



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF CAIRNS

Diocese of Cairns Policy

Document name:	Diocesan Pastoral Council
Approved by:	Bishop Joseph Caddy
Responsibility:	Director, Diocesan Outreach and Mission Services
Approval date:	May 2026
Review cycle:	3 years

Diocesan Pastoral Council Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Diocesan Pastoral Council (DPC) is one of two peak consultative bodies within the Diocese, which assists the Bishop in pastoral discernment. The DPC acts in concert with the Diocesan Finance Council (DFC), each with distinct canonical and governance roles.

The DPC is the primary consultative body to advise Bishop on pastoral priorities, planning and decision making.

The DPC incorporates the canonical functions of a Pastoral Council pursuant to cc. 511–514 of the Code of Canon Law.

2. Specific Definitions in addition to Charter

Unless the context otherwise requires, specific definitions additional to those within the overarching charter are:

Consultative Vote	A form of participation whereby the Council offers advice, discernment, and recommendations to the Bishop, without possessing deliberative or decision-making authority. Final decisions rest solely with the Bishop (c. 514 §1).
Synodality / Synodal Manner	A way of being and working Church characterised by prayerful listening, dialogue, discernment, co-responsibility, and “walking together” among clergy, religious, and lay faithful for the sake of mission.
Round Table	A time-limited consultative forum convened by the Bishop or Council to seek expertise, experience, and perspectives on a defined pastoral issue, trend, or challenge.

3. Scope/Mission

- 3.1 Each activity and division within the Diocese is part of a structured, missionary outreach of the Church with its charitable purpose and stewardship driving all our operations.
- 3.2 DPC is to develop Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals arising from the 2025-2026 Synod journey of the Diocese of Cairns. Areas of focus are:
 - a. Building a synodal church marked by listening, dialogue and shared discernment and the recognition that all the baptised are integral to the mission of the church.
 - b. To form missionary disciples for leadership, service and daily life through ongoing formation in faith, leadership and discernment, enabling clergy and lay people to live the Gospel in contemporary contexts.

- c. Strengthen parishes as welcoming, vital and mission-focused communities, attentive to Christ's presence among the poor and vulnerable.
 - d. Renewed attention to walking with young people and families in faith, life and mission.
- 3.3 The DPC's aim is to enable operational delivery of the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals across parishes and agencies across the Diocese, where applicable.
- 3.4 In accordance with c. 511, the DPC exercises the following functions:
- a. seek out and listen to the voices of the faithful in the local Church and all people in the Diocese, and
 - b. to investigate, consider, and formulate practical conclusions for those things which pertain to pastoral works within our diocese
 - c. function in a synodal manner
 - d. propose recommendations for pastoral action to the Bishop
- 3.5 In order to fulfill 3.2 the DPC can form subcommittees, working parties and roundtables and commissioning of research.

4. Role of the DPC

- 4.1 The DPC is commissioned by the Bishop as an advisory and consultative body on stewardship in the areas of pastoral concern including outreach, care, education and pastoral services across the Diocese. It provides leadership and direction to the Diocese and promotes best governance practices while working towards our Catholic mission. The DPC works in partnership with Parish Pastoral Councils, other diocesan Agencies and advisory bodies, and other Catholic entities to support the Bishop and other groups in their local church leadership roles and to drive the Mission of the Church. DPC shall make recommendations to the Bishop, offer reflective and consultative advice and propose practical steps about those things that pertain to the pastoral works of the Diocese.
- 4.2 The DPC will exercise its role in a synodal manner characterised by spiritual conversations, prayerful listening, dialogue, discernment, co-responsibility, and respect for ecclesial authority. Members are appointed to serve the mission of the entire Diocese and not to represent particular parishes, organisations, or interest groups.
- 4.3 DPC will be instrumental in building up Diocesan communities by:
- a. Promoting best practice and consistency in governance in the spirit and principles of the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals.
 - b. Providing close links between the Diocese and the parishes and their governing bodies
 - c. Initiating and facilitating dialogue between the people of the Diocese, Diocesan bodies and the pastoral leadership of the Diocese
 - d. Researching, reflecting upon and discerning issues of concern to the whole Diocese
 - e. Establishing committees / working groups / round tables to investigate areas of pastoral concern and Diocesan responses
 - f. Developing broad pastoral and strategic goals at an overarching Diocesan level
 - g. Addressing areas of Diocesan pastoral concern in relation to developing long-term plans for consistent and uniform practices across all Diocesan agencies and communities
- 4.4 The DPC seeks to foster unity, trust, transparency, and collaboration across diocesan life, and to support the Bishop through thoughtful advice, shared discernment, and practical pastoral insight.
- 4.5 All members are expected to act in accordance with Church teaching, diocesan policies, the Diocesan Code of Conduct, and the principles set out in these Terms of Reference.

- 4.6 The DPC will discern and make recommendation to Bishop in the following areas:
- a. Collaboration with Parishes
 - b. Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals
 - c. Faith Formation
 - d. Services to Poor, Alienated and Marginalised
 - e. Safeguarding
 - f. Current matters affecting the Catholic faith and communities, as they arise
 - g. Communications, advocacy and the public image of the Catholic mission.

5. Members, Skills and Proceedings

- 5.1 The DPC consists of up to 16 members, including:
- a. Bishop/Ex Officio
 - b. Vicar General
 - c. Vicars Forane (3)
 - d. Lay members.
- 5.2 The Bishop of Cairns will preside over the DPC, or appoint a Chair to preside in his place.
- 5.3 External attendees (non-members) will include executive-level staff from diocesan agencies:
- a. Catholic Education Diocese of Cairns
 - b. Centacare FNQ
 - c. Diocesan Services
 - d. Other representatives as and when required
- 5.4 Canonical requirements of members of the DPC:
- c. 512 §1** A pastoral council consists of members of the Christian faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church – clerics, members of institutes of consecrated life, and especially laity – who are designated in a manner determined by the diocesan bishop.
- c. 512 §2** The Christian faithful who are designated to a pastoral council are to be selected in such a way that they truly reflect the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the Diocese, with consideration given to the different areas of the diocese, social conditions and professions, and the role which they have in the apostolate whether individually or joined with others.
- c. 512 §3** No one except members of the Christian faithful outstanding in firm faith, good morals, and prudence is to be designated to a pastoral council.
- 5.5 All members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council are expected to engage in ongoing formation. Formation is integral to the Council’s identity and effectiveness and is not optional. Formation programs will support:
- a. synodal practice,
 - b. pastoral discernment,
 - c. ecclesial leadership,
 - d. and understanding of diocesan life and mission.
- 5.6 The DPC will meet a minimum of three (3) times per year, in excess of **c. 514 §2**.
- 5.7 In accordance with **c. 513 §2**, the Diocesan Pastoral Council ceases when the episcopal see is vacant. The Council may be reconstituted by the new diocesan bishop.
- 5.8 Canonical requirements for functions of the DPC:

- c. 513 §1** Members are ordinarily appointed for a three-year term, unless otherwise determined by the Bishop.

The pastoral council is established for a period of time determined in the Charters and Terms of Reference.

6. Communication Protocols

6.1 Communication Protocols will be followed by all DPC members:

6.1.1 Internal Communication

Communication within the Diocesan Pastoral Council is conducted in a spirit of mutual respect, prayerful listening, and shared discernment. Members are expected to contribute freely to discussion while respecting the confidentiality of Council deliberations.

6.1.2 Communication with the Bishop

The Diocesan Pastoral Council communicates its advice, reflections, and proposed conclusions to the Bishop through formal reports, minutes, or other means determined by the Bishop or Chair.

6.1.3 Communication with Diocesan Agencies, Clergy, and Parishes

The Diocesan Pastoral Council does not exercise authority over diocesan agencies, parishes, clergy, or other bodies.

6.1.4 Public Communication and Media

The Diocesan Pastoral Council does not engage in public communication, media commentary, or advocacy in its own name.

6.2 Confidentiality

Matters discussed at meetings of the Diocesan Pastoral Council are confidential unless otherwise determined by the Bishop. Nothing in these Communication Protocols is to be interpreted as granting the Diocesan Pastoral Council or its members authority to speak or act on behalf of the Diocese.

6.3 Record Keeping and Reporting

Accurate records of meetings, including agendas and minutes, are maintained in accordance with diocesan governance practices.

6.4 An annual report may be prepared for the Bishop summarising the work of the Diocesan Pastoral Council during the year. The Bishop alone determines whether any annual report, or part thereof, is published or shared more widely (**c. 514 §1**).

7. Related Documents

These Terms of Reference are to be read in conjunction with the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Cairns - Overarching Board Charter. Where provisions of the Charter relate to matters of corporate governance, compliance, or administrative practice, they apply to the Diocesan Pastoral Council insofar as they are consistent with the consultative nature and canonical norms governing pastoral councils (cc. 511–514 CIC). In matters of canonical interpretation, the Code of Canon Law prevails.

8. Effective Date

This document is effective: 19th May 2026



Bishop Joseph Caddy AM