

St Mary of the Angels Parish

Parish Pastoral Council

Terms of Reference



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Why do we need a Parish Pastoral Council?

Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC)s are one of the structures which were strongly recommended by the Bishops of the Second Vatican Council, as a response to a desire that priests and laity work together.

In dioceses, as far as possible, councils should be set up to assist the Church’s apostolic work, whether in the field of making the gospel known and people holy or in charitable, social or other spheres.¹

The forming of Pastoral Councils recognises the importance of the role of the laity (the people of God, the faithful, the parishioners) in the life of the Church. The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem) further emphasised that the laity, by virtue of their baptism and full initiation into the Church (through the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist), share responsibility for the pastoral mission of the faith community, the parish.

¹ Vatican II, Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, 26.

What is the role of the PPC?

The purpose of the PPC is to promote and support the evangelising mission of the Parish, working in collaboration, and assisting, the Parish Priest or duly appointed Administrator, to foster the spiritual and pastoral life of all the Christian faithful.

The PPC enables the members of the Parish community to fulfil their baptismal calling to share in Christ's mission and to connect their needs and their strengths with the Parish's plans for the future.

How does the PPC contribute to Pastoral Planning?

A key task of a PPC is to plan for the future of the parish community i.e. to do pastoral planning. This is the process of planning for the ongoing life and development of the parish faith community.

As with families and in the workplace, there is a need to plan for the future. In fact, if we fail to plan, we plan to fail. Pastoral planning enables a parish to continue to develop, to be a place of spiritual nourishment, belonging, healing and meaning and so to fulfill its purpose faithfully and well in a changing world.

Pastoral planning seeks to determine effective ways for parishioners to be active in the life and mission of the Church, promoting the reign of God in our world. Generally, the Pastoral Council is given the task of developing a pastoral plan which is designed to cover a period ranging from three to five years. When planning for the future, the PPC must take into account previous planning initiatives, such as goals set and consultations undertaken, so that work already done is respected.

Communication and consultation, in this regard, are of prime importance. Being well informed about relevant diocesan plans, priorities and resources will also be important for the effectiveness of pastoral planning.

Following parish surveys, consultation and engagement (culminating in an open planning day session for parishioners) the PPC is to publicly release a Planning Report. The Planning Report outlines the methods of engagement, aspirations, feedback summary and next steps.

Complementing the Planning Report, the PPC will release a five-year Work Plan, which builds on the ideas and suggestions raised by the parish in the planning phase, and which sets out timeframes for the delivery of activities. The Work Plan is reviewed yearly, with the PPC reporting to parishioners on how the parish has delivered on actions.

Input from parishioners may also be sought to complement the ongoing cycle of monitoring and evaluation, and further planning days will be held to inform future Work Plans. Activities may be added to the Work Plan, but must demonstrate alignment to the stated aspirations and priorities. Any additional activities or actions will be reported in the yearly review for transparency.

What does a well-functioning PPC look like?

A well-functioning PPC typically exhibits several key characteristics:

1. **Diverse representation:** the PPC would include members from various demographics within the parish community, such as different age groups, gender and theological standing, ensuring a wide range of perspectives are considered.
2. **Collaborative decision-making:** decisions are made collaboratively, with input from all members and a commitment to consensus-building whenever possible.
3. **Effective communication:** members communicate openly and effectively with each other, as well as with the parish leadership and the congregation, fostering transparency and trust.
4. **Objectivity:** members are representative of the whole parish community. and aim to take a community view of issues, not an individual or group perspective.

What does PPC membership look like?

There will be ten (10) members, this consists of the Parish Priest, Assistant Priest and eight (8) parishioners. In addition, up to two (2) ex-officio members may be involved, which includes members of the Parish Office or representatives of relevant committees (such as the Parish Finance Committee). This number is recommended, even for a large community, as this allows for maximum participation.

A term of membership is defined as two (2) years. To facilitate continuity, it is anticipated that approximately half the PPC will choose to continue for at least three terms.

Membership of the PPC is open to all parishioners through invitation, and is completely voluntary, with an expected commitment of two (2) hours a month. The PPC may fill any casual vacancy by invitation.

How are the meetings run?

Meetings will occur on the second Tuesday of every month and only cancelled if there will be no more than five (5) parishioner members in attendance (not including the parish priests and ex-officio member/s).

There will be a minimum of ten (10) monthly meetings of the PPC each year. Where a meeting is cancelled due to lack of quorum, it is the preference that the meeting will be rescheduled. Meetings will begin and end with a prayer or reflection by either priest, followed by confirmation of previous minutes and any other business.

Who forms the executive of the PPC?

The Parish Priests plus office-bearers will form the executive of the PPC. The office-bearers, chosen by the members, will be Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, and Secretary.

The role of the executive is to:

- Reflect on the effectiveness of each previous PPC meeting. What went well? What can be done better?
- Organise the agenda for each meeting, incorporating input from all members.
- Arrange distribution of the agenda and all relevant material one (1) week in advance of the meeting.
- Arrange distribution of minutes no later than one (1) week following the meeting.
- Coordinate the business of the PPC between meetings.
- Arrange additional formation opportunities outside the regular meetings.

What are the key duties of PPC members?

PPC members attend meetings of the PPC scheduled monthly, and provide advice and support to the Parish Priest.

Members must develop and monitor the implementation of the Parish Planning Report and Work Plan, and identify and develop missionary opportunities for the Parish. The PPC also provides support and information when a new priest is appointed to the Parish.

Additional duties are required of the executive of the PPC, being the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the Secretary. Task groups may also be set up under the auspices of the PPC for specific purposes for a definite duration and will report regularly to the PPC. These groups may include members of the PPC.

The role of the Chairperson includes:

- Incorporating input from all PPC members to prepare an agenda for meetings.
- Maintaining the pastoral focus of the PPC (encouraging involvement and active listening, and ensuring respect)
- Working collaboratively to set realistic short-term and long-term goals for the PPC.
- Ensuring there are outcomes for each agenda item, or possibilities for outcomes.
- Ensuring ongoing liaison with the Parish Priest.
- Encouraging the participation of all members in working on projects and tasks.
- Ensuring there is regular communication with parishioners to inform them of the work of the PPC.
- Representing the parish at deanery/diocesan meetings as required.

The role of the Deputy Chairperson includes:

- Attending meetings of the executive (if required)
- Providing encouragement and support for the Chairperson.

- Assisting the Chairperson in conducting the PPC's work.
- Performing the duties of the Chairperson in the latter's absence.

The role of the Secretary includes:

- Providing for the recording of the minutes of PPC meetings.
- Arranging for the necessary meeting place and the resources appropriate for the meeting.
- Attending to inward and outward correspondence.
- Distributing information and correspondence to PPC members and parish groups as required.
- Keeping a file of records of the PPC's minutes, decisions, history, membership and development.

What qualifications and experience are necessary?

No training or experience is required. However, members should be actively involved in parish life and practicing the Catholic faith through regular attendance at liturgy and reception of the Sacraments.

Members must hold a current Victorian Working with Children Check or Victorian Institute of Teaching registration. All volunteers with the Parish must complete the Safeguarding Essentials online training module on an annual basis, and any roles or activities which work directly with children and young people are required to complete the Working Safely with Children and Young People online training module every 3 years.

What are the skills and attributes of PPC members?

- Commitment to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable people
- Motivated to work within the Catholic Church environment and a strong commitment to its values.
- Commitment to ongoing personal faith formation
- Honesty and integrity
- Reliability
- Responsibility
- Willingness to work collaboratively as part of a team
- Planned and organised
- Willingness to participate in learning opportunities e.g. induction, training and development
- Able to communicate effectively and respectfully with others
- Flexible and adaptable
- Respect confidentiality and privacy
- Ability to contribute to planning the mission of the Parish
- Understands that although members of the PPC should represent the diversity of different groups within the Parish, members of the PPC advocate for the whole Parish not only their group
- Understands the need to declare an actual or potential conflict of interest