



Parramatta Diocese Governance Review Report – *Case Study for ISMAPNG Governance Forum*

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Parramatta Diocese Governance Review in light of principle of subsidiarity:

- Review Terms of Reference
- Review Approach
- Understanding *subsidiarity* and *synodality*
- Key Findings in relation to principle of synodality and subsidiarity
- Implications for Mercy Governing Entities

PD Review Terms of Reference

- Governance Review of the organs of administration and governance:-
 - » Diocesan Administration including the Vicars General, College of Consultors, Chancellors, Council of Priests, Episcopal Vicars, Vicars, Diocesan Curia, Personnel Board.
 - » Diocesan Finance Council and its relevant Sub-Committees.
 - » Chancery Administration.
 - » Other Diocesan Committees including Liturgy, Safeguarding.
 - » Diocesan Pastoral Council, Deanery Pastoral Councils, Parish Councils and Administration.
 - » Parramatta Diocese Schools Council (Catholic Education, Diocese of Parramatta).
 - » Catholic Care Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains Advisory Council.
 - » Catholic Diocese of Parramatta Services Limited Board.

PD Review Terms of Reference

1. To identify areas in which the governance and management structures of the Diocese and parishes assists or impedes accountability, transparency, consultation and synodality and the proper attainment of clerical and lay men and women's participation and co-responsibility in the decision-making processes of the Diocese.
2. To identify any cultural practices or symbols that have led to appropriate use of power as well as to any serious or widespread abuse of power in governance and management practices.
3. To identify any lack of consistency or weaknesses in the current application of good governance practices within the Diocese and propose any additional structures or governance applications that will strengthen the existing governance models within the Diocese, its Agencies and Parishes.

PD Review Terms of Reference

4. To identify principles of governance that will facilitate best practice in management and administration within Diocesan and Parish Administration, Catholic Education and CatholicCare.
5. To identify best practice examples of governance and management in the Diocesan structures and other models within the Church, including regulatory models, with on diversity, consultation and synodality.
6. To recommend changes to governance and management structures to achieve the goals of best practice as outlined in these terms of reference.

Summary: Examples of ecclesial & civil governance principles

Ecclesial

- Synodality
- Subsidiarity
- Discernment
- Integrity
- Dialogue
- Accountability
- Morality

Civil

- Engagement
- Responsibility and liability
- Right decision-making
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Ethics

Review Methodology

- Consideration of findings from *The Light from the Southern Cross* Report
- Qualitative methodology:-
 - One to one interviews with key individuals (50+)
 - Analysis of legal documentation
 - Meeting observation
 - Aggregation and analysis of findings
 - Consultation and feedback
 - Report with consideration of best practice and recommendations and commendations for consideration of the Bishop

Timeline and approach impacted by COVID-19

Subsidiarity and other ecclesial principles in PD Governance Review

- Review TOR specify civil, canonical and ecclesial principles of accountability, transparency, consultation, synodality, participation and co-responsibility, and the use of power in governance and management practices, but not specifically subsidiarity.
- Reviewers asked to identify best practice principles and examples of governance and management practice inclusive of diversity, consultation and synodality

Subsidiarity 1

- The principle of subsidiarity came to international attention when it was named and stated by Pope Pius XI in his social encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931 in the following way.
- *It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry. So, too, it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and a disturbance to right order to transfer to the larger and higher collectivity functions which can be performed and provided for by lesser and subordinate bodies. Inasmuch as every social activity should, by its very nature, prove a help [subsidium] to members of the body social, it should never destroy or absorb them [QA 79]*

Andrew Murray, 'The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Church' - Australian Catholic Record, April 1995

Subsidiarity 2

- Since then it has been reaffirmed by successive popes and has become a central principle of Catholic social theory. Although the principle of subsidiarity has clear roots in earlier social and political theory, its explicit statement grew out of particular historical conditions. The Church's response to the laissez-faire economic policies of the nineteenth century had been to support the right and responsibility of government to intervene in the economic and social affairs of its citizens. The purpose of this had been and remains to ensure the protection of the dignity and rights of individual persons. At the same time, by 1931 it was recognised that the state itself was capable of concentrating and controlling not only political but also social and economic power. Andrew Murray, ('The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Church' - Australian Catholic Record, April 1995)

Subsidiarity 3

- The principle of subsidiarity recognises both that the good of the individual person is primary in all discussion of social and political organisation and that persons can live only in communities, which, therefore, have their own specific goods and exercise powers in their own right. Pius XI applied it both to the relationship between individuals and the community and to the relationship between the higher and lower organisations in a more complexly structured society. In summary, the principle states that a government should intervene in the affairs of citizens when help is necessary for the individual and common good but insists that all functions that can be done by individuals or by lower level organisations be left to them. The government, therefore, has a subsidiary or helping role in relation to lower organisations or individuals. (Andrew Murray, 'The Principle of Subsidiarity and the Church' - Australian Catholic Record, April 1995)

Subsidiarity - definitions

- In the Roman Catholic Church a principle of social doctrine that all social bodies exist for the sake of the individual so that what individuals are able to do, society should not take over, and what small societies can do, larger societies should not take over.
- In political systems the principle of devolving decisions to the lowest practical level.
Dictionary.com
- Subsidiarity is an organizing principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. Political decisions should be taken at a local level if possible, rather than by a central authority. [Wikipedia](#)
- The principle that decisions should always be taken at the lowest possible level or closest to where they will have their effect: e.g. in a local area rather than for a whole country. Cambridge Dictionary

Subsidiarity from Governance perspective

- Where feasible decisions should be taken at the level of those impacted – higher level bodies should be mindful of the impact of their decisions on those affected by them. E.g. where this is not feasible are patients in a hospital vs management or Board in setting the budget. But governing body and/or management have responsibility to consult, engage, and involve those impacted by their decisions in the process of decision-making.
- While the Church champions subsidiarity, its decision-making and legal structures do not always reflect the principle.

Synodality

- April 2021 announcement of Synod on Synodality in October 2023:
For a synodal Church: Communion, participation and mission.
- Uniquely for this synod the intent is to involve all the People of God in 3 phases i) listening in local Churches; ii) *2 Instrumentum Laboris*; and iii) Synod of Bishops in Rome as a point of convergence from listening and discernment phases
- General Secretariat of the Synod is preparing a Preparatory Document, questionnaire and *Vademecum* (Guide) for local Churches for 17 October 2021

Synodality – Pope Francis:

Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015

- From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I sought to enhance the Synod, which is one of the most precious legacies of the Second Vatican Council... A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening "is more than simply hearing".(12) It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn.. the Church is nothing other than the "journeying together" of God's flock along the paths of history towards the encounter with Christ the Lord, then we understand too that, within the Church, no one can be "raised up" higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person "lower" himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way. [An inverted pyramid]

Synodality – Pope Francis:

Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015

- In a synodal Church, the Synod of Bishops is only the most evident manifestation of a dynamism of communion which inspires all ecclesial decisions...The first level of the exercise of synodality is had in the particular Churches...The second level is that of Ecclesiastical Provinces and Ecclesiastical Regions, Particular Councils and, in a special way, Conferences of Bishops...I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization'. The last level is that of the universal Church. Here the Synod of Bishops, representing the Catholic episcopate, becomes an expression of episcopal collegiality within an entirely synodal Church.

Synodality – Pope Francis:

Address Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 17 October 2015

- The Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized, and within the College of Bishops as a Bishop among Bishops, called at the same time – as Successor of Peter – to lead the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches...Our gaze also extends to humanity as a whole. A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations...to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.

Synodality and subsidiarity

- Arguably synodality is a more comprehensive and contemporary lens through which to look at governance in Church entities, and absorbs key elements of subsidiarity (such as protection of the individual from the powerful) through co-responsibility and discernment.
- Synodality involves all the People of God journeying together in
 - listening and discernment (communion);
 - inclusion, and co-responsibility (participation);
 - and breathing the word into the world (mission)

Synodality and subsidiarity in PD Review

- Bishop Long explicitly wanted structures of power examined, degrees of inclusion, and co-responsibility, as part of governance.
- All but one governing body is advisory to the Bishop. However, there were high levels of professionalism and commitment to mission, largely due to astute recruitment to diocesan entities, and to the Bishop's disposition of respectful listening.
- Notwithstanding some areas for improvement, the reviewers found the diocese operating with sound governance and administrative protocols such as contemporary HR practice, risk-management and accountability.

Synodality and subsidiarity in PD Review

- *Mission:* The Bishop has clearly communicated his vision for the diocese, and engendered widespread commitment to it (despite 'culture wars'). The prudent, risk-based, long-term financial focus of the Diocesan Finance Council, situates the diocese well for a sustainable financial future where its ministries can be maintained. [*No mission without margin*]
- *Inclusion:* There are two women on the Curia – a religious and a laywoman and high numbers of lay people on other diocesan bodies.
- *Co-responsibility:* Most agencies are headed by lay people and efforts are made to draw all the baptised into the life of the Church e.g. parish, deanery and diocesan pastoral councils.

Leadership and Decision-making in PD

- There is a discernible model of leadership in the Parramatta Diocese based on scripture, the findings of Vatican II, and the teachings of Pope Francis. Bishop Vincent embodies and leads the Parramatta model of leadership. It is one in which the dignity of each person is placed at the heart of ministry, where every effort is made to bring God's message to life through word and deed. It is also a model of leadership which embraces engagement with the society in which it operates alongside fidelity to ecclesial norms and teachings. It respects and adopts civil governance principles and strives to implement regulatory requirements and risk-based approaches. And it is a model where social justice principles such as solidarity and a commitment to the common good are in evidence.

Reception of Report and Implementation

- The Diocese of Parramatta Governance Review Report was presented to the Bishop in a formal handover ceremony in the diocese on 26 March 2021 which included commissioning a Taskforce to lead implementation of the recommendations
- Formal oversight and accountability is through regular diocesan meetings, and meetings with reviewers at 6 month intervals