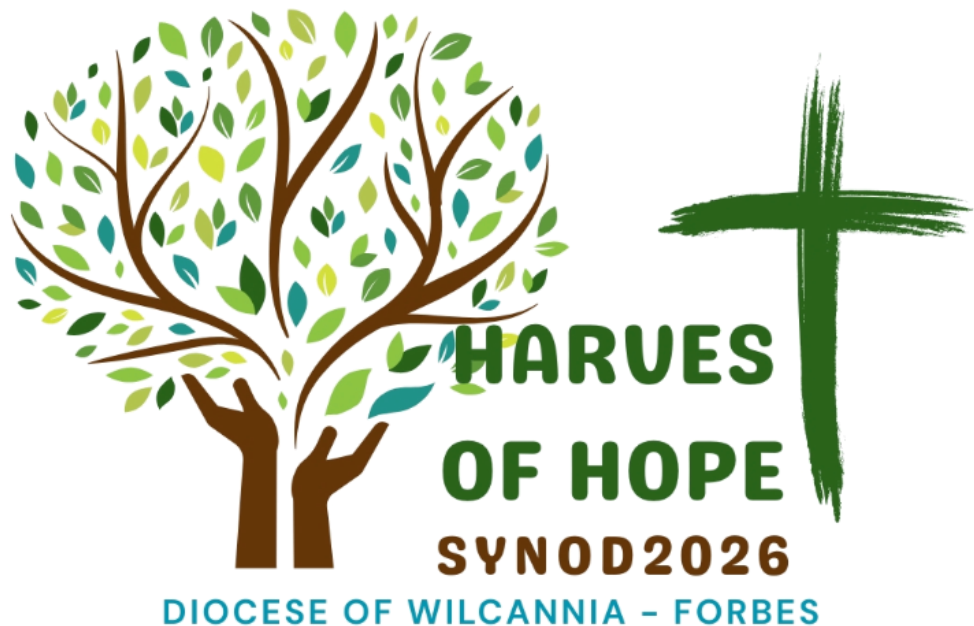


Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes Synod Survey Collation 2025



**Collation compiled by Dr Trevor Cooper,
Actuary and Statistician**

**Survey prepared by Synod
Subcommittee of the Diocesan Pastoral
Council: Mrs Therese Glasheen, Mr
Adrian Ray, Sr Elizabeth Young**



December 2025

Bishop's Message

Thank you to everyone who has participated in this journey to our Diocesan Synod so far. Together, we listen to the Holy Spirit and each other for the good of the diocese. I first asked the Diocesan Pastoral Council to consider how we might hold a Synod in April 2024. Since then, I convoked the Synod in my Easter message of 2025 and shared resources on the dedicated Synod webpage. I commissioned this survey, which the Synod Subcommittee prepared and launched during a diocesan Zoom gathering to talk about the purpose and meaning of the Synod. Both online and paper surveys were received during the months of September to November. I enlisted Dr Trevor Cooper, from the Parish of Sawtell in the Diocese of Lismore, to assist in the collation of the survey results. Trevor and his parish have been associated with our diocese for several years and we are very grateful for their assistance. With faith and hope in God, and the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, I commend this document to you, that we may read and pray with it as we continue the next phases of our Synod journey.

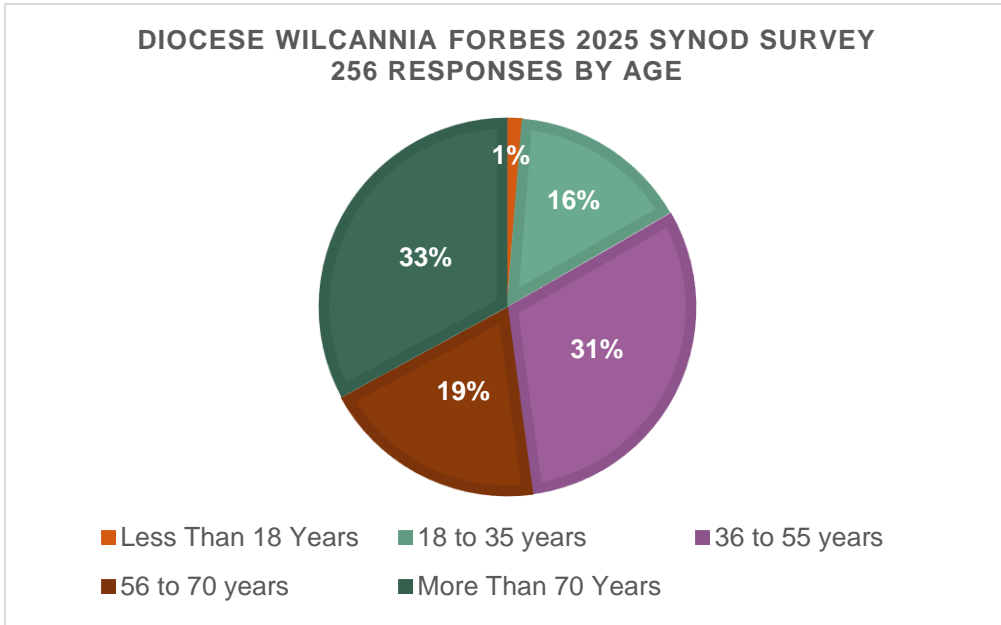
Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green OSPPE DD

Summary

Each one of these responses is precious. We received over 250 completed surveys prior to this collation (there were several that arrived after the date) as well as other communications. We acknowledge that these results do not represent all Catholics in the diocese, and that data may be skewed towards the greater response numbers from large parishes, as well as employees of Catholic agencies. Nevertheless, we see that Catholic life is greatly valued, both in personal and communal faith expressions. There is a desire for Catholic life in the diocese to be relevant, liturgical, socially active and help to connect people. Those who regularly attend Mass are highly committed and involved, but there is a fear for the future of local parishes in 10 years' time if important questions are not asked and challenges addressed. This material will help the Bishop to discern through the Synod processes, with all members of the diocese, about what we need now and into the future. Let us continue to pray and may the Holy Spirit guide us in the great mission of Jesus Christ in Wilcannia-Forbes.

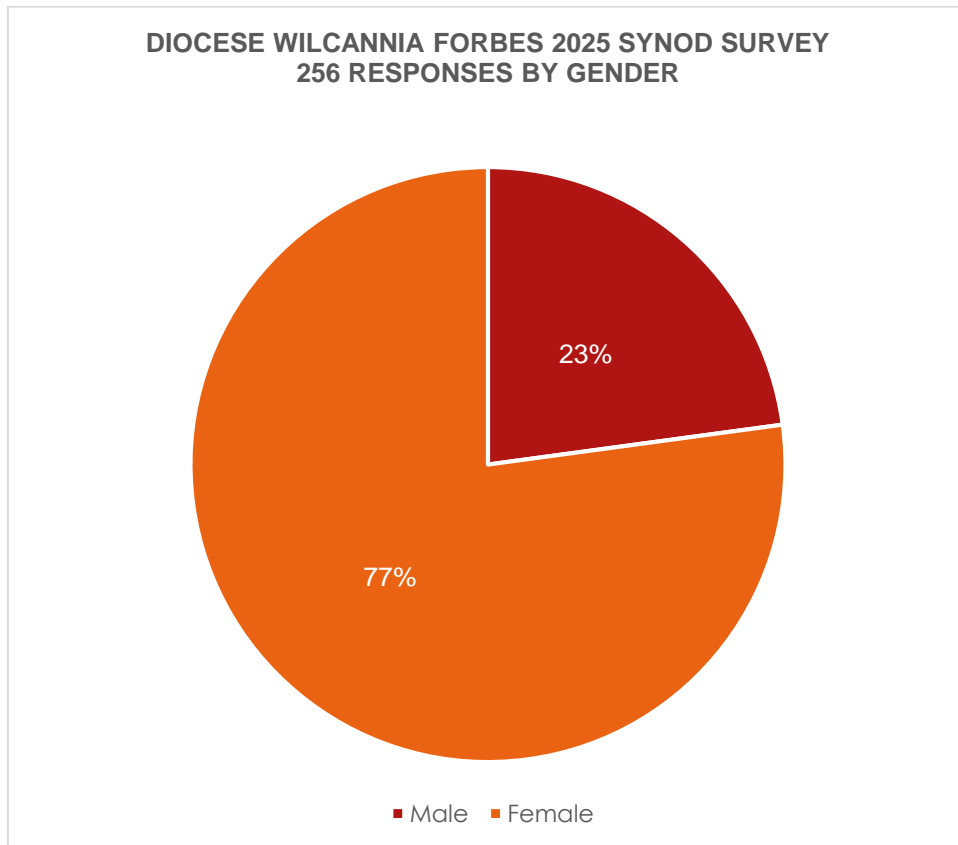
Synod Subcommittee

Responses by Age



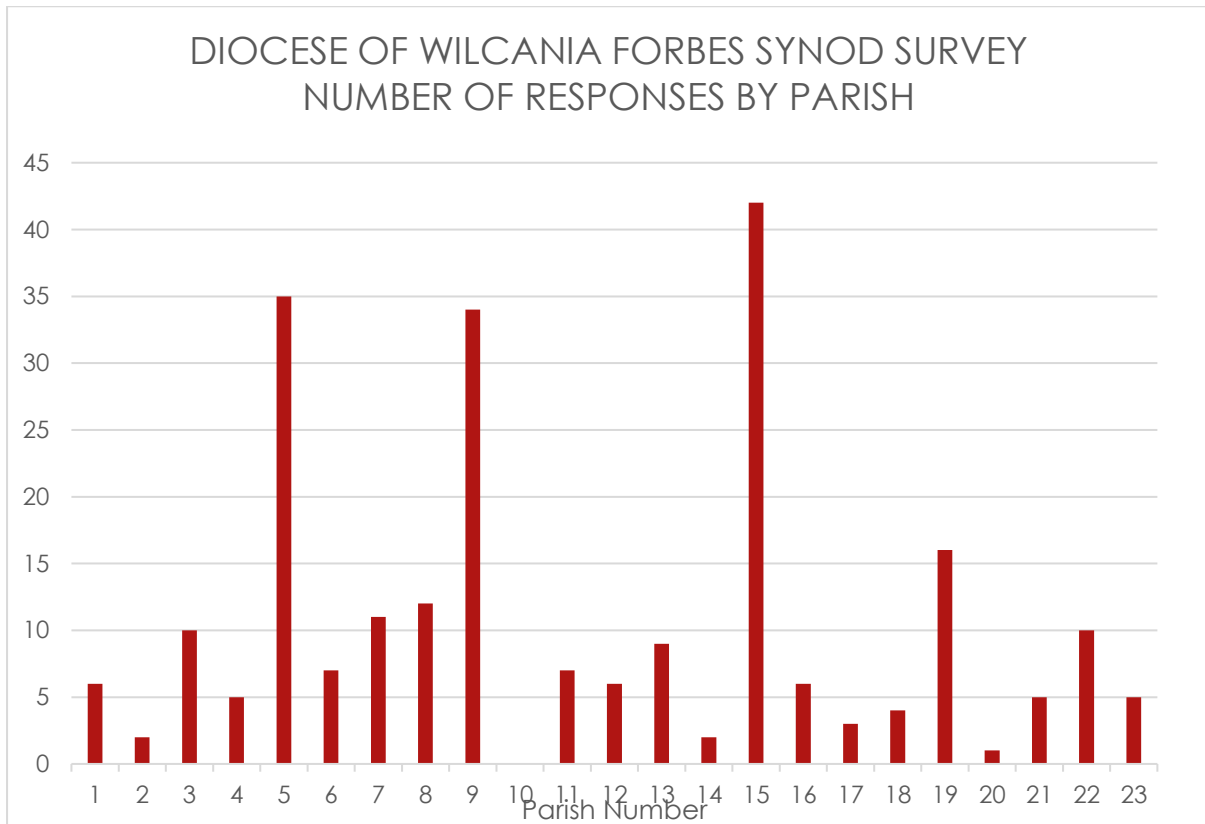
*83% Aged over 35
52% Aged over 55
33% Aged over 70*

Responses by Gender



48% Men over 70
77% Women over 35
46% Women over 55

Responses by Parish



Balranald	1	Narromine	13
Barham	2	Nyngan	14
Bourke	3	Parkes	15
Brewarrina	4	Peak Hill	16
Broken Hill	5	Trangie	17
Cobar	6	Trundle	18
Condobolin	7	Warren	19
Deniliquin	8	Wentworth	20
Forbes	9	Wilcannia	21
Hay	10	Outside Diocese	22
Hillston	11	Property/Remote	23
Moama	12		

Parish numbers match with placement in the graph above for reference; they do not indicate the number of responses.

Results of Responses: Initial Questions

Mass Attendance

Don't Attend	7%
Occasionally Attend	19%
Regularly Attend	74%

Volunteer in Liturgies 57%

Employed by Catholic Church or Agency 41%

Other Volunteering 33%

Volunteer in Liturgies or Other Volunteering 82% out of 74% that regularly attend.
Committed core group.

44% of respondents said they Financially Support the Parish

82% of those who Regularly Attend said they Financially Support the Parish

What Brings Joy?

Question: In your experience of Catholic life, what brings you joy?

Quotes [These quotes and those on the following pages are just a sample of the overall answers to each question.]

"The Knowledge that God Loves Us and wants what's best for us."

"Making a positive impact on other's lives, being able to support them during hard time, to ease their burdens, to encourage them with the love of Jesus"

"Never miss Mass. Talking to God in His house."

"Seeing families, young people, and Elders come together in faith, culture and community."

"Seeing God's love in simple, everyday moments"

"Listening to the Word of God, reflecting on the Homilies, singing with the Choir and being with a community of like minded people of faith and belief."

Results

- Community and Friendship were expressed as being important by some 67% of respondents
- Receiving the Sacraments were expressed as being important by some 53% of respondents
- Supporting people in need was expressed as being important by some 32% of respondents
- Seeing Children and Families at Mass was expressed as being important by some 23% of respondents
- Other responses included enjoying the Homily, Knowing more about my Faith, Sharing my Faith, and the Music.

Greatest Challenges

Question: In your experience of Catholic Life, what do you see as the greatest challenges?

Quotes:

"I find it challenging balancing my beliefs as a catholic with my social cultural values as a 21st century Australian."

"Connecting students and families to the Church"

"Less people attending services especially less younger people"

"I feel I don't always live my faith openly at work or in public outside my Parish community."

"Committed Catholics are aging, so bringing forth young inspired faithful leaders."

"Clergy misconduct has greatly impacted any moral authority or legitimacy we have as Catholics in society."

Results:

- More than 80% of responses are worried about the lack of people coming to Mass.
- 61% of respondents are concerned particularly about how to reach young people and young families.
- 53% of respondents are concerned how Catholic teaching reconciles with lived experience in a modern world.
- 22% of respondents are concerned about the impact of sexual abuse scandals and how that has negated the authority of the Church.

Parish & Diocesan Involvement

Question: What would inspire you to become more involved at a Parish or Diocesan Level?

Quotes:

"I am inspired when the Church makes space for authentic voices from the community, when people feel listened to and represented."

"I'd be inspired to get more involved if there were more opportunities to connect with others, especially younger people, grow in my own faith, and make a meaningful contribution."

"We're pretty involved at the moment."

"To be informed or invited to get involved."

"A greater sense of genuine community and friendship."

"I have been more involved in the past when youth and energy were on my side."

"Having leadership that is approachable, understanding and open to modern perspectives encourages deeper engagement and a stronger sense of community."

Results:

- Of the 74% of respondents that indicated they regularly attend Mass, 80% of those people who answered the question indicated they were already involved and because of age or work couldn't do much more.
- 52% of people wanted a stronger community and to develop stronger friendships. Considering the responses from the 26% of people who don't attend or occasionally attend Mass, some 85% of them want to feel included as part of the community and to develop stronger friendships. Having participatory leadership understanding of contemporary needs was expressed strongly in that group. The age distribution of that group is 80% under 56.
- There were other views, but not statistically significant. Some people would become more involved if there was better music, some if Liturgies were conducted differently (more and less Traditional).
- Overall, people seem to be more open to becoming involved if they are feeling connected.

Parish in 10 Years Time

Question: Describe what your local Parish might look like in ten years time.

Quotes:

"Sadly it will be very small."

"Given our aging population, the Parish could consist of three people."

"Defunct"; "Possibly non existing"; "Ruined"

"Hopefully more open with a more youthful Parish that is less judgmental and open to anyone who wants God in their life."

"I feel that without intentional change or new initiatives, the Parish is unlikely to experience significant growth or transformation."

"Hard to say...with faith and hope it will be active and alive with all age groups engaged in their faith. With Priests from local vocations. A place where all people of good faith are welcome."

"I imagine it as a hub of faith, healing and service, where people gather for worship, support and connection."

Results:

- 72% of respondents indicate that their Parish will be either very small or gone in 10 years. 94% of regular Mass attendees think that.
- 2% of respondents think it will be the same as it is today, with just different faces.
- The optimistic views (26%) universally paint a picture of connected communities, supporting one another, and being supported by their Leadership, reaching out to their communities. A variety of worship styles were alluded to. Change, welcomeness, and being integrated into the broader community appeared strongly in this optimistic view.

Enhancing the Life of your Parish and Diocese

Question: What might add to the life of faith in your Parish or at a Diocesan level?

Quotes:

"Outreach opportunities and engagement with the wider community.;" "The Alpha Program"

"Strengthening community connections by making an effort to meet people and being welcoming to new Parishioners."

"Events outside of Mass, youth groups, more involved with the schools, prayer groups, bible studies."

"Working toward bringing young families back to the Church."

"Transparency (openness, communication, accountability), creativity, allowing/including all Parishioners to be involved"

"A willingness and openness to suggestion and growth."

"Eucharistic Adoration on a regular basis at least once a month"

Results:

47% of respondents wanted more youth and young family involvement.

32% of respondents wanted more community engagement both in their church and in the wider community.

The underlying theme of the importance of being a welcoming Church could be read implicitly in nearly every suggestion.

There were a wide range of ideas from improved music, Eucharistic Adoration, and providing more support for people in need.

Comments and Suggestions

Question: Do you have any comments, questions or suggestions for the Synod to consider?

Quotes:

"Will any items gathered in this survey get taken any further – we need them taken all the way to the top."

"What can we do as Catholics to welcome and cater to the youth of today who have modern views but still want to be involved in their faith?"

"Women having more roles in the Church."

"Allow the Synod to function as it should. Listening and hearing what is being said, encouraging open and frank conversations."

"How do we keep our smaller Parishes alive."

"Transparency in the finances of Parishes and the Diocese."

Overall there seems some enthusiasm to have a discussion about the future of the Diocese.

Ability to Attend Synod 30 September - 2 October 2026

Yes	29	11%
No	124	48%
Maybe	103	41%

Conclusion

The Synod Subcommittee would like to express an enormous amount of appreciation to Dr Trevor Cooper and to all who took the time and effort to complete this survey and reflect on some important matters of faith and our Catholic community. Please learn more about the Synod on the webpage and we greatly value your participation in the next phases. Use the dedicated synod email address to contact us or to be included in the Synod Communication email list.

www.wf.catholic.org.au/synod-2026/

synod2026@wf.catholic.org.au