



Coptic Orthodox Church

Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions

Board of Trustees Report

“Whatever you do in word or deed do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ giving glory to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17)

Annual Report (2022)

As 2022 comes to an end and we herald in a new year, we reflect on the past fifteen months, the work that has been done, the work we are doing, and the work we are yet to do. We take this opportunity to give thanks to God for all the wonderful people who contribute tirelessly and faithfully to the life of the Diocese daily at every level, as well as our Clergy and our operational Committees and Boards: the Board of Trustees, Finance Committee, Legal Committee, Property Committee, Constitution Committee, Safeguarding Committee, Parish Councils, Coptic Education Board and Saint Bishoy College Board.

Together, these people volunteer their time daily to support the community, parishes and diocese, so that we can build a sustainable, caring and robust Diocese that strives, with God’s grace, to function with integrity according to the highest of Christian and professional standards, both today and tomorrow.

As we give thanks, we pray God’s continued blessing upon the Diocese and all its faithful, and ask our loving Lord to empower and enable us all to do all we can for the glory of His name, and the service of His children.

+Angaelos

Servant of the See of London

Papal Legate to the United Kingdom

Papal Legate to the Diocese of Sydney and its Affiliated Regions

Governance Update

The Board of Trustees commenced operation in October 2021. From the outset, all members of the new Board of Trustees were asked to submit a declaration of conflict of interest. As a board, we established an operational framework and defined our governance structure with clear roles and responsibilities, processes, and operating procedures.

The Board is now seeking to establish a Governance Committee which will have ongoing responsibility for the development and maintenance of policies and procedures, and the execution of all internal controls to ensure the operational compliance and accurate reporting of the Diocese.

Constitution Update

With the help of the Legal Committee and the Constitution Committee the initial task was to establish a constitution to guide the operation of the Diocese. To that end, we undertook a process of open consultation with all members of the Diocese to solicit feedback and input regarding the structure and make-up of the Constitution. After the incorporation of extensive feedback regarding a draft constitution, a final Constitution was published and signed by HH Pope Tawadros II on 11 September 2022. It is this Constitution that will provide the formal, legal foundation for the operation of the Diocese and will guide future governance and elections. Our next task is to establish a clear set of by-laws to accompany our new constitution.

With the new Constitution established, the first Parish Council elections were successfully held on 4 December 2022. It is pleasing to see that our sisters in Christ can now be a part of these Parish Councils, having an equal voice in the operational management of our parishes.

Finance and Property Update

At the outset, the Board of Trustees formed a Property Committee to complement the work of the already established Finance Committee. A governance structure was established, which empowers the Property and Finance Committees to review and assess parish requests regarding financial and property matters. For example, from time to time, parishes may request the acquisition or disposal of certain assets and associated financial support. Upon receipt of such a request, The Board of Trustees works with the relevant committees to assess their recommendations for either follow-up or approval. Thus far, the governance structure has proven to be efficient, transparent, and constructive, both amongst the members of the committees and with the Parishes they serve.

The Board of Trustees is currently working with the Finance Committee to comprehensively review and restructure Parish contributions and associated Diocesan expenses to ensure an equitable and transparent approach to financial management. In addition, we are conducting a thorough review of our property portfolio to:

- a) ensure the financial viability of our assets, and
- b) review our commercial asset holdings with respect to the ethos of the church and our financial management and reporting obligations.

Safe Church Ministry

It is vital for the work of the Diocese, that every church is a safe and caring environment for all members. The Safe Church Ministry Committee was established as the focal point for the governance of safety across the Diocese. Considerable progress has been made through the course of the preceding twelve months, including:

- Creation of Diocesan-wide database of “Safe Church” representatives for each parish.
- Ongoing governance to ensure that all servants and responsible persons within each parish are registered for a current Working with Children Check.
- Building governance, policy and procedures that will guide our decisions and actions.
- Establishment of an education platform to roll out across all parishes.

The Safe Church Ministry Committee is currently seeking the services of a full-time specialist to support the on-going development of policies, procedures and educational training for servants and clergy across the Diocese.

Aged Care Services

The Board of Trustees is working with the board of St Maurice Aged Care to support and encourage the development of an aged care facility. This is a service that we are committed to support for our Coptic Community today and in the future.

Education Update

All three colleges within the Diocese continue to excel across curricular and co-curricular activities and have demonstrated outstanding HSC results for 2022.

St Mark's College and St Mary and St Mina's College

St Mark's College and St Mary and St Mina's College continue to excel across curricular and co-curricular activities, including:

- Both colleges had approximately 30% of their 2022 cohort achieve an ATAR of 90 or above.
- St Mark's was ranked 83rd in the State and St Mary and St Mina's was ranked 67th in the State.

A number of priorities have been tackled by the newly appointed NSW Coptic Orthodox Board of Education over the past two months, including;

- implementation of a robust governance and board appointment process;
- collection and synthesis of staff and parent priorities across the colleges;
- completion of financial audits and implementation of new finance protocols;
- successful completion of the NESA accreditation process;
- tackling compliance and construction matters associated with the buildings at St Mark's College;
- re-establishing the Parent and Friends Committee at St Mary and St Mina's College.

Upcoming priorities for the Education Board include:

- finalising the new building for St Mary and St Mina's College at Rockdale;
- working with clergy and teachers to update the Coptic Orthodox Studies curriculum;
- collaborating with St Mary and St Mina's Parish committee to determine the united future of the college;
- appointing chaplains for all the colleges to oversee the spiritual wellbeing of the students.

St Bishoy Coptic Orthodox College

The students at St Bishoy College performed admirably while continuing to face a number of challenges during 2022. Despite these challenges, the College continued to achieve strong NAPLAN results during the year. We express our appreciation to the staff for their dedication and care for the students, looking back the year with thanks for God's grace, as well as the support and care of our families and our broader community.

The St Bishoy College Board has worked closely with the management and staff, as we commence preparations for NESA accreditation in 2023 and planned improvements to the College facilities, the Board and Executive look forward to the continued support of the Archangel Michael and St Bishoy Parish, parents and friends of the College, our Diocesan Board of Trustees and the broader community. Wishing all of our community a blessed season of the Nativity.

Consecrated Sisters and Nuns

The Diocese is committed to supporting the services and programs of our consecrated sisters and nuns in NSW and QLD. These women faithfully and humbly dedicate their lives to an incredibly important and effective ministry and we are blessed to have them in our community.

Clergy

Although the Board of Trustees is primarily responsible for operational and financial matters, we are pleased to report that the pastoral development of our Diocese has continued since October 2021. We are blessed to have a number of newly ordained priests in the last 15 months.

We take this opportunity to thank our Fathers for their feedback and ongoing engagement in the Clerical Council meetings.

Funds Raised

This year saw the devastating floods across Australia and the tragic fire at Abu Sefein in Egypt. The Diocese helped raise funds to help those who were impacted by these tragic events. With the support across all the parishes we were able to raise \$17,700 to help Australian Flood victims and \$21,640 to help the community affected by the fire at Abu Sefein in Egypt.

Focus areas for 2023

We still have a lot of work to do some items on the list include:

- a) Benevolent Committee and service focused on helping our local community in need.
- b) Continue to establish and build governance, policy, and procedures.
- c) Communication, Public Relations Strategy.

We have many opportunities and challenges ahead and we ask for your continued prayers as we navigate through these.

May our Lord Christ continue to bless the clergy and congregation of the Diocese of Sydney
May the Holy Spirit grant us one heart and one spirit to serve the Lord and his Church.
Wishing you and your families a blessed Coptic New Year filled with grace and hope.