



## *Pastoral Research Online*

Issue 20

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### **Welcome to the 20th monthly edition of *Pastoral Research Online*. . . .**

It's almost the end of March and this is our first newsletter for 2015. What is going on? Well, the story goes back to February last year, when we held our first major conference. Perhaps you were there – it was in Melbourne and it was called 'Beliefs and Practices of Australian Catholics: what we know and why it matters'.

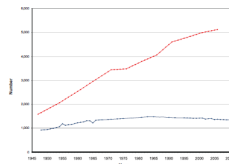
The conference was a major event for the Pastoral Research Office. Although PRO staff had spoken at dozens of conferences since our beginnings in 1996, we had never before held our own conference, where we took the opportunity to lay out in one place for everybody to see the results of all the research that we had done over the years. Personally, as was apparent to all those in attendance, and much to my embarrassment, I found it a very emotional experience; it was as though everything we had worked for was suddenly under scrutiny in a way it had never been before, and I was also overcome with appreciation for the fantastic work of the PRO staff and other members of the conference planning team. Several papers from the conference have now been published in *The Australasian Catholic Record*, with more to come in future issues, and these will also be added to our website in the near future.

Immediately after the conference, we lost quite a lot of staff resources: chief conference organiser Trudy Dantis spent a couple of weeks accompanying our distinguished guest and conference keynote speaker, Dr Mary Gautier, on her Eastern States speaking tour, and then needed to devote much of her time and energy to her doctoral studies (which she duly completed – see page 4). Julie Wilmot resigned to do further study, Claudia Mollidor found herself pining for her native Germany and returned to Europe, and Stephen Reid took some well-deserved holidays.

At the same time, the conference seemed to have raised the profile of the Pastoral Research Office – as it was intended to – and quite a few Catholic agencies approached us about conducting research. Not all of these became actual projects, but several have become a reality, and we outline two of them in this newsletter. So at the same time as we were understaffed we were being approached to take on a great deal of new work.

This year is a good time for us to be doing contract research projects, as most of the tasks associated with analysing and distributing data and publishing reports from our major 2011 projects have been completed, and while we are now beginning to plan for the 2016 version of those projects, the real work on them won't begin for another few months. But stay tuned – there will be a 2016 National Church Life Survey, and there will be a 2016 National Count of Attendance. But will there be a 2016 Australian Census? That is a question to be decided by the Government and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**Bob Dixon**  
**Director**



### **DID YOU READ?**

***“Number of Catholics in the world continues to increase”***

According to the *Statistical Yearbook of the Church*, the number of Catholics in the world is around 1.253 billion. In 2013, the Catholic population rose slightly from the previous year, as did the number of priests and permanent deacons. However, the number of men and women in religious orders declined.

To read further click on the following link:

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1501270.htm>



The Building Stronger Parishes project is now in the last stage of data analysis and reporting. We are close to finishing a major report on the project. The report will summarise the entire project and report on the major findings. It will also be the foundation on which subsequent thematic reports will be based. These reports will be released periodically over the rest of 2015.

A proposal for a series of national seminars on the Building Stronger Parishes project was recently approved by the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research. The aim of these seminars is to create greater awareness of the project and disseminate project findings and to encourage further consultation in parishes and dioceses in order to form and implement appropriate pastoral strategies.

Further details of these seminars will be released in the coming weeks.

### Priests in Australia 1950-2010

How many priests served in Australia in the period from 1950 to 2010? That's the question we have been asked to answer by the Truth, Justice and Healing Council. And it's not as easy to answer as you might think. We have been asked to provide the total of all the priests, broken down by diocese for diocesan priests and by congregation for religious priests, and to use as our primary sources the annual *Official Directories* of the Church. We initially thought we could do the job in six weeks, but instead we have been going for over six months and we are still a few weeks away from finishing. Why so slow? There are a number of reasons, many of which relate to the *Official Directories* themselves:

- There are no electronic back copies of the *Official Directories*.
- At various times, the *Official Directories* for Australia also included New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands.
- Typography in the 1950s and 60s directories was very inconsistent, meaning that manual data entry was faster than electronic scanning.
- In the 61-year period under investigation, there are 13 years in which no directory was published.
- So many priests have similar names (e.g., Fr Michael Ryan), and in some years the directories only published initials, not Christian names.

We are fortunate to have been able to recruit good staff to work on this project. Visiting Irish moral theologian Dr Aoife McGrath got the project off to a good start for the first six months until, under the terms of her visa, she could no longer be employed by us. (Aoife is now working for the Christian Research Association, where she is doing research on lay pastoral ministry in the Catholic Church in Australia. She is hoping to remain in Australia with a new visa, in which case we will be able to regain her services.) Since January, work on the project has been done by casual staff members Joachim Rymarz, Steven Tucker and Paul Egan, with extensive assistance from volunteer Dr Peter Wilkinson. We are immensely grateful to all these people.

### UNDERSTANDING RELIGIOUS VOCATION IN AUSTRALIA TODAY:

#### ***Who is joining religious life?***



Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) believes this is a timely and important question, given the current challenges facing the future of religious vocations, and the fact that 2015 has been declared as the Year of Consecrated Life. CVMA has commissioned the Pastoral Research Office (PRO) to carry out an Australian study similar to the one carried out by the National Religious Vocation Conference (NRVC) in the US in 2009.

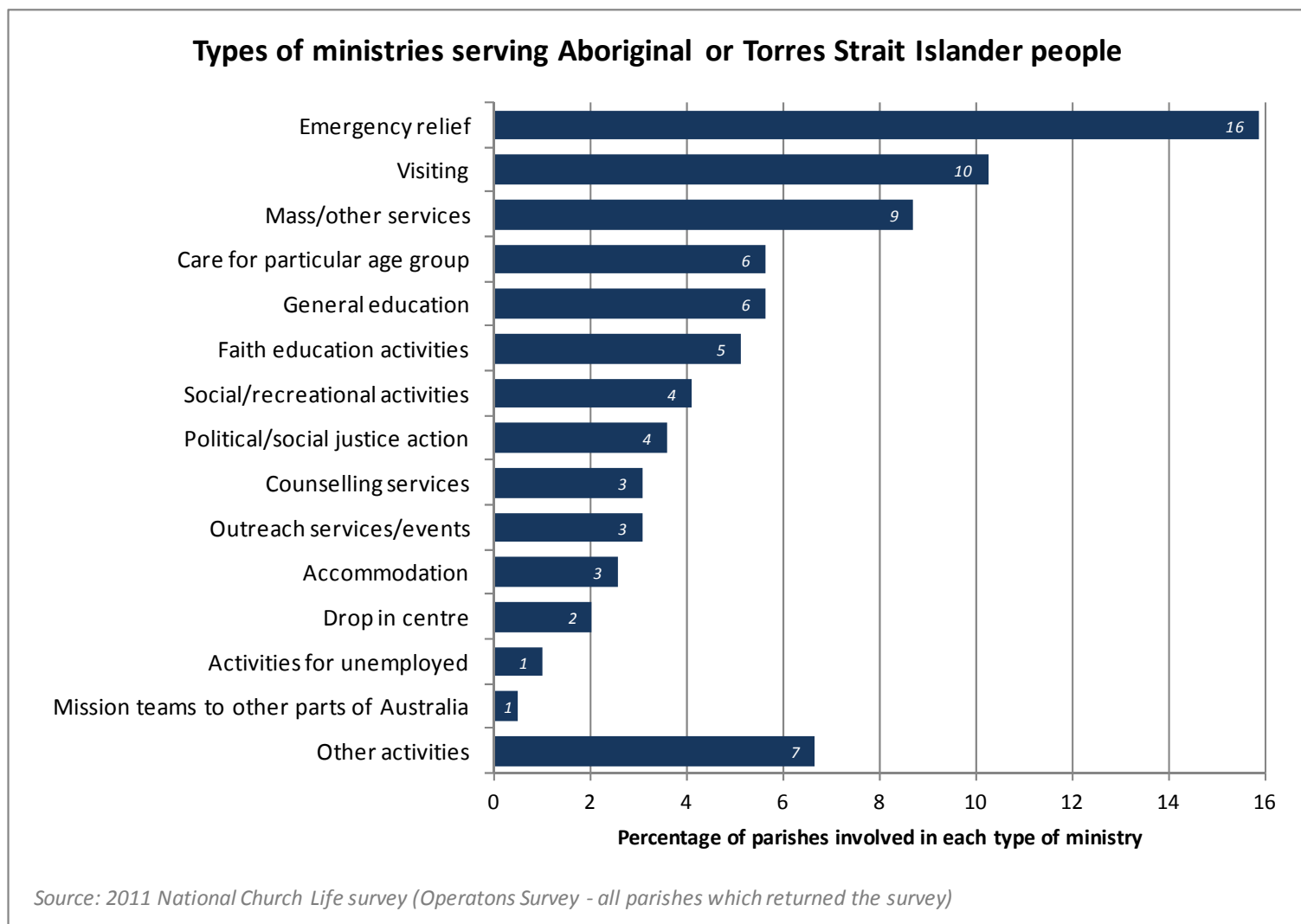
The purpose of this study is to understand the characteristics of men and women who have entered religious life, and to identify the characteristics of the religious institutes and societies that are attracting and successfully retaining new members. As part of Stage One of the project all religious institutes and societies in Australia have been invited to participate by completing an on-line or hard-copy questionnaire. To date we have received just over 70 completed surveys, and hope there are more on the way. Stage Two will involve interviews with selected congregational leaders, and focus groups with selected congregational members.

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ministries in Catholic Parishes



According to the “Operations” survey of the 2011 National Church Life Survey, a questionnaire completed by one person from each participating parish<sup>1</sup>, around 17 per cent of Catholic parishes worked directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While many parishes had no such involvement, many also had very few Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Catholics living with their parish boundaries. However, at least half of the parishes in the dioceses of Broome, Darwin, Port Pirie, and Wilcanda-Forbes stated that they worked directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The following chart shows the types of parish ministries that primarily serve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the proportion of parishes which were involved in such activities. Note that, while 17 per cent of parishes said they **worked directly** with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, around 30 per cent of parishes said that they provided ministries which **primarily served** those groups. The most common ministry was providing emergency relief, in which 16 per cent of all parishes were involved. Around one in ten parishes undertook visitation ministries, such as in hospitals or prisons, and slightly fewer (9%) provided Mass, or other services in place of Mass. Other parish ministries were: care for particular age groups of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders (six per cent of parishes were involved), general education (6%), faith education activities (5%), social or recreational activities (4%), and political or social justice action (4%). A smaller proportion of parishes (less than three per cent each) were providing counselling services, outreach or evangelisation services or events, accommodation, drop in centres, activities for unemployed, and mission teams to other parts of Australia.



**1. NOTE ABOUT THE DATA:** 170 randomly chosen parishes returned ‘Operations Survey’ questionnaires as part of the 2011 National Church Life Survey. However, the results reported in this edition of Pastoral Research Online are for all 288 parishes which participated in the NCLS, whether they were part of the national sample or not. As such, the results cannot be said to be statistically representative. However, they provide useful information about parish ministries and activities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Totals do not add to 100% in the graph as parishes could choose more than one option, and those parishes which were not involved in such activities are not included.

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## CONGRATULATIONS

to **Trudy Dantis** on graduating from the University of Divinity as a **Doctor of Philosophy**.



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## IN THE NEWS:

### **Australian Bureau of Statistics recommends Census every 10 years**

**Did you know that** . . . population estimates based on the Australian Census are used to determine the number of seats allocated to each state in the House of Representatives? **Or that** . . . population estimates based on the Census are key elements in the criteria used by the Commonwealth to appropriately distribute funds to States and Territories?

In Australia we are fortunate to have a National Census undertaken every five years (the US and the UK conduct one every 10 years). The Census is the only reliable way to obtain accurate information about how many people there are in each part of Australia, what they do, and how they live ([www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au), Cat. 2903.0). In fact, it is written in Australia's *Census and Statistics Act* (1977) that it shall be taken in every fifth year.

Through the **National Catholic Census Project**, a project of the Bishops Conference, parishes, dioceses, and organisations are the recipients of up-to-date customised Census data which provides essential planning tools for all levels of the church.

The Pastoral Research Office will shortly be contacting the Australian Bureau of Statistics to put forward the case to retain a five-yearly Census.

## Did you know . . . ?

- In 2011, the birthplace with the highest proportion of recent arrivals of Catholics to Australia was Ireland (including Northern Ireland). Just over one-quarter (25.7%) of all Irish-born Catholics in Australia arrived between 2008 and 2011.
- The proportion of the Catholic population aged 65 and over increased from 10.9 per cent in 1996 to 14.1 per cent in 2011.
- There were 124,610 Indigenous Australian Catholics in 2011, an increase of around 53 per cent since 1996.

These facts about Catholics from the 2011 Census will soon be available in the **Social Profile of the Catholic Community in Australia**, the Australian version of the Parish and Diocesan Social Profiles.

Keep an eye on the PRO website to download your copy.



## WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THERE WAS ZERO NET OVERSEAS MIGRATION?



If the same number of people left the country as arrived in the country (that is, zero net overseas migration), Australia's total population in 2033 would be 25 million people—just 1.5 million more than the current population.

However, the proportion of people aged 65 and over would increase to 23 per cent (in 2011 it was 14 per cent), and the proportion of children aged under 15 would decrease to 16 per cent (in 2011 it was 19.3 per cent).

Zero net overseas migration would result in people of working age making up 61 per cent of the population in 2033, while the total ratio of the dependent population to the working age population would increase to 65 'dependents' for every 100 'workers'.

Source: "Does size matter? Population Projections 20 and 50 years from 2013", in *Australian Social Trends 2014*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat. 4102.0.

Or go to: <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0main+features82014>