

# STRENGTHENING AND *Revitalising* PARISHES



**Constitution** for Parish Pastoral Councils  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH





# ARCHBISHOP'S INTRODUCTION

Dear Priests and members of Parish Pastoral Councils,

I am very grateful that you have agreed to serve your parish community as a member of the Parish Pastoral Council. Your generosity in assuming this important role of service and the personal gifts you bring are pivotal to an effective Parish Pastoral Council and as such critically important to the vitality of parish life and indeed to the Archdiocese.

In the Archdiocesan Plan 2016-2021, I have named seven priority areas which I believe will empower parishes to collaborate to *'walk together on the pathway which we hope will deliver a Christ-centred, faithful, vibrant, welcoming, inclusive and mission-oriented Church, one which will enrich our own lives and the lives of all whom we encounter and seek to serve.'*

To assist in this mission, one key strategy, which has now been completed, is the renewal and update of the Parish Pastoral Council Constitution. I foresee that this, along with an accompanying resource, will be the foundation of faith formation and leadership training of Parish Pastoral Councils in developing pastoral action plans for your parish.

I understand that each parish is unique in that it has its own history, qualities and characteristics and, therefore, will respond in its own way the carrying out of the mission of the Church, the mission of Jesus. I encourage you to take seriously your role as leaders in the Parish community to effect long lasting Parish renewal. My hope is that with the guidance of the Holy Spirit under your leadership, the parish will become a strong evangelising community.

The Parish Pastoral Council Constitution 2018, in the spirit of the Archdiocesan Plan *'A people walking together, in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd,'* calls for and will assist parishes, and indeed the whole Archdiocese to collaborate as one Body, so that we might return the Church to Christ and return Christ to the Church, our greatest task and challenge.



+ Timothy Costelloe SDB

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB**  
Catholic Archbishop of Perth



# Walking together in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd



## Preamble

"Parish Pastoral Councils are gathered by various means and in various forms in Catholic Parishes throughout Australia. They all have the single purpose of ensuring that the local church community, from among which they are called, has every possible opportunity to carry forward the mission of Jesus Christ. Thus the nature and function of the Parish Pastoral Council are drawn from the nature and mission of the Church, and its role in the Parish community is to make present the 'servant leadership' of Christ in collaboration with the overall pastoral leadership of the Parish Priest."<sup>1</sup>

## Rationale

### The Parish

The Parish is a community of faith headed by a Parish Priest who is appointed by the Bishop of the diocese and accountable to him. It has its own entity, it has rights and obligations and a certain degree of autonomy. The Parish, however, is not a totally independent entity rather it is part of a vine that is the Diocese, which in union with the universal Church continues the life and mission of Jesus in the world.

### The Parish Pastoral Council

The Parish Pastoral Council, hereinafter referred to as: the Council, is a consultative body. As such it has the right and duty to provide wise advice and constructive assessments to the Parish Priest. It is to be involved in prudent policy making, goal planning and setting of objectives to further the mission of the Parish faith community as an extension of the mission of Jesus.

### Communio and Mission

In union with Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, all members of the Church together, by virtue of their baptism, are called to participate in the Church's mission. The mission of the Church, the mandate to evangelise, is rooted in the mission of Christ.

### Evangelisation

The Church exists to evangelise [E.N. 14]<sup>2</sup>. For the Church, evangelising means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new [E.N. 18]<sup>3</sup>. This work of the Church embraces a preferential option for the poor.

### Servant Leadership

"For the Son of Man himself came not to be served but to serve, and give his life..." [Mk 10.45]<sup>4</sup>. Servant leadership is centred in the servanthood exemplified by Jesus. It calls forth, the gift of others, guided and graced with their own particular gifts and talents. The mission of the servant leader is to serve one another, including those inside and outside the Church by working in collaboration for the building up of the community of the Church. To this end, lines of communication are to be kept as open as possible between Parish administration, Parish agencies and individual members of the Parish as well as with other Parishes, the Clergy Zones and the Archdiocese as a whole.

### Missionary Discipleship

Pope Francis urges that all Christians "go out as missionary disciples, each generously offering their talents, creativity, wisdom and experience in order to bring the message of God's tenderness and compassion to the entire human family."<sup>5</sup> A missionary disciple values the dignity of each person and their diverse and particular gifts are recognised and encouraged to be offered for the life of the Parish.

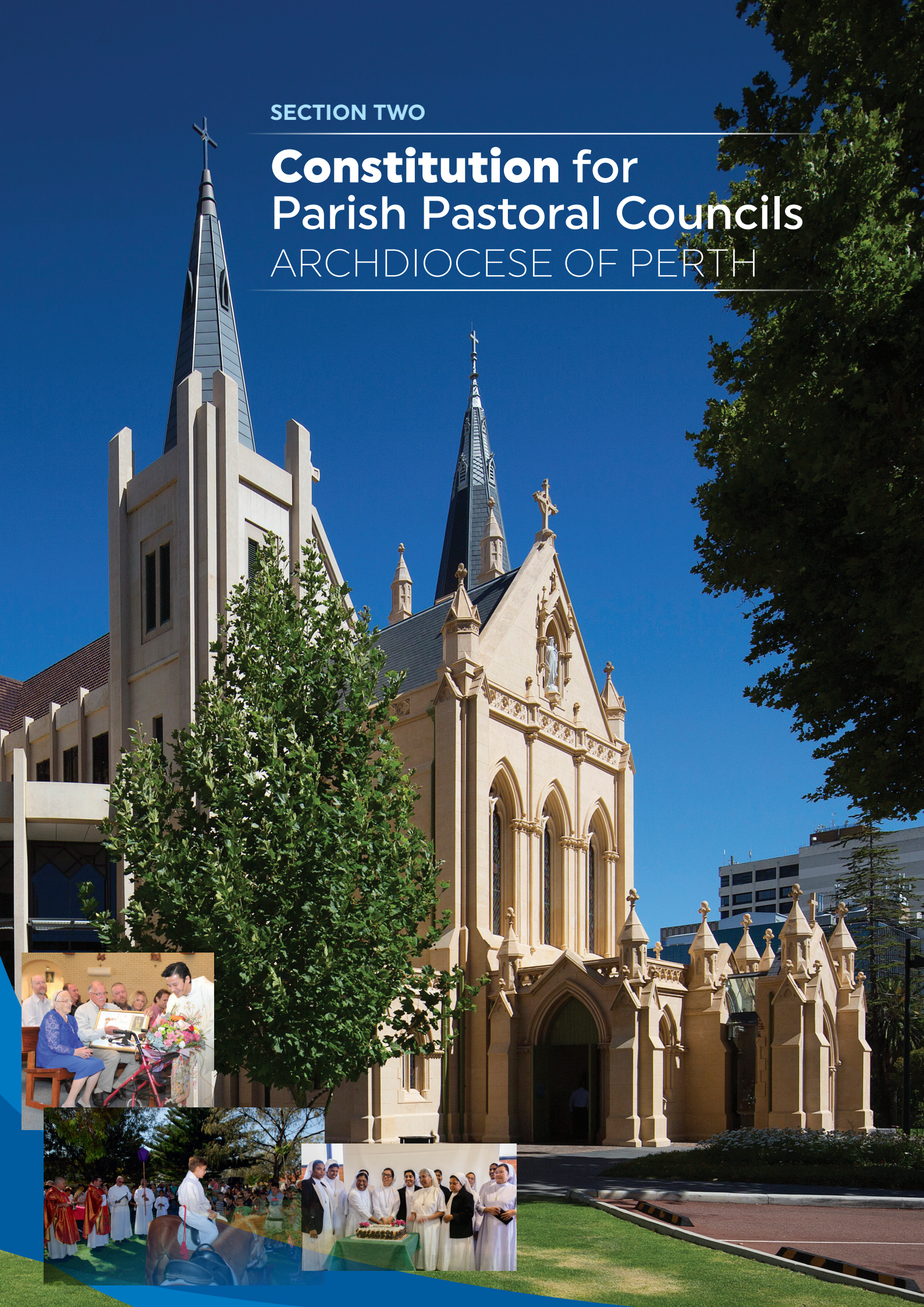
The Preamble and Rationale form a framework of key guiding principles for every Parish and parishioner to work towards "a Christ-centred, faithful, vibrant, welcoming, inclusive and mission-orientated Church"<sup>6</sup>.



## SECTION TWO

# Constitution for Parish Pastoral Councils

## ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH





# Constitution for Parish Pastoral Councils

## ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH

### 1. Constitutional Mandate

- 1.1. This Constitution is mandated by the Archbishop of Perth.
- 1.2. The Council "is regulated by the norms laid down by the diocesan Bishop".
- 1.3. The purpose of this Constitution is to provide regulations for the operation of the Council as a body of persons to carry out activities that are specified below.

### 2. Definitions

#### 2.1 President

President means the Parish Priest.

#### 2.2 Chairperson

Chairperson means the person elected by the Council members to chair meetings.

#### 2.3 Quorum

Quorum means one half plus one of all Council members and must include the Parish Priest.

### 3. Name

The name of the Council shall be the Parish Pastoral Council of (name of the parish and suburb or town in which the Parish is located).

### 4. Role

A Council consists of the Parish Priest together with parishioners elected by the Parish community and those co-opted by the Parish Priest. The role of the Council is to promote the Church's mission to live and communicate the love, values and teachings of Christ in our world. The Council shares in the responsibility for the ongoing life and development of the faith community, working together with parishioners to provide support for their efforts to live as followers of Christ.

### 5. Function

5.1 Pastoral issues, the core concern of the Council, are those that impact on the life of parishioners in the areas of

- integration of their faith into everyday life — home, work and community
- nourishment and support of their faith as they strive to live as faithful disciples of Jesus
- outward focus for the development of a vibrant Christian community, actively engaged in Jesus' mission of witness and service in the wider world.

5.2 Therefore, the key functions of the Council are

- to assist the apostolic work of the Church by promoting Christian formation of people and providing for them the means to achieve this
- to carefully evaluate information gathered in order to contribute towards the making of decisions that reflect the values of the gospel and the teachings of the Church
- to promote courses of study and reflection and any other initiatives which develop an understanding of the apostolate of the laity so that they can carry out their mission to the world at the Parish level and beyond
- to seek out and respond to the needs of people in the Parish and beyond and to involve the whole Parish in the response to these needs
- to set long-term and short-term pastoral goals for the Parish
- to develop a sense of Church beyond Parish boundaries and to stimulate a Christian response to local issues and the problems confronting our world
- to promote communication between all members, sectors and organisations of the Parish and wider community
- to co-operate and communicate with diocesan organisations and to support and promote the activities and services of these organisations.

NB Canon law states that in each Parish there is to be a finance committee to help the Parish Priest in the administration of the goods of the Parish.<sup>8</sup> The Parish Pastoral Council should dialogue and collaborate with the Parish Finance Committee where necessary in fulfilling the mission of the Parish.





# Constitution for Parish Pastoral Councils

## ARCHDIOCESE OF PERTH

### 6. Membership\*

- 6.1** Recommended criteria for membership:
- (a)** Catholics who are active members of the Parish community and have reached the age of eighteen (18) years
  - (b)** an interest in the welfare of all parishioners
  - (c)** a desire to be of service to the Parish community
  - (d)** a keenness to promote the teachings of the Catholic Church
  - (e)** an ability to work cooperatively and constructively with all other members of the Council and
  - (f)** a sufficiency of time to devote to Council duties.
- 6.2** The Council shall comprise:
- (a)** the Parish Priest and his assistant clergy as ex-officio members
  - (b)** a representative of other pastoral workers specifically serving the Parish
  - (c)** between 4 to 7 persons determined in the manner provided in Section 7 of this Constitution and
  - (d)** such parishioners as may be co-opted by the Parish Priest and the Council provided that the number co-opted shall not exceed the number of elected/selected members.
- 6.3** Membership of the Council shall be for a period of two years except for ex-officio members.
- 6.4** Any retiring member may be elected/selected provided he/she has not served for more than six (6) consecutive years.
- 6.5** On completion of six (6) years service, a retiring member may again be eligible after a lapse of one year.
- 6.6** Should the position of an elected/selected member become vacant, the Council shall have the power to appoint a replacement until the next election/selection.
- 6.7** Any member of the Council may resign by giving written notice of intention to the Secretary of the Council and the resignation shall operate from its acceptance by the Council.
- 6.8** Any member of the Council who, without apology is absent from three successive meetings, is deemed to have vacated his/her position from the Council.

\* Number and terms of Council members may depend on local circumstances; eg country Parishes.

### 7. Selection of Parish Pastoral Council Members

- 7.1** An election of Parish Pastoral Council members may take place at an annual community meeting or selected in a manner as determined by the Parish Priest in consultation with a body of parishioners.
- 7.2** Where an election is to be held at a meeting, at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting the Council shall:
- (a)** publicise the criteria for Council membership, as stated in Section 6.1
  - (b)** prepare a complete list of the names of current members of the Council to give to the meeting
  - (c)** indicate which, if any, members are eligible for re-election
  - (d)** determine the number of elected members to be included on the Council
  - (e)** determine the method of nomination for election to the Council.
- 7.3** Any person eligible to attend the meeting and otherwise eligible to be a member of the Council under this Constitution may, with his/her consent (whether present at the meeting or not), be nominated to be elected to the Council.
- 7.4** The method of voting shall be by each person indicating, in writing, the candidates of their choice.
- 7.5** The names of the new members of the Council shall be made public to the Parish.

### 8. Parish Pastoral Council Meetings and Proceedings

- 8.1** "The Parish Priest presides over the Council."<sup>9</sup>
- 8.2** As a consultative body, the Council makes recommendations to the Parish Priest.
- 8.3** All recommendations shall be reached by consensus and after careful and prayerful discernment by Council members.
- 8.4** Council members shall elect their own Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary.





- 8.5** Regular meetings of the Council shall normally be held once per month. Special meetings may be held as often as deemed necessary.
- 8.6** Special meetings of the Council shall be held when called by the Parish Priest, the Chairperson or by any three members of the Council or by the Vicar responsible for Parish Renewal. No less than three (3) days notice is required.
- 8.7** No meeting may be held without a quorum.
- 8.8** In the absence of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson, the Council shall elect an Acting Chairperson to chair the meeting.
- 8.9** All other points of procedure and order at meetings shall be decided by the Council Chairperson.
- 8.10** Minutes of all meetings of the Council shall be taken by the Council Secretary and all members are to receive a copy. One copy of the minutes shall be given to the Parish Priest for insertion in the Parish file. Another shall be inserted in the Council Secretary's file which is passed to his/her successor in office.
- 8.11** All written communications from the Council shall be made with the knowledge and approval of the Council and shall be effected through the Council Secretary.

## 9. Committees of the Parish Pastoral Council

- 9.1** The Council is empowered to appoint such committees as it deems necessary.
- 9.2** Membership of committees is not confined to members of the Council, however, at least one Council member is required to serve on each committee.
- 9.3** The duties of any committee shall be clearly defined by the Council and a specific date shall be set for the completion of the tasks assigned to the committee.
- 9.4** Committees report to and make recommendations to the Council.
- 9.5** As soon as a committee's task is completed, the committee is automatically dissolved. The Council reserves the right to dissolve any committee of the Council at any time.

## 10. Annual Report

- 10.1** An annual report will be prepared by the current Council Chairperson on the operation of the Council for the preceding twelve months.
- 10.2** Other reports as determined by the Parish Priest and the Council Chairperson may be made available to the Parish community.
- 10.3** All reports shall be approved by the Parish Priest before being made available to the Parish community.

## 11. General

- 11.1** This Constitution can only be amended by the Archbishop.
- 11.2** In the event of any dispute or uncertainty as to the meaning or intent of any clause in this Constitution, the matter shall be referred to the Vicar responsible for Parish Renewal for interpretation and decision.
- 11.3** The Council is required to work within the spirit and letter of this Constitution.
- 11.4** If for any reason the Council does not function according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution, the Parish Priest should notify and seek the advice and assistance of the Vicar responsible for Parish Renewal.
- 11.5** If, after receiving assistance, the Council is still unable to operate successfully it may be dismissed by the Parish Priest after consultation with the Vicar responsible for Parish Renewal. The Parish Priest may then re-constitute a new Council in accordance with the statutes 6.1 and 7.1 to 7.5.

## REFERENCE LIST

1. *Parish Pastoral Councils in Australia*, Bishops Commission for Pastoral Life, Australian Catholic Bishops Conference
2. *Pope Paul VI Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975)
3. Ibid
4. TJB (1966) Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd.
5. *Pope Francis, Message for World Mission Day* (2016)
6. *Archbishop's Welcome*, Archdiocesan Plan 2016-2021 Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB
7. *Code of Canon Law* (1983) Canon 536.2
8. *Code of Canon Law* (1983) Canon 537
9. *Code of Canon Law* (1983) Canon 536.1





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