



## CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CAIRNS

**Media Release**

**15 June 2025**

### ***Over 230 Gather for Historic Synod Plenary Consultation session in Cairns***

More than 230 people from across the Catholic Diocese of Cairns gathered on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> of June at Brothers Leagues Club for the 2025 Diocesan Plenary Consultation event, a milestone event aimed at providing important consultation from all areas of the diocese to shape the future direction of the local Church.

Attendees have travelled from every corner of the vast diocese, as far south as Tully to the remote communities of the Torres Strait and Weipa; to reflect, listen and speak boldly as part of this unique opportunity for prayerful dialogue and spiritual renewal.

Parishioners, educators, clergy and lay people were invited to contribute to the process, which aims to respond to the needs and hopes of local communities while remaining grounded in the Gospel.

Bishop Joe Caddy, who facilitated the day's reflections, said:

“As we embarked on our 2025-2026 Synod journey, it was brilliant to see people from all different corners of the diocese sitting side by side, respectfully reflecting and listening to each other's views on how the Church can grow. It is clear that attendees feel honoured to be part of this process, and I am truly grateful to see them taking it seriously and embracing the community spirit.”

A standout moment of the day was the open question-and-answer session with the Bishop, where parishioners were invited to ask direct anonymous questions about the diocese's direction, decisions, and challenges. Bishop Joe responded openly and honestly, acknowledging the complexity of many of the issues raised. Topics included the role of women in the Church, how to better engage young people in the Mass, increasing faith participation in schools, and the desire for greater ethnic diversity among priests serving in the diocese. His candid and pastoral approach was well received by those present, who appreciated the rare opportunity to engage in such honest and respectful dialogue.

Special guest presenter Susan Pascoe AM, who was a member of the Vatican's Methodology Commission for the Synod on Synodality and a facilitator at the Synod Assemblies in Rome in 2023 and 2024, praised the event's energy and depth of discussion.

“There was a real sense of vibrancy in the room. When you wandered around listening to the tables, people were willing to raise big issues but also provided fresh ideas with a level of animation. What stood out to me most was how deeply people care about the



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Church and how seriously they're taking this moment, it says a lot that registrations had to be closed for this event. The Diocese of Cairns has shown that it's ready to have the tough conversations, together and in good faith."

The purpose of the Diocesan Synod is to consider the current landscape of the Church in the Diocese of Cairns and to co-create a shared vision for the future. Guided group discussions throughout the day explored themes such as community engagement, faith formation, youth involvement, leadership, and inclusivity.

The event is a key step in the diocesan journey of renewal and collaboration, with outcomes to inform future pastoral planning and local mission initiatives.

As the diocese continues to face cultural, generational and geographic challenges, the Synod represents a renewed commitment to working together in faith.

The next steps in this process will involve taking the feedback from the Plenary Consultation Day to a year of ongoing conversations and discernment by the Diocesan Synod Membership. The diocese will come together again in 12 months' time to reflect on the progress made, share what has emerged, and continue shaping a shared path forward in faith to focus on initiatives and strategies for mission in our local Church.

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