of the term of office of the person he or she replaces.

2.0 DIOCESAN SUPPORT

- 2.1 Where possible the Council shall be assisted by the Diocesan Pastoral Support Unit.
- 2.2 Within reason, the resources available to the DPSU will be made available to the Councils to facilitate their roles.
- 2.3 The DPSU will facilitate communication to ensure the Council adequately addresses its responsibilities.

3.0 FUNCTIONING

- 3.1 Each Council shall provide an annual report of its activities to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and report at diocesan assemblies as requested by the Council.
- 3.2 Council members shall respond to any reasonable request to attend formation or training events or meetings called by the Diocesan Pastoral Council. The DPC and the Councils shall hold an annual joint meeting to assist in the development of forward planning in the Diocese.
- 3.3 In the event that a Council is unable to resolve any issue, such matters are to be referred to the Executive of the Diocesan Pastoral Council for mediation.
- 3.4 Each Council shall hold an Annual General Meeting at its last meeting in each Calendar year, where it shall evaluate the year, formally approve its annual report, present a budget and elect an Executive consisting of a chairperson, a deputy chairperson and secretary. Other officers may be elected according to the Terms of Reference (e.g a publicity officer, a treasurer) but shall not be part of the Executive.
- 3.5 The chairperson shall chair all meetings. In the absence of the chairperson, the deputy chairperson shall chair that meeting.
- 3.6 All meetings shall be conducted according to the principles of discernment and consensus.
- 3.7 Meetings shall require a quorum of half plus one of the current members to be present. Where it is necessary and possible, members may be counted as present if they are available on-line ie by phone conferencing, video conferencing etc.
- 3.8 All meetings shall contain a period of prayer and formation relevant to the particular Council.
- 3.9 Agendas for meetings shall be available at least one (1) week before the meeting date. All items for the agenda are to be with the secretary at least fourteen (14) days before the date

- of the meeting.
- 3.10 Proper minutes of all meetings shall be recorded by the secretary and after checking by the chairperson, distributed to the members within two (2) weeks of the meeting.
 - 3.11 The Council shall meet not less than four (4) times in each calendar year. The dates and times of meetings for the following year shall be determined at the Annual General Meeting.
 - 3.12 Subject to these Protocols, the Council may regulate its meetings as it thinks fit.
 - 3.13 The Executive may at any time and shall on a request of not less than three (3) members convene a meeting of the Council.
 - 3.13 Each Council may establish sub-committees for particular issues or activities with clearly defined objectives, membership, leadership, and end date.

4.0 FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Each Council shall receive a non-accruable annual budget .
- 4.2 The Council has a responsibility to discern and ensure that funds are used wisely and in the best interests of promoting the responsibilities of the Council.
- 4.3 If additional funds are required for special purposes, a formal request shall be made to the Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- 4.4 All efforts shall be made to cover costs for Council endeavours where possible.
- 4.5 Subject to procedures already in place for attendance at state and national conferences, claims for travel and other expenses incurred by members on behalf of the Council shall be approved by the Executive prior to expenditure.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS OF DIOCESAN COUNCILS

5.1 ORDINARY MEMBERS

- Assist the Council to achieve its Responsibilities as outlined in the Terms of Reference.
- Attend all Council meetings or tender an apology.
- Arrive on time and if possible arrive early to assist with the room set up etc.
- Bring all necessary paperwork – agendas, minutes of previous meeting(s) and any other necessary reports, etc. and pen and paper.
- Be prepared. Read any information that has been sent to you prior to the meeting. Be ready to speak to agenda items and reports that you have placed on the agenda.
- Work collaboratively and be open to decision-making by discernment.
- Be willing to participate in the work of the Council. This could include taking a turn at preparing Prayer and Formation, joining subcommittees, undertaking research, being an office bearer of the Council, etc.
- Attend any training/formation for Council members arranged by the Executive or the Diocesan Pastoral Council.
- Be willing to work collaboratively with other parish and diocesan groups and Councils.

5.2 EXECUTIVE

- The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Secretary form the Council's Executive.
- In addition to the particular duties listed below, the Executive –
 - conducts the business of the Council between meetings,
 - oversees the development of proposals for consideration by the Council,
 - meets when required with the Executives of the other diocesan bodies and Councils to facilitate collaboration, and
 - may arrange additional formation opportunities outside the regular Council meetings.

5.3 CHAIRPERSON

- Assist with the preparation of the agenda for each meeting of the Council, reflect on the effectiveness of the previous Council meeting, make suggestions for agenda items and for formation opportunities for the Council.
- Encourage Council members to take a turn at leading the prayer and the formation period.
- Maintain the pastoral focus of the Council so that the aims and objectives outlined in the Council's statutes are a priority and work towards their achievement.
- Chair each meeting of the Council and the Executive.

- Prior to Council meetings spend some time preparing in regard to each agenda item.
- When chairing Council meetings: work collaboratively; be open to decision-making by discernment; monitor the time frame of each agenda item; ensure significant time for Prayer and Formation at meetings to create an atmosphere of faith; encourage new, shy or inexperienced members to express their views; discourage any particularly garrulous members from monopolizing or unduly dominating any discussion; invite (or personally put) questions designed to elicit relevant facts or enable decisions to be made; act as a resource person; confine discussions to ideas rather than personalities; stop any sotto voce discussions by "sub groups" while a speaker is addressing the Council, ensure all decisions are properly recorded.
- Provide encouragement and support for Council members and motivate members to fulfill their specific responsibilities, affirm their efforts individually and collectively.
- Encourage team building to facilitate the operation and cooperation of the Council.
- Encourage the implementation of strategies that inform the diocesan community about the work of the Council and ensure that regular updates on important projects are prepared for "Aurora", for the diocesan website, and for other communication channels.
- Represent the Bishop and the Council on occasion.
- Work with the Deputy Chairperson and Secretary to prepare the annual report.
- Ensure that tasks to be performed between meetings are accurately identified and clearly allocated to members for completion.

5.4 DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

- Attend Executive meetings.
- Provide encouragement and support for the Chairperson and the Secretary.
- Perform the duties of the Chairperson in the latter's absence.
- Represent the Bishop and Council when required.
- Assist the Chairperson to prepare the annual report.

5.5 SECRETARY

5.5.1 Preparing for Meetings

- Attend Council Executive meetings
- Draw up agenda, approximately two weeks before the meeting. This will include reflecting on the effectiveness of the previous Council meeting, checking the minutes of that meeting and pencilling items for "business arising" and arranging related papers and correspondence in the order in which they will be required.
- Forward the agenda and other relevant meeting papers to the Diocesan Councils Support Officer or the Diocesan Pastoral Support Unit for distribution.

5.5.2 At the meeting

- Arrive early to set up the meeting room.
- Keep accurate minutes of the meeting that include the names of those present, any apologies, all decisions made, etc.

5.5.3 Between meetings

- Type up the minutes within two weeks of the meeting and forward them to the Chairperson for checking/approval and then to the Diocesan Pastoral Support Unit for distribution.
- Write all letters and carry out other tasks as directed by the Council.
- Keep the current membership list up-to-date.
- Assist the Chairperson to prepare the annual report.
- Assist the Council to achieve the responsibilities of the Council as outlined in the Terms of Reference.