Parish and Regional Restructure

(A report from the Standing Committee.)

Key Points
•   Demographic trends mean that a realignment of Regional boundaries is necessary, and this will take place in the latter half of 2021.
•   There are inefficiencies in seeking to maintain the number and concentration of parishes in some areas, and the requirements for implementing a 'hub and spoke' model of local administration should be explored.
•   Further consideration is being given to the implications of such changes for Regional Councils, Mission Areas and the functions of Sydney Diocesan Services.

Purpose

1.   The purpose of this report is to supply the details of a review of diocesan organisational and administrative structures to allow effective ministry and mission outcomes given the sustained growth and changes across the Diocese's geographic reach.

Recommendation

2.   Synod receive this report.

Background

3.   Parishes and Regions with geographic boundaries are the main organisational and administrative structure for the Diocese's ministry and mission. The existing parish and Regional boundaries are currently, and increasingly in the future, facing challenges with commonly used geographic divisions and population growth. This report provides a review of parish and Regional definitions and boundaries and suggests that a 'hub and spoke' option for parishes be strategically encouraged and that current Regional boundaries be redrawn.

Parishes

4.   The shift from chaplaincy to parish-based ministry happened relatively early in the development of Anglican ministry in Sydney. Anglican evangelicals were convinced that the English parish model was the best way to develop a gospel influence and to provide a way to build a stable community. From the establishment of the first two parishes as St Philip's, Sydney and St John's, Parramatta in 1802, parish ministry quickly became normalised. "The evangelical movement had transformed parish ministry into an energetic round of activities designed for the spiritual and educational benefit of all parishioners." (Piggin and Lidner, the Foundation of Public Prosperity, 2019, p.97).

5.   The underlying conviction in the development of the parish system in Sydney over the following decades was that the whole of society needed to be inducted into the truths of the word of God. The parish system's very structure, with the subsequent establishment of dioceses, was a reminder of the task: every square metre of the geographical area is covered, which brings the responsibility to plant and sustain churches by starting new parishes.

6.   The social changes that resulted from the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of modern transportation did not diminish the ongoing growth in the parochial network. By 1935 there were 165 parish units across the Diocese. Over the next 30 years, approximately three new parishes per year

were created, concentrated in the post-WW2 baby boom era. What is noticeable is that since 1965 the total number of parishes has remained mostly unchanged.

7.   Number of parishes:
      (a)   1935: **165** (Population approximately 1.5 million)
      (b)   1965: **260** (population approximately 2.5 million)
      (c)   2020: **265** (Population approximately 5.5 million)

1972 *Looking Into the Parish* report

8.   Until the 1960s the nature and expectation of parish ministry was relatively stable. However, societal changes were challenging the long-term patterns. The extent of these challenges is highlighted by the proceedings of the 1970 session of Synod. Standing Committee was requested to establish a commission with the following guidelines:
      (a)   Examine the effectiveness and relevance of parochial ministry and organisation in the present age;
      (b)   Determine the means of increasing the effectiveness of the ministries of ordained men and the ministries of laymen;
      (c)   Consider such other matters as may appear to the Commission to be relevant to the foregoing; and
      (d)   Recommend any reforms the Commission considers necessary and means of implementing these reforms.

9.   The final report was presented to Synod's 1972 session and then published as *Looking Into the Parish*.

10.   The report is clear that societal changes required a significant evaluation of how to undertake effective parish ministry. The degree of these changes is seen in the sudden slowdown in growth of the overall number of diocesan parishes highlighted above. Changes were rapid and financial viability was forcing new parish configurations. Parish structure and ministry could not continue as it had for well over 100 years.

11.   The recommendations of the report were far-reaching and considered quite radical. Examples include: an emphasis on the development of team ministry away from a solo-ministry mindset; a focus on relationships and fellowship for ministry patterns; the possibility of dividing the Diocese into Regions, each with an Assistant Bishop; a focus on the development of central diocesan services to support parishes. It is worth noting that the theological emphasis on the local church, colloquially known as the Knox-Robinson theology of church, informed many of the recommendations.

12.   The report stated that the fundamental structure of the parish system should be maintained. "The Parochial system is the main framework for ministry in the Anglican Church. It is the administrative means whereby the manpower resources for the work of the gospel are allocated…In essence, it is a system of dividing the Diocese into geographic units..." (page 9, Report paragraph 1) The parish was an organisational and administrative system that allowed resources to be allocated and developed to enable the gospel's work to be undertaken.

13.   The report concluded with a recommendation that there was an urgent need to form a group responsible to Standing Committee to research and plan ongoing parish ministry changes. The Commission's view was that population and societal changes required continuous attention to maintain gospel ministry across the Diocese.

New Parishes in new areas

14.   One development that the *Looking Into the Parish* report anticipated, but took another decade to implement, was the establishment of 'Vision for Growth' in 1984, followed by 'Vision 2001' in 1993. With the rapid expansion of new housing areas, mainly in western Sydney, the initiatives gave diocesan focus to establishing new parochial units in these new areas.

15.   An indication of how the Diocese was able to respond to the new housing areas is observed by tracing the average population size for each new parish church building after WW2:
      (a)   Post WW2: **5,000**

(b)   Vision for Growth (1984-1993): **13,000**

(c)   Vision 2001 (1994-2001): **25,000-30,000**

(d)   MPC/NCNC (2001 - Current): **60,000-80,000**

16.   In the post-WW2 era, the goal was to have a new parish church within walking distance in each new housing area, with the underlying assumption that ministry could be sustained with a parish population of 5,000. Over the following decades, acquisition of suitable land became more difficult; the cost of land purchase rose dramatically; development approval for church buildings was contested; local government requirements increased building expenses; and societal changes altered expectations of what was achievable with new parochial units.

17.   The consequence of how new parochial units have developed over the last 30 years is that there is an uneven distribution of parishes across the Diocese. 35% of the population running from north to south along the eastern side of the Diocese has 60% of the parishes.

Other parish changes

18.   While a 1994 Synod report "Future Patterns of Ministry" focused primarily on recruiting, selecting, training, supporting, and resourcing lay and ordained ministers, it also discussed the ongoing challenges of parish ministry. The report suggested that the restrictions on ministry development were caused by focusing on geographic parish boundaries. Two options were briefly considered but not pursued:

(a)   Redraw parish boundaries so they encompass larger areas, something akin to current mission areas; and

(b)   Make existing Local Government areas the unit that defines the parish.

19.   The report ultimately assumed the existing parish organisational structure would continue. However, the final recommendation requested that the Standing Committee prepare legislation to allow more flexible ministry practices as an alternative to the existing parochial system's geographic boundaries. It is again notable that the option of removing all geographic boundaries was not considered.

20.   Over the next ten years, the Diocese adopted two initiatives that gave expression to the 1994 report's recommendation:

(a)   Recognised churches (parishes without property)

(b)   The establishment of New Fellowships (proto-parishes) under Evangelism and New Churches.

21.   These initiatives have allowed some degree of flexibility in the development of ministry across the Diocese. Currently, the Diocese has four parishes without property and five ENC fellowships, but their establishment is not common.

Current observations on parish ministry

Maintaining the geographic coverage of the parish system

22.   Parishes with geographic boundaries remain the main organisational and administrative structure for diocesan mission and ministry. This structure's advantages are shown in the diocesan concern for establishing a ministry in new housing areas and sustaining ministry in more disadvantaged socioeconomic areas that are hard to maintain. The very nature of each parish's geographic coverage is a reminder that the gospel is for every person in every community and the diocesan network has a responsibility to use resources to enable this to occur.

23.   The Diocese has never given any serious consideration to removing all parish boundaries. The advantages of parish boundaries and geographic coverage are such that this not an option that is worth considering now or in the foreseeable future.

Parishes enable good church order

24.   The majority of diocesan parishes have different church gatherings in a local fellowship bound by common leadership, common property, and common resources. A significant number of parishes

operate with multiple geographic gathering locations (one parish has five church centres) but still pool common leadership and resources.

25.   Parish organisation and administration can be thought of as the practicality of good church order. There is a theology of gathering an individual congregation; everything else is pragmatism and wisdom that has gospel intent.

Observations by SGS Economics and Planning

26.   In early 2020 the Anglican Church Growth Corporation (**ACGC**) through Sustainable Development Group Ltd (**SDG**) engaged with SGS Economics and Planning to examine the current property assets and how they may be best utilised given the projected population and demographic changes over the next 40 years. SGS Economics and Planning were uniquely qualified to undertake this work as they were used in the Greater Sydney Commission's planning.

27.   Inevitably the diocesan parish and regional organisational and administrative structures were also considered.

28.   Sydney has experienced rapid population growth over the last 20 years, and though the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a halt to migration, the growth is expected to return to pre-COVID-19 levels in the short to medium term. The increase in population is accompanied by a changing local demographic profile, reflected in an ageing population and diversified population with dramatically changing needs at a local level.

29.   SGS Economics and Planning are of a view that the existing regional and parish boundaries now face underlying challenges with commonly used geographies and population growth.

30.   The final report includes the following recommendation: "From a secular population and land use perspective, it is recommended that the Anglican Church consider reviewing the existing parishes and Region definition/ boundaries. As a minimum, better alignment with commonly used geographies (i.e., Council boundaries and ABS Standard Areas) would significantly improve alignment with data, policy plans, and settlement patterns. It is also recommended that boundaries reflect the three cities identified in the Greater Sydney Plan. More consistent parish sizes would allow for a more efficient parish planning and more effective use of church assets across the Diocese for better ministry outcomes."

31.   Such external observations are not determinative in making decisions about the structure of parish ministry, yet the report does contain compelling evidence that attention needs to be given to how parishes are structured now and into the medium-term future.

Current variations in parish populations

32.   Parishes range in population size from 1,000 to 90,000.

Viability

33.   The measure of parish viability is a specified minimum amount of parish income (Net Operating Receipts). For a recognised church, viability is measured by the number of adult attendees and level of offertory income.

34.   For parishes, the total offertory (excluding all other income) is a better measure of people resources. A parish's very rough measure to sustain and develop ministry and mission is having an offertory income of $250,000 or greater. There are obvious exceptions where parishes with less income can be sustained, but at $250,000, there is sufficient income for staffing (1 and 2/3 FTE), housing, maintenance, and ministry expansion. This level of offertory income assumes sufficient people resources.

35.   Currently, 140 parishes have an offertory below $250,000. Several parishes benefit from other forms of income; nevertheless, nearly 40% of all diocesan parishes deal with some level of resource restraint. There are wonderful exceptions to this picture, yet there is a sustained pattern that is discernible: a new and enthusiastic rector is appointed. Over the next few years, enthusiasm is diminished as hoped-for growth does not materialise, or initial growth is not maintained. Long-term patterns stabilise the internal

life of the parish. Good ministry occurs, people are discipled, but the weight of keeping the parish going with all the external and internal obligations and small resources leads to sub-optimal performance.

Parish expectations

36. Over the last 50 years, parish ministry has moved from a **voluntary organisation** that pools resources and money, where parish leadership was reasonably consistent; to what is today more of a **small business enterprise** with a significant number of internal and external requirements.

37. The voluntary association era had the following characteristics:
    (a)   Parishes all similar – little strategy needed;
    (b)   Trained to minister the word of God, every ordained minister can become a rector;
    (c)   Sunday services – straightforward, with a common prayer book, common music;
    (d)   Parish council/wardens – minimal expectations;
    (e)   The cultural context was a white, Anglo-Saxon Christianised society.

38. By contrast, in parishes today:
    (a)   Parishioners have higher expectations with consequent increased potential for strain in relationships with staff and parishioners;
    (b)   Every rector has to understand the unique history and culture for each parish, in order to formulate independent strategy and implementation;
    (c)   Rectors now manage staff teams and a larger number of ministry volunteers, with high expectations;
    (d)   There is a significant increase in the number of external and internal requirements for parish councillors and wardens;
    (e)   The cultural context is highly diverse.

39. It is reasonable to anticipate that in the future, the current factors will increase in significance for the parish as societal and demographic changes occur.

Wardens' responsibilities

40. The responsibilities and obligations of wardens have significantly increased over the last decade. There is a growing problem in finding suitable and willing church members who will undertake the wardens' responsibilities. This is especially the case in the large number of parishes that cannot pay for administrative support and instead rely on wardens' available discretionary time.

Societal changes

41. Anglican affiliation is forecast to continue to decline significantly over the next ten years before stabilising around 2031. This is primarily driven by an increasing trend towards 'no religious affiliation', which in-turn, flows to increasing 'no religious affiliation' in children, which carries throughout their life. Affiliation rates, in turn, affect Anglican reach potential.

42. There are likely to be fewer nominal, occasional church attendees automatically choosing to attend an Anglican church at Christmas and/or Easter out of a sense of duty to their religious affiliation. Any decision to do so will be based more on the individual church's location and awareness of its interaction with their community.

43. The Anglican Church will not rely on its historic affiliation rates to maintain or increase its relevance to a wider population. This relevance will be much more linked to how effective churches, and especially parishioners, can be in living out their faith and the Christian values as they seek to demonstrate care and compassion in the communities in which they live and operate.

44. The trends in Anglican affiliation form another observation about the rapidly changing social setting for parish ministry.

Development of "Hub and Spoke" parish structure

45.   Just as there was a major look at the parish's nature 50 years ago, parish ministry's current and future context strongly suggests that a new way of configuring parishes be developed and strategically encouraged.

46.   This report proposes that a "Hub and spoke" parish structure be strategically pursued and encouraged, though any involvement is to be voluntary.

47.   "Hub and spoke" is used to describe a way of combining two or more parishes in a sub-regional area so as to enable resources to be shared and common mission purposes to be pursued. Traditionally this is described as an "amalgamation", but historically amalgamations are a reactive mechanism to deal with decline and non-viability in one parish. "Hub and spoke" is preferred as a distinct term for a proactive response in that it aims to join parishes while they are still independently viable, in order to create more opportunity for ministry and mission to be undertaken.

48.   The proposed reconfiguration of parishes is not driven by a reaction to a decline in numbers or poor management, as is the current case in other Anglican dioceses worldwide. Instead, it has arisen out of a desire to enhance the diocesan network's mission effectiveness, given demographic and societal changes.

49.   What is proposed is not expected to be implemented with an immediate effect. It is a long-term strategic direction that will have a cumulative effect.

50.   Though there are a few primary factors that inform the proposal, such as the current shortage of rectors, they are not determinative in suggesting a restructure.

51.   The assumption is that the intent of the Anglican parish system remains. Parishes are the main building block for diocesan ministry and mission. The very nature of parish geographic coverage that presupposes an assumption that the gospel is for every person in every community remains a given. The significance of this is that the Diocese is committed to retaining gospel ministry to new growth areas and difficult ministry areas that seem to bear little fruit.

52.   Further, as a diocese, we believe in cooperation, networking, and partnership. The "hub and spoke" structure allows this to be developed in a sub-regional area that will potentially allow more effective use of financial and people resources.

53.   There will remain compelling reasons why parishes of all sizes will stay as they are, but the "hub and spoke" option will be an option that may have advantages in many areas of the Diocese.

Next steps

54.   "Hub and spoke" pilots have been undertaken. In one example, three parishes in a sub-regional area concluded that in their circumstances, though there are complexities in navigating the changes, the hub and spoke model is the best option to sustain and grow the ministry of the gospel in the area. With a more straightforward organisational and administrative structure and the ability to share children's and youth resources, the benefits of a "hub and spoke" model were found to be compelling.

55.   Two working groups are in operation. Bishop Chris Edwards chairs a working group on determining the best practice for establishing and sustaining a "hub and spoke" parish, allowing new 'hub and spoke' rectors to interact with and learn lessons from more established 'hub and spoke' rectors. Bishop Gary Koo chairs a working group on the leadership requirements for a rector of a "hub and spoke" parish. Not all presbyters have the capacity to lead an amalgamated parish.

56.   It is clear that a significant review and update of both the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008* and the *Parishes Ordinance 1979* is necessary, to both allow and to maximise the administrative efficiencies that are intended with the hub and spoke model.

Regions

Establishment of Regions

57.   In 1991 Synod considered a summary report from the Standing Committee (30/89) on the "Future of Regionalism and Diocesan Development". The report is a useful reference point in understanding our current Diocesan Regional structure.

58.   Three possible future structures for the Diocese were examined:
      (a)   Establish both Parramatta and Wollongong Regions as separate Dioceses;
      (b)   Establish a program of continued devolvement of Regions across the whole Diocese;
      (c)   Develop any other appropriate options for the future oversight of the existing Wollongong and Parramatta Regions.

59.   As was the case in the early 1970s, the option of Wollongong becoming a separate diocese was quickly dismissed.

60.   Another option canvassed but dismissed was the idea that Sydney be established as a new Province comprising three dioceses.

61.   The 1991 report finally recommended that the Diocese pursue a "new regionalism" which would expand the number of Regions across the Diocese, devolving as much authority and decision making and distribution of funds to the Regional level, i.e., the Regional Council. This was described as "pastoral oversight and jurisdiction, maximum authority and [having] a regional administrative body with maximum autonomy."

62.   New Regionalism was pursued throughout the 1990s with the establishment of South Sydney, North Sydney and Georges River as Regions. It is a reasonable assessment that the expectation of the new Regionalism was never achieved. Financially it was difficult to sustain, putting pressure on the Endowment of the See (**EOS**). More substantially, the devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Regions never materialised. By 2009, with the fallout from the GFC, even the significance of Regional Councils as the decision-making body for the distribution of funds for ministry was greatly reduced.

63.   Over time, Regionalism's original intent has continued to adapt: local episcopal pastoral oversight and centralised governance and administration have emerged has a result. These ongoing adaptations were primarily driven by modern technology/communication advantages, which has allowed a more efficient centralised diocesan administration.

64.   To help understand how Regionalism has developed over the last 25 years, the original argument in the 1991 report that favoured a new Regionalism is compared with current circumstances.

Comparing the original arguments for Regionalism with current circumstances

1970s: Moving to Regionalism will address the felt isolation of some areas of the Diocese

65.   While distance is still a factor, modern technology and communication have allowed easy and immediate access to St Andrew's House.

66.   In the last decade, the more remote parishes have established stronger local bonds through the establishment of Mission Areas.

67.   Population growth in many of these "isolated" areas has also reduced the perception of isolation.

1970s: The link between the Archbishop and his clergy and parishes is diminished without Regionalism

68.   Modern technology and communication mean there is a direct relationship between the Archbishop and clergy/parish never anticipated in 1991. The recent COVID-19 experience has demonstrated this direct and significant relationship to the Archbishop.

69.   The ongoing advantage of Regionalism is that the local Bishop has a personal and pastoral relationship with rectors and, to a much lesser extent, a few assistant ministers and key wardens. The Bishop is the filter point for issues and disputes.

1970s: Regionalism would establish strong and more accessible administrative centres

70.   This suggestion was a product of its time. Modern technology and communication have nearly entirely removed this argument.

71.   Currently available to any parish in the Diocese are the following:
   (a)   Sydney Diocesan Services (**SDS**) Parish support – professional, competent support in governance, finance, legal, human resources and property. As this centralised capacity has increased, clergy/wardens have been trained to deal directly with SDS.
   (b)   Registry – modernised and accessible processing of licences and authorities.
   (c)   Human Resources – as this is developed, it will also retrain clergy/wardens (as is already occurring) to use the diocesan Parish HR officer as the first port of call.
   (d)   Legal – the capacity of the Diocese to give legal advice has significantly increased.
   (e)   The Anglican Church Property Trust (**ACPT**) and Anglican Church Growth Corporation (**the Growth Corporation**) – now allows centralised support for all significant property development.
   (f)   Professional Standards Unit (**PSU**) – over the last ten years, the central administrative role of PSU has increased, especially post-Royal Commission.
   (g)   Youth and Children's Ministry advice – Youthworks Ministry Support Team regional advisors offer free, on-call advice and support to assist parishes deliver an effective youth and children's ministry.

1970s: Without Regionalism the Archbishop would become a more remote figure

72.   Technology and modern communication have overcome this concern. The Archbishop is more immediately connected than ever anticipated.

1970s: Regionalism devolves authority to a local level

73.   It was initially envisaged that Regionalism would over time "require a greater devolution of power and a more extreme delegation." This was to include the processing and issuing of licences/authorities; permission for remarriage; approving faculties and building plans; and controlling the process and recommendation of clergy appointments (Rector and Assistant Minister).

74.   Rather than devolving authority, it is now mostly centralised. The local Regional Bishop primarily signs off on the centralised process.

Conclusion

75.   In summary, we now operate with a Regionalism that no longer fits the rationale that led to its implementation.

How has the role of Regional Bishops changed?

76.   Regionalism intended that the Regional Bishop would give the majority of his time to the Region. The expectation was that there would be minimal diocesan-wide responsibilities for Assistant Bishops. As Regionalism changed, the Regional Bishops have necessarily dedicated a significantly increased proportion of their time to Assistant Bishop's responsibilities, serving the Diocese as a whole rather than focusing on issues within their region.

77.   There are three interconnected factors as to why this has occurred.
   (a)   The overall demands on and expectations of the Archbishop's office have continually increased. The Archbishop can only sustain the responsibilities of his office with the help of a significant time commitment by Assistant Bishops. An indicative break-up of a Regional Bishop's time would be a 50/50 split between Regional and Assistant Bishop responsibilities.

(b)   The centralisation of administration over the last 25 years has required more involvement from the Archbishop's office. At a minimum, the Archbishop's Office has a connection to PSU, Ministry Training and Development (**MT&D**), the ordination process, ordinances, Standing Committee, SDS, Glebe Administration Board (**GAB**), ACPT, Diocesan Resources Committee, HR oversight, Moore Theological College (**MTC**), the Growth Corporation, Strategy and Research Group (**SRG**), Anglican Media, EdComm, defending freedom of religion, Anglican Schools Corporation and Anglicare.

(c)   In a report to Synod in 2019, it was noted that the number of Standing Committee ad-hoc sub-committees had had a three-fold increase due to Synod resolutions over the last ten years. Additionally, the Standing Committee has itself agreed to establish a number of sub-committees on a range of matters and issues. For good reasons, the Archbishop's office has deemed it wise to have an episcopal presence on many of these ad-hoc sub-committees.

The current rationale for Regionalism

78.   The circumstances and consequences of establishing smaller dioceses make any consideration of this possibility a practical impossibility. However, the Diocese's size and geographical reach will mean that some other administrative and organisational arrangements such as Regions remain necessary.

79.   So what are the reasons for continuing with Regionalism if much of the original arguments are no longer valid?

(a)   Most rectors, a few assistant ministers (ordained and lay), and a few wardens want to know who is the personal contact in ministry matters. Even if there is available central administrative support, the personal pastoral relationship with the relevant Regional Bishop is significant.

(b)   Regions remain a useful way of notionally configuring the Diocese such that it is pastorally manageable.

(c)   It allows for broader representation of both clergy and lay on Standing Committee. However, the advantage of this is more about appearance than reality.

(d)   The Archbishop can, at his discretion, delegate matters of parish concern to the local Regional Bishop.

The future of Regionalism

80.   Two initial comments. First, the original reason for establishing the Georges River Region arose from the (accurate) observation that it was such a non-Anglo, ethnically and culturally diverse area. It was often said, "the Georges River Region spoke of the future of the Diocese." That future has now arrived. Large parts of the Western Region and significant parts of the Wollongong Region are now culturally the same as the Georges River Region. With a few exceptions the whole Diocese now has the characteristics of the Georges River Region of 1996.

81.   Second, the SGS Economics Report has suggested that the current Regional structure is not sustainable. The Regions should be "aligned with the functional areas of the Diocese." At a minimum, the current Regional boundaries will not keep track of the City's significant restructuring over the next 40 years into three major city hubs: Western Parkland City, Central River City and Eastern Harbour City, known as the three city metropolis model.

82.   The NSW Government is significantly increasing infrastructure spending in pursuing the three city hubs that will change how Greater Sydney functions over the coming decades. The current regional boundaries were established up to 50 years ago, as was the case with Wollongong Region leading to certain idiosyncrasies that we can no longer afford to ignore. For example, the current boundaries of the Wollongong Region include the proposed Aerotropolis around the new western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek!

83.   As well as the shifts at the level of government planning, the anticipated changes in population in the Regions in the years ahead are significant, as the disparity in growth and projected population across the regions in following table demonstrates:

	2020	**2026**	**2036**	**2046**	**2056**
Georges River Region	1,095,070	1,203,892	1,339,944	1,488,770	1,637,572
Northern Region	937,047	1,011,253	1,090,348	1,169,647	1,248,912
South Sydney Region	913,993	987,486	1,107,695	1,201,313	1,294,902
Western Region	1,525,321	1,775,453	2,143,366	2,440,267	2,737,139
Wollongong Region	1,062,506	1,174,350	1,385,811	1,580,092	1,774,348

84.   Forecasts for Sunday adult attendance in our churches show a greater level of disparity between the sizes of the Regions than overall population figures would suggest:

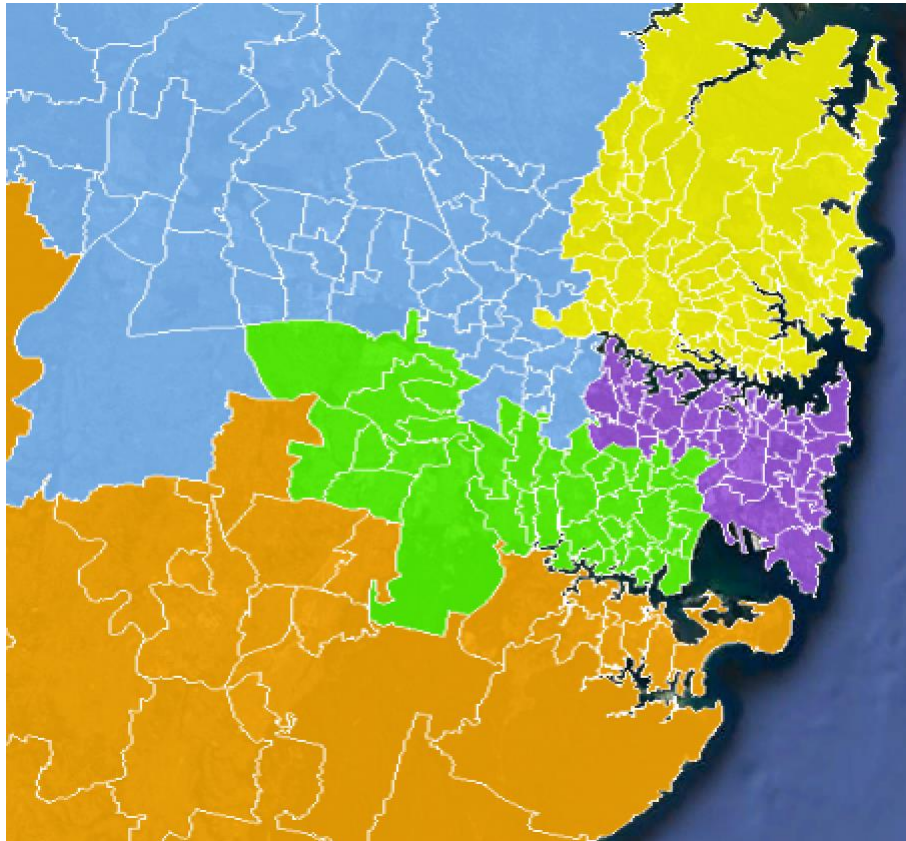|	**2020**	**2026**	**2036**	**2046**	**2056**
Georges River Region	5,233	5,691	6,174	6,772	7,370
Northern Region	11,792	12,629	13,484	14,399	15,315
South Sydney Region	7,052	7,558	8,655	9,418	10,180
Western Region	12,237	13,941	16,520	18,397	20,792
Wollongong Region	9,882	10,700	12,478	13,967	15,455

85.   The Regions are already out of kilter, but rather than tinkering with the regional structure based on our present situation, it makes sense to begin the process of restructure now, with the expectation that this will be an ongoing process as the demographics of the city evolve. We cannot "set-and-forget" for another 30 years.

86.   The most obvious change necessary to our Regional structure is for one Regional Bishop to be focused on the south-west growth corridor. One approach would be a wholesale reconfiguration of Regions to align with the three-city metropolis model. However, to do this now would be premature because the development in Western Sydney will occur over the next 20 years.

87.   A better option is an incremental approach, with "Stage 1" changes made now, in anticipation of further "Stage 2" Regional reconfiguration in (say) 5 years, with the expectation that the Regional structure would continue to be reviewed and revised as necessary over time. This would allow us to begin shifting Regional structures in the directions that we anticipate them to continue moving, embedding cultural change and establishing the principles for further adjustments in the future.

88.   In response to these developments, the Archbishop has been encouraged by the Regional Bishops to make some boundary changes to the current five Regions, effective from the middle of 2021, as shown in the map in the appendix.
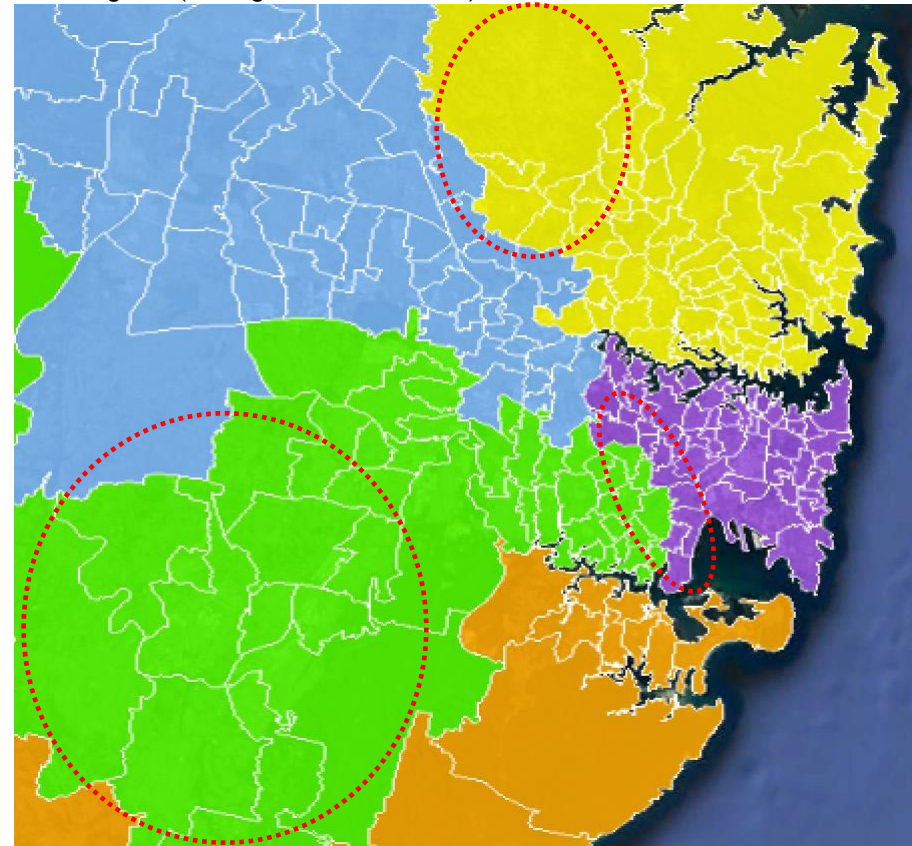
PETER HAYWARD
Bishop of Wollongong

On behalf of the Archbishop and Regional Bishops

4 March 2021

Current Regions (Greater Sydney Area Only)

New regions (Changes in three zones)

Parishes (Current)

Parishes (New)

57	Western Region = Blue	52

↓ 5 Hills parishes to Northern Region – Castle Hill, Glenhaven, Dural, Cherrybrook, West Pennant Hills

63	Northern Region = Yellow	68
51	South Sydney = Purple	58

↑ 7 parishes from the "Bayside" LGA – Sans Souci, Kogarah, Brighton/Rockdale, Bayside, Marrickville, Earlwood, Canterbury

41	Georges River Region = Green	47

↑ 13 parishes from the Macarthur Mission Area – Camden, Campbelltown, Cobbitty, Denham Court, Eagle Vale, Ingleburn, Menangle, Minto, Narellan, Oran Park, Rosemeadow, South Creek, The Oaks

58	Wollongong = Orange	45