



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

MEDIA RELEASE

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FAREWELL BELLS FOR BISHOP SHANE AS HE HEADS NORTH TO LEAD BRISBANE

If you've heard the bells ringing at Sacred Heart Cathedral this week, here's why: the is farewelling Bishop Shane Mackinlay, who will be installed as the new Archbishop of Brisbane this Thursday.

After flying in from commitments in Rome and Germany, Bishop Shane touched down in Bendigo for just three days to say his goodbyes before heading north to take on one of the country's most prominent Church leadership roles.

Appointed the eighth Bishop of Sandhurst in 2019, Bishop Shane has led the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst — which stretches across 38 parishes from Bendigo to Kerang in the north-west and Harrierville in the north-east — through a period of significant change and renewal.

One of his earliest major reforms was the incorporation of Catholic Education Sandhurst to strengthen Catholic school governance and support their operations, which were previously managed by individual parishes.

Bishop Shane is widely regarded as a thoughtful and collaborative leader who has encouraged a more inclusive and participatory Church. He established the Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council, inviting lay people to share responsibility for shaping the mission and life of the Diocese.

This approach reflects Pope Francis' vision of "synodality" — walking together as the People of God — and takes inspiration from the earliest Christian communities, where small groups gathered in homes to support one another, share their faith, and discern God's call together.

Bishop Shane brought this spirit of participation to the national stage as Vice-President of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia (2018–2022), a landmark process that engaged more than 220,000 people in conversation about the future of the Catholic Church in Australia.

It was here that his leadership style came into sharp focus. When a controversial motion on the role of women in the Church failed to pass, tensions ran high. Bishop Shane stepped in, calling for the decrees to be reworded and put to a fresh vote.

The move opened the door for deeper dialogue and greater consensus. Reflecting on the moment later, he said:

“At first, we mostly spoke from our heads, sharing ideas we already held firmly. But after the crisis, people began speaking from the heart — with real vulnerability. And this courageous speaking was received with a different quality of listening. We weren’t rehearsing objections anymore; we were genuinely open to understanding and being changed. Many have since described the disruption and the new possibilities it opened as an experience of the Spirit at work among us.”

On the international stage, Bishop Shane was a delegate to the Synod on Synodality in Rome, where he also served on one of the writing committees helping shape the documents driving global Church renewal.

Bishop Shane leaves behind a Diocese that is more collaborative, more participatory, and better prepared for the future. His influence has been felt not just in Sandhurst, but across Australia and internationally.

He’ll officially be installed as Archbishop of Brisbane on Thursday, 12 September.

The Diocese of Sandhurst will now enter a period of transition, with interim leadership arrangements to be announced next week. A new bishop will be appointed by Pope Leo XIV next year.

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Photographs: Link and captions to come.