

**ANALYSIS AND DIAGNOSIS OF THE PARISH**

	<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>MAP OF PARISH</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>STEP 1</b>	<b>THE FIRST ASSESSMENT OF THE BASIC CHALLENGE/PROBLEM</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>STEP 2</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION</b>	<b>5</b>
Section A	THE SOCIAL CONTEXT	
	1. Demographic	
	2. Ethnic and Cultural Situation	
	3. Socio-Religious Situation	
	4. Socio-Economic Situation	
	5. Socio-Political Situation	
	6. Socio-Familial Situation	
	Problems in the Social Context	
Section B	THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF THE PARISH	<b>16</b>
Level 1	Pastoral Care of All as a Whole	
Level 2	Pastoral Care of Small Communities	
Level 3	Pastoral Care of the Family	
Level 4	Pastoral Care of Specific Categories	
Level 5	Pastoral Services	
	5.1 Evangelisation and Catechesis of All Children and Adolescents	
	5.2 Parish Schools	
	5.3 Pre-Sacramental Catechesis of Adults	
	5.4 Liturgical Celebrations	
	5.5 Prayer and Community Spirituality	
	5.6 Promoting Human Development	
	5.7 Ecumenical Movement	
Level 6	Pastoral Workers and their Ongoing Formation	
Level 7	Structures for Decision Making	
Level 8	Structures for Making Proposals and Planning	
Level 9	Structures for Communication	
Level 10	Parish Assets and Finance	
Level 11	Secretarial and Technical Services	
<b>STEP 3</b>	<b>RETROSPECTIVE VIEW (LOOKING BACK)</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>STEP 4</b>	<b>PROGNOSIS (LOOKING FORWARD)</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>STEP 5</b>	<b>DIAGNOSIS OF THE BASIC CHALLENGE/ PROBLEM</b>	<b>41</b>
	PASTORAL DESCRIPTION OF THE IDEAL MODEL OF THE PARISH	
	ELEMENTS OF THE IDEAL PARISH OF KU-RING-AI CHASE CATHOLIC PARISH	
	<b>OBSTACLES AND POTENTIALITIES</b>	<b>48</b>
	<b>CONCLUDING STATEMENT</b>	<b>52</b>

**MAP OF THE PARISH**

## **ANALYSIS OF KU-RING-GAI CHASE CATHOLIC PARISH**

This reflection and analysis on the situation of the parish happened during a series of pastoral meetings of the parishioners held over a two-week period from 30<sup>th</sup> October 2006 to 12<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

It was done in several steps by groups of parishioners who responded to an open invitation from the

Parish Priest and the Parish Council. The analysis was done as part of the Prospective Method of pastoral planning and was undertaken as part of a process of ongoing parish renewal. At the request of the parish two members of the Community Animation Service of Movement for a Better World facilitated the process.

The purpose of the meetings was to have a deeper understanding of the present situation of the parish. Parishioners needed to know 'where we are' in relation to 'where we want to be'. We had dreamed up elements of a vision of an ideal model of parish in the "Spirituality for our Times" Renewal Week held in late March into early April, 2006. This vision for the future was revisited during the pastoral meetings from the end of October into November, 2006.

The groups of parishioners who met have striven to work in a prayerful and patient way, in an attitude of hope, contemplating the people of the parish in the local situation. They did so in a spirit of humility, trust and openness.

## **STEP 1 FIRST ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION (A FIRST QUICK LOOK)**

Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish came into being only recently, in June 2006, drawing together the former parishes of St. Patrick's, Asquith and St. Bernard's, Berowra. St. Patrick's had become a Parish in its own right in 1951, originating from the neighbouring parish of Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Waitara. Later still in 1973, St. Bernard's Parish was established for the community at Berowra. The first school in St Patrick's Parish was established by the Sisters of Mercy, from the North Sydney Monte St. Angelo Province who came to St. Patrick's in 1958 from Waitara and by 1959 a small school was established in a building which functioned both as school and church. They also started a school in St. Bernard's Parish. Both schools are now fully staffed by lay teachers.

Since the Vatican Council II closed in 1965 the parish has made many efforts to bring about the growth and renewal that the Vatican Council called for in all the people and in their way of living. Some of these efforts and achievements were recalled:

- Parishioners themselves built the two churches
- Lay people proclaim the word
- Changing from Latin to English in the Mass
- Sacramental programme was introduced properly and included the families
- The R.C.I.A. and the role of the catechists
- Youth Masses and Antioch movement
- Hospitality – cups of tea after Mass
- Family groups
- Appointment of first permanent parish priest of Saint Bernard's and surviving the subsequent instability of the change of priests.
- The introduction of the permanent diaconate
- Youth music ministry
- Lay teachers taking over responsibility in the schools.
- Parish Councils provide advice to the priests
- Greater consultative participation
- Greater accountability of clergy to the people – in finances and in parish property
- More interfaith dialogue and respect
- Baptism – the people see new people welcomed into the church
- Ministers and priests conducting marriages together
- Marriage Encounter
- The Paulian Society
- Refugee resettlement – people from Asia and Europe
- The activity of the Columban seminarians in the parish
- Scripture study groups
- Prayer group
- Availability of daily Mass
- Mass is inclusive of children and has a special atmosphere
- The charism of the Sisters of Mercy from their work in the schools

- Catechists
- The gift of our pastors, their different approach and their practical homilies
- Continuing contact with former pastors
- Building the schools
- Greater participation of the people in the Mass including both boys and girls as servers; readers; acolytes; senior servers and Special Ministers
- St Catherine's home in Brooklyn
- Ministry to the housebound
- Adult faith education and the Lenten programmes
- Action on behalf of social justice
- The social life and activity of the parish
- The broad sense of community that exists – we belong

Despite these and many other efforts and achievements, a majority of Catholics take little or no part in parish life. In 2006, of the 8,107 Catholics living within the boundaries of the parish, about 1,100 people (13%) participate in Sunday Eucharist.

After taking notice of this reality we surfaced the DISSATISFACTIONS that people voice about the parish, about the services it offers, about the way it is organised and run, and the dissatisfactions of the pastoral workers themselves. The purpose here was to have a first understanding or to make a first assessment of the key challenge/problem facing us and to try to do this as people of faith. Our formulations of the partial problems are:

- Dissatisfactions about the parish in general:

People, including the clergy, feel powerless in their relationship with the official church.

- Dissatisfactions about the pastoral services:

The pastoral services of the parish do not totally meet the needs of the people.

- Dissatisfactions about the structures/organization:

The people, including the clergy, do not feel part of the structures.

- Dissatisfactions of the pastoral workers themselves:

The pastoral workers are too few. Their work is unseen and they feel unsupported.

In looking at the partial problems above, the key overall challenge/problem in a first assessment was seen to be:

**The way the official church, at various levels, organises its life and ministry does not engage effectively or appropriately the people of the parish.**

It is evident that in saying this we are not intending to blame anyone but simply to understand the situation. The other face of dissatisfactions is people's longings and yearnings.

In looking at this key challenge/problem we asked ourselves: In what direction does the solution lie?

We say the following:

#### **GENERAL LINES OF A SOLUTION.**

- We foster two-way communication.
- We interpret the teaching of the official church for our situation.
- We find out who and where all our people are and we get to know them in their situation.
- We encourage a sense of ownership among all in our parish.
- We look towards being more inclusive of people of non-English speaking backgrounds.
- We give formation to all the community, especially to the lay ministers, so as to be church in all its aspects.

## **STEP 2**

### **DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION**

#### **SECTION A**

#### **THE SOCIAL CONTEXT**

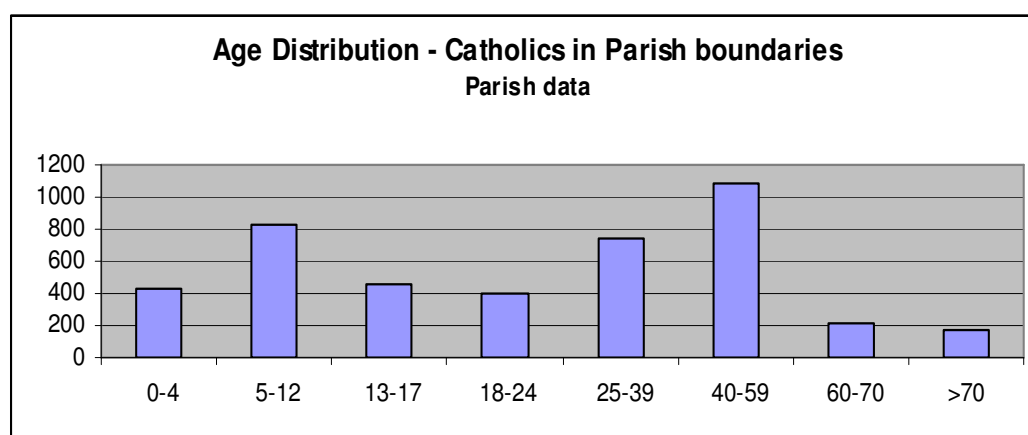
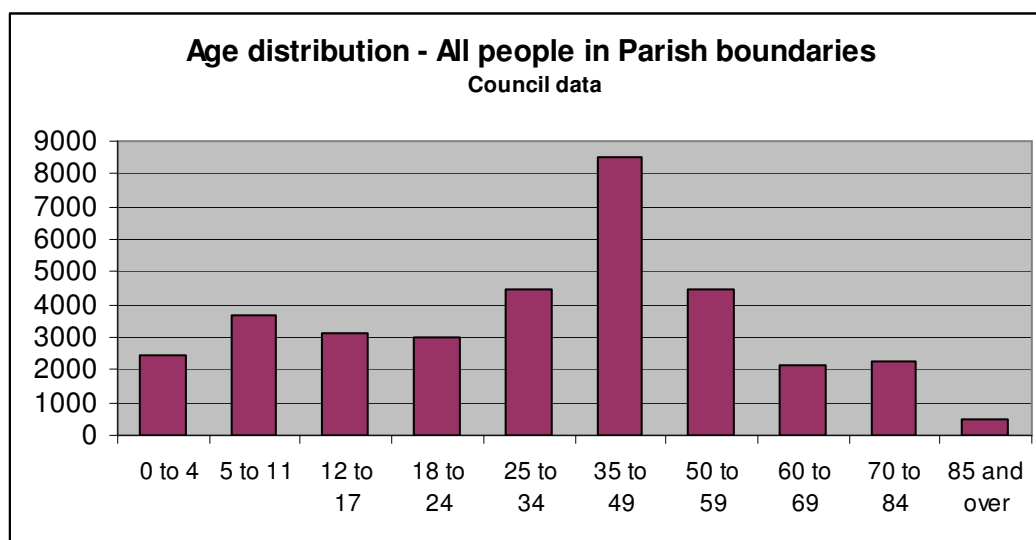
**Locality:** Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish is situated within the Shire of Hornsby. A small portion lies north of the Hawkesbury. Much of the parish shares a boundary with the Ku-Ring-Gai National Park. Contained within the parish are the suburbs and localities of Hornsby, Hornsby Heights, Hornsby North, Asquith, Berowra, Berowra Heights, Berowra Waters, Cheero Point, Mt Colah, Mt Kuring-gai, Cowan, Brooklyn, and Mooney Mooney.

Within the Diocese of Broken Bay, Ku-Ring-Gai, Chase Parish is part of the Northern Deanery. Its neighbouring parishes are Arcadia to the west, Gosford to the north, Wahroonga to the east and Waitara to the south.

### 1. Demographic Situation

The overall population of the area of the parish is 34,006 (2001 census) of whom 16,877 are male and 17,129 are female. Of the 8,495 who are retired, 3,398 are male and 5,097 are female.

The overall population distribution is indicated in the following age structure graph:



The average number of family members: 3

<b>Household Types</b>				
Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish				
	2001	%	1991	%
Couple with child(ren) 15 years and under	3,752	31.4	4,389	43.4

Couple with child(ren) over 15 years	1,735	14.5	827	8.2
Couple without child(ren)	2,889	24.2	2,261	22.4
Group household	221	1.9	274	2.7
Lone person household	1,869	15.7	1,386	13.7
One family household	NA	NA	8,200	81.1
One parent family with child(ren) 15 years and under	491	4.1	544	5.4
One parent family with child(ren) over 15 years	625	5.2	293	2.9
Other families	107	0.9	128	1.3
Other not classifiable household	380	3.2	169	1.7
Total couple with child(ren)	5,489	46.0	5,217	51.6
Total families	9,602	80.5	8,442	83.5
Total family households	9,466	79.3	8,276	81.9
Total one parent family	1,116	9.4	835	8.3
Two or more family household	NA	NA	76	0.8
<b>TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>11,935</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>10,107</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Average number of persons per household:	3
Birth rate per year over the past few years:	No good figures
Floating population - numbers of seasonal workers, holiday population:	4,428-census night
Rate of turnover in population per year:	1.3%

## 2. Ethnic Cultural Situation

The dominant cultural and ethnic group (83%) is of Anglo-Celtic origin. There are very few Aborigines living in the area (0.5%). The following table gives the country of origin for the area of Hornsby Shire Council covered by the parish.

<b>Origin and Nationality</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>%</b>
Australian born	24,921	71.7	23,976	75.6
Overseas born	8,356	24.1	7,260	22.9
Australian citizens	30,812	88.7	27,714	87.4
Indigenous population	157	0.5	40	0.1
Australian citizens aged 18+	22,265	64.1	19,031	60.0

Generally Australians of Anglo-Celtic origin are seen as more reserved than other ethnic groups, and mix freely only with those whom they know well, where it is recognized they are friendly and welcoming. They show great generosity in times of disaster, and have traditionally believed strongly in 'a fair go'. Nonetheless they keep their troubles to themselves and they tend to be reserved and to be undemonstrative in relationships (especially men) with a certain difficulty in verbalizing feelings and communicating in depth. This may cause them to be diffident which stems from a fear of being rejected rather than from a belief that they are better than others. They might not be as demonstrative as others, but the feelings are still there. Loyalty to the groups with which they are most closely connected is a feature. A very small percentage of people make their religious tradition central to their social and cultural life

They value privacy and prefer to 'mind their own business' unless family or close friends are involved. They do not want to intrude or to interfere in other people's lives. They can be very responsive, but tend to wait until they are approached: they are not natural volunteers; when they are asked they are usually ready to help generously and to share the workload.

They do not like snobbishness and can be suspicious and critical of others especially those in authority, capable of being 'knockers'; they are casual, practical and inventive rather than reflective and often 'sport mad'. They take time to open up to others. At times they are suspicious and resentful of the influence of minority groups, seeing them as 'different', but when they get to know them as people, the personal contact and knowledge leads to empathy.

The younger ones are seen to being different and it is recognised that there is are variations among generations

The following list is of ethnic groups found within the parish boundaries:

- Italy 4.1%
- China 2.2%
- Filipino 2.1%
- Polish 2.3%
- India 1.2%
- Other European 2.0%
- Other Asian 2.1 %
- Oceanic and Pacific 0.2%

Migrants come to Australia wanting to give themselves and their families a better life, and are prepared to work hard to establish themselves and to keep their jobs. Home ownership is important and in the early years of their time in Australia, they support each other until established and then are anxious to mix, although more comfortable with their own folk. Family life and the celebration of traditions and customs are important especially those connected with their religious obligations. Keeping in touch with the extended family is important in their cultures. The love of their traditional cuisine has been shared with mainstream Australians who have embraced the diversity of cultural offerings.

As far as understanding and respect for the law goes, Anglo-Celtic people make a liberal law and they interpret it strictly whereas Latins make a strict law and interpret it liberally

With regard to **education**, the majority have completed at least a secondary education. The following table indicates the highest qualifications received.

<b><i>Education - Highest Qualifications received</i></b>				
Of the total population living within the boundaries of Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish				
	2001	%	1991	%
Bachelor or Higher degree	4815	17.8	2867	12.1
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	2985	11.1	1888	8.0
Vocational	5175	19.2	4101	17.4
No qualifications	11262	41.7	12159	51.5
Not Stated	2761	10.2	2591	11.0
TOTAL	26996	100.0	23606	100.0

**The mass media** has a powerful influence in a variety of ways. It can inform and raise awareness of significant issues and can help people gain a global view, but it also has the power to promote permissiveness, self-interest, materialism and consumerism. Media shapes our thinking, decision-

making, attitudes, values and constantly challenges values. It can affect 'common thinking' of large groups of people, forming public opinion. Most news items are sensationalized and fuel an all-pervasive climate of fear and anxiety.

Electronic games contribute to addictions, violence and anti-social behaviour. Pornography on the Internet leads to social problems and addiction for it can desensitise people and sabotage marriages. Chat-rooms and texting can help people stay in touch but they can lead people into a sub-culture of anonymity where there is less inter-personal communication. People take on a new way of life lived in isolation without face-to-face meeting. Mobile phones on public transport, and in restaurants and other public places introduce a different dynamic and can be intrusive. In general many experience information overload; they believe what they want to believe for "It's true if I want it to be true." Many have a non-critical attitude to the media and tend not to query what they read and see.

Apart from the Sydney and national daily papers the parish is served by **local press** which are considered the most read papers in the district. The Berowra and District Bush Telegraph and the Hornsby Bush Telegraph both have a vibrant letters column and an extensive coverage of local issues, which are of great interest to the residents of the area.

**Leisure and entertainment** There are many outdoor sporting facilities available but nothing for indoor sports and at Berowra there is no community centre or hall. At Berowra there is a popular musical society. Fishing (with a licence), boating and skiing are popular water sports because of the Hawkesbury River forming part of the northern boundary of the parish. A cinema complex is in Hornsby, but there is no entertainment for teens in Berowra. People gather at the R.S.L. Clubs at Asquith and Berowra, at the Mooney Mooney Workers Club, the Asquith Bowling Club and the Asquith Leagues Club.

Leisure experiences also include picnics and family get-togethers, sporting activities, T.V., playing the 'Pokies'. Christmas is a family-centred time. At New Year many go to the beach. Other days celebrated include the Queen's Birthday public holiday and Easter Monday. People attend race meetings, football, go on picnics, play cricket and go to watch cricket, and many make gardening their interest and pastime.

## 2. **Socio-religious situation.**

Christian denominations (other than Catholic) are:

Anglican: 9,102 or 27%; Orthodox 0.7 %;

All other Christian denominations amount to 6, 482 or 19.1% of the population:

Uniting Church: 7%; Presbyterian: 4%; Baptist: 3%; Lutheran 0.6%; Pentecostal 1.3%; Seventh Day Adventist 1.2%, Other 2%.

Most groups have stable congregations which are aging and shrinking in common with the trend across Australia. The Baptist community runs a Christian school at Berowra which serves as a church on Sundays. There are some active Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons in the area who seem to have little influence but are persistent.

The parish has fraternal and cooperative relationships with other mainline churches. Through a Ministers Fraternal, initiatives of collaboration are promoted and held. There has been a growth in friendship and respect among ministers and their respective congregations where suspicion and animosity has given way to acceptance and cooperation. Ministers participate in Anzac Day and Remembrance Day services and support the World Day of Prayer.

The Catholic Womens League (CWL) and Uniting Church at Mt. Colah have regular friendly contact. State primary schools have ecumenical services. Hornsby and Asquith High schools, with the financial support of the churches, have a Scripture Course taught by a paid teacher on Staff.

The Ling Liang community are in Mills Ave., Mt. Colah.

Non-Christian religions have 1,858 adherents or 5% of the population. Buddhists constitute 2.2%,

Hindus, 1.8% and Muslims, 1.4% of the population. There is a Japanese Buddhist Temple in Manor Rd, Mt Wilga. It is well-established and very rich. The group is engaged in helping people through social work.

Those who profess no religion at all are 5, 049 or 15.2% of the population and those who do not state any religion at all number 3,148 or 9.2% of the population. The total of these two groups is 8,197 or 24.4% of the population which is a significantly large number of people and constitutes the second largest grouping after the Anglican faith. It was thought that the area of the parish is less religious than areas nearby in other parts of the shire.

### 3. **Socio-economic situation.**

The following figures describe the figures for industry, and the statistics are drawn from the 2001 census.

<b>Occupations</b> Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish				
	2001	%	1991	%
Professionals	4,418	24.7	2,534	16.6
Associate professionals	2266	12.7	1,300	8.5
Managers and administrators	1383	7.7	1,949	12.7
Clerical, sales and service	5,574	31.2	4,872	31.9
Production and transport	738	4.1	581	3.8
Tradespersons	1973	11.0	1,900	12.4
Labourers	907	5.1	1,345	8.8
Inadequately described and not stated	256	1.4	807	5.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>17,884</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>15,290</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<b>Labour Status</b> Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish				
	2001	%	1991	%
Employed full time	11,399	42.3	10,283	43.0
Employed not stated	458	1.7	728	3.0
Employed part time	6,059	22.5	4,265	17.8
Total employed	17,916	66.5	15,275	63.8
Total in labour force	18,560	68.9	16,162	67.5
Total labour force	18,560	68.9	16,162	67.5
Total not in labour force	7,587	28.1	7,443	31.1
Total unemployed	645	2.4	886	3.7
Not stated	809	3.0	322	1.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26,956</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>23,927</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Most people commute to work outside the parish boundaries for work. There is light industry at Asquith on Salisbury Rd. and vicinity.

**Unemployment** causes a loss of personal dignity and self-worth, inequality between people, a loss of motivation and depression all culminating in tension in the family. Among its many effects it causes anxiety, stressed relationships, debt, loss of property, family break-up, domestic violence. Young people who are unable to find work feel frustrated, sometimes sinking into the drug culture and associated petty crime. The middle-aged find it hard to obtain re-employment, so they are compelled to rely on casual work and lose the benefits of being employed. Males who think of themselves as breadwinners feel they are letting the family down. Many feel shame and despondency as they are drawn into long-term poverty.

There is still a stigma attached to being “on the dole”, although this is less than some years ago. The attitude of Centrelink can be nasty. When unemployment causes financial hardship, those affected regard any benefits as a blessing even though receiving benefits may cause embarrassment. In the Information Technology area a number of people have experienced sudden retrenchment. In Australia many now have to hold down more than one job and are still the ‘working poor’, while families where both parents need to work to house and feed their family are becoming the norm. There is widespread job insecurity as jobs are not offering permanency. People work longer hours, overtime (often unpaid) and accept unpaid or underpaid work to keep their job. There is a concern that the unemployment rate is misleading through the inclusion of part-time work, even one hour a week. The under-employed are becoming the working poor: they lack money for essentials; some younger people have to put their personal ambitions on hold and they go back to living with their parents. Financial insecurity makes it hard for people to plan for their family. Many people no longer have lifetime tenure in their work because short-term contracts are increasingly the way of negotiating employment and work conditions.

**Unions.** Most people at some time in their lives have been part of a union or association. Those Higher Education Contribution Scheme cannot see the value of student unions at times. Since the changes in Industrial relations legislation, more have joined unions. There is a fear of the new legislation’s consequences for people think there is greater scope for injustice and exploitation of workers.

With regard to **housing**, in 2001 the great majority of people live in separate housing, but there is a rental crisis in the area.

<b>Dwellings</b> Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish				
	2001	%	1991	%
Separate house	10434	83.2	9135	84.6
Semi-detached (incl. row/terrace/town-house)	421	3.4	274	2.5
Flat, apartment	823	6.6	514	4.8
Other	170	1.4	170	1.6
TOTAL occupied private dwellings	11921	95.0	10136	93.9
TOTAL unoccupied Dwellings	622	5.0	656	6.1
Not stated	73	0.6	44	0.4
TOTAL DWELLINGS	12542	100.0	10793	100.0

As 34.7% of households have a mortgage (down from 41.3% in 1991), and as interest rate rises have become regular and frequent, considerable financial pressure and anxiety is experienced on family budgets. The pressure is increased if there is the threat of loss of income or ill health. All this adds to financial insecurity which makes it difficult to plan for the future. People feel ‘they are always trying to catch up’. To sustain their lifestyle, most are two-income families, while the consumerism, materialism and individualism so evident in our culture add considerable financial pressures to acquire the latest ‘must have’.

**Social and health services** offered in the area include the Centacare Counselling Service at Waitara. The district also has a child care centre, Meals on Wheels, Home nursing, a private and a public hospital, medical centre and access to the Mercy Life Centre.

The area does, however, lack a number of support services. Retirees face a number of difficulties stemming from the fact that when people are widowed they are financially on their own with one income, and they need affordable financial advice and assistance. A counselling service for the general population is seriously lacking. Parishes are not always aware of the services that Centacare offers. It would appear that government social service provision is adequate.

When general services are considered, they are regarded as being fairly good, but the Berowra area is not well served by bus transport. Berowra is an isolated community with only one exit road and if it is blocked there is no escape route in an emergency. The town is reasonably supplied with shops, banking services and a reasonable choice of schools.

#### 4. **Socio-political situation.**

The Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish is situated within the boundaries of the Hornsby Shire Council, apart from Mooney Mooney, which lies on the northern side of the Hawkesbury River. The whole of the parish is part of the Federal electoral division of Berowra and the State district of Hornsby, with a section of the locality of Brooklyn, a part of Hawkesbury. Both the Federal and State sitting-members are from the Liberal party. As the Australian Attorney-General, the federal member is not seen as accessible as the State member or the local Mayor or Councillors.

Both Federal and State seats are regarded as blue-ribbon Liberal seats. The local council has a number of Independent members. Recent publicity about the strong influence of the right-wing in the pre-selection processes on the conservative side of politics has confirmed the belief that the seats will continue to be represented by people with those views. Local people believe that the other side of politics as represented by the Labour party in particular, or the Greens or Democrats will never get in at the federal level. Some see apathy or inertia in social justice areas as a consequence and most people do not engage in politics at federal or state level. In addition many people have the perception that money changes hands for decisions at the local area, thus tainting their Shire Council with corruption. They also believe their local Councillors argue among themselves so much that they never get anything done.

People do, however take a strong interest in issues which affect them locally and in the decision-making processes of the Shire Council. They are angry about the re-allocation of resources, once having been approved for projects within the parish which are subsequently reallocated to projects away from the parish. They express concern about the pressures from developers to erect high-rise buildings in response to the shortage of vacant land and they are part of local action groups which arise to confront these issues. Some of the action groups in the area are the Mt Ku-ring-gai action group, the Berowra community group and the Berowra Waters action group. In older parts of the parish as long-term residents sell up and leave, their houses are demolished and replaced by townhouses and the like, so changing the settled and stable nature of the area.

Parking and transport issues are perennial concerns, as well as the need for more roads out of the area because of bushfire danger, but the lack of a pool or a community centre are issues on which people lobby their Council. Local issues considered 'hot topics' currently are the lack of a police presence in Berowra, notwithstanding the police station there, the council purchase of the quarry (which is not in their area) for a very large sum and for which they will be paying a levy on top of their rates for a very long time to come because of the cost of the interest, the use of the Council Works Depot and the proposed high-rise development at Brooklyn.

People are willing to join in the Cleanup Australia activities and support not only the local Harmony Day, but some go into Sydney for days of action on Social Justice issues, such as the walk across the Harbour Bridge and the more recent Walk against Global Warming. It has to be said, though, that while people might become upset about social justice issues they more often take action in their own way such as in the long history of refugee resettlement which the parish has undertaken. In

political terms they feel disenfranchised, considering that once their vote has elected a member, their views are not heard and members serve their party's interests ahead of the particular needs of their electorate. They tend now to vote just because they have to.

#### 5. **Socio-familial situation.**

In the area there are 9,602 families, 5,489 couples with children, 2,889 couples without children, 1,116 one-parent families, while there are 107 other family arrangements.

Families are very affected by the present condition of society, although the traditional family is still considered as the preferred unit in society. It is desired as the context for bringing up children, support for each other and as an economic unit. Families can help each other to grow, but there is less support for them than ever. In this area many families have lived here for generations and it is considered to still be a stable and settled area, even though many of their children are moving out of the area because the high cost of housing acts as a deterrent. People who are moving into this area are seen to be the children of people in more affluent areas. They come because housing is cheaper than where they grew up. Mortgage costs are considered manageable while both partners are in work and there is no threat of a loss of income from, for example, ill health. It is usually for financial reasons or the fear of dropping out of a career path that causes many mothers to be back at work six weeks after the birth of the baby. In an essentially stable area, it is often grandparents who are the glue which holds the family unit together, as they take on extensive support of their children and grandchildren as child minders or as 'taxi drivers'. Grandparents help their children avoid expensive child care and before and after school care.

With both parents working to pay the bills, families struggle to balance the demands of family life and work (including long hours of travel each day as they commute, often to the Sydney CBD). They live with exhaustion and are time-poor, struggling with a working week which now can be spread over seven working days. On Sunday they try to catch up, placing family contact and rest and refreshment often ahead of other commitments. Though it is now the view of the majority of husbands and wives that they should share domestic duties, in practice as the husband usually takes the job which requires the longer hours of work, and the wife often some form of part-time or shift work, it is frequently the wife who struggles to fit in work, house-work and the ferrying of children to the many after-school and weekend activities considered necessary for their children, drawing on the support of the grandparents or relatives where possible.

While most people are against divorce and infidelity, in practice they accept that marriage breakdown happens. In some sections of the total population within the parish boundaries the incidence of divorce is up to 50%. People see the majority of young people (including their own children) living together before marriage. Young people believe the time of living together initially is a test before a long-term commitment to become an economic unit and as well as so their shared love can grow and their children will have a safe and stable home in which to grow up. Their parents, even though they frequently disapprove of the practice, offer support because they do not want to lose their children, but know that couples who live together outside marriage can and do have children. Within the rising numbers of blended families, there is a particular challenge of relationships, particularly for new dads. Living together before marriage, de facto marriages and the use of contraceptives are now commonplace, with Catholic parents and extended families refusing to shun those they love when they are in this situation, striving above all else to maintain their relationship with their children. Contraception as a means of family planning is seen as the responsible thing to do, while abortion is seen as very private, but is common.

In addition, the increasingly higher incidence of one-parent families would indicate a need for greater support rather than a further reduction of welfare benefits and increasing pressures for single mothers to return early to work. So many differing family arrangements exist, for example same-sex 'marriages', that the term family now has many differing interpretations. A trend for a higher turnover of families in the area is causing the disruption and eventual breakdown of long-established neighbourhood networks of friendship and support. A further strain on these networks is the increasingly long hours people spend commuting and their general state of weariness.

People retain a high ideal of family life but often engage in patterns of interacting which do not enable relationships to grow. Many (especially men) lack skills in resolving conflicts and suffer low self-esteem. Violence, aggression, excessive drinking, drug use by the youth are often a hidden yet real dimension of some households.

The factors outlined above, in addition to a reliance on casual and part-time work with the consequence of under-employment and job insecurity make it harder for families to plan ahead and they experience the frustration of never catching up to their aspirations. Perhaps because of this, domestic violence, which people try to keep hidden, comes to light from time to time. It will be prevalent while there are ongoing economic stresses and the lack of time or skills to deal with the situation underlying the conflict.

Very often nuclear families try to carry their burdens on their own and keep their feelings to themselves. Left in isolation family members can become overwhelmed by the weight of their problems, and the family can even disintegrate, but where they are connected to others outside the family unit, they can be helped to become very resilient.

Family law, particularly the recent changes affecting custody and access to children, as well as the right of children to divorce their parents are civil laws which can have the most significant impact on families. In addition, because of their reliance on their cars, road laws affecting speeding, drink driving and the like also have a significant impact.

It can be hurtful when all the children move away from the family to find their future elsewhere. The relatively few young ones left behind lack peer support. Older people are also challenged by their 'empty nest'. Now, as more and more retirees and the aged move into retirement villages, a new group of often unsupported residents who have left their often life-long involvement with their communities behind, require attention, resources and links to local groups. As they become ever more frail and move into hostel and nursing home care, they can suffer loneliness and loss deeply. Significantly, there are others who have extended family in the district and who are likely to be debt free and report they feel secure.

### **Problems in the social context**

- A community whose majority character is very reserved, giving the appearance of being very standoffish or uneasy; which doesn't easily communicate in depth, finding it difficult to verbalise feelings (especially among men) results in people keeping their problems to themselves.
- The powerful influence of the media is shaping our lives, resulting in permissiveness, materialism, lowering of moral standards and a non-critical attitude to what the media portrays.
- Electronic games contribute to anti-social behaviour.
- Pornography on the Internet can desensitise people and undermine relationships.
- Chatrooms and texting can lead people into a sub-culture of anonymity with less inter-personal communication.
- Many people experience information overload.
- The religious needs of most are not being met by the mainline churches.
- Unemployment and its effects are the loss of dignity and self-worth, accompanied by feelings of inferiority and despair.
- People feel left out of the political process and many are cynical about politics generally.
- The busyness of life is causing pressure and stress on family relationships. Sunday is when they 'regroup'. The working week is seven days for some.
- People feel overlooked and left out when politicians and decision-makers allocate resources. There is a neglect of local projects and the area misses out.
- Both marriage partners need to work and women feel the pressure to return to work soon after the baby's birth.
- Husbands tend to work long hours and wives take shifts of part-time work to cope with financial pressures.
- People experience great difficulty balancing work and family life – they have a feeling of being constantly exhausted.
- There is widespread job insecurity without a sense of permanency.

- Financial insecurity makes it harder for people to plan for their family.
- Grandparents are often relied on to assist their children to keep their families together and they themselves feel fatigued.
- The shortage of land increases pressures from developers wanting to erect high-rise buildings.
- There is a fear of the consequences of the new Industrial Relations legislation.
- There is a rental crisis in the area.
- Difficulties are faced by retirees when widowed and they have to manage on one income.
- A counselling service for the general population is seriously needed.
- Berowra is not well served by bus transport.
- Berowra is an isolated community with only one exit road which could easily be blocked on the occasion of an emergency.

## **SECTION B. DESCRIPTION OF THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION OF THE PARISH**

### **LEVEL 1. Pastoral Care of all as a Whole**

Census figures show that there are 8,107 Catholics in the parish (23.1% of the total population of 34, 006). Of the 8,107 about 1,100 generally come to Sunday Mass (13% on any one Sunday) That number increases 2100 at Christmas and Easter.

There are on average: Baptism of Infants under 1 year old - 68 per year; children between 1 and 7 years old – 15 per year; children over 7 years old – 3 per year. The vast percentage of children are from non-Mass going families.

Confirmation: Average number per year: 80

First Holy Communion: Average number per year: 80

Reconciliation.

- Individual Rite: Average number of penitents per month: 8

- Communal Rite: Celebrated in Advent, Lent, before 1<sup>st</sup> Eucharist - Average number participating: 150

Marriages: Number per year - 11 in 2005, i.e. 3 Catholics marrying Catholics and 8 mixed marriages

Funerals: Average per year was 19 in 2005

Religious traditions:

The special religious feasts here are: Anniversaries of Churches; Feast Days of St Patrick and St Bernard; Advent Season and Christmas; Candlemas Day 2<sup>nd</sup> February; Feast of St Blaise 3<sup>rd</sup> February; Ash Wednesday; Holy Week; Easter; Anzac Day; Pentecost; Feast of Assumption of our Lady; All Saints/All Souls and the month of the Holy Souls;

Features during the ceremonies are:

Feast of Presentation 2<sup>nd</sup> February – Blessing of candles and prayer for the religious;

Feast of St Blaise, 3<sup>rd</sup> February Blessing of throats;

Ash Wednesday Blessing of people with Ashes and distribution of Project Compassion Boxes for Lenten almsgiving;

Holy Week:

Palm Sunday – blessing of palms and procession with palms from a separate location to the church building

Holy Thursday – washing of feet and adoration;

Good Friday – Stations of the Cross and remembrance of the Lord's Passion with veneration of the Cross;

Easter Vigil and Masses; Easter Fire and procession to the church

Mothers Day – Blessing of mothers and the gift of a flower

Fathers Day – blessing of fathers

Month of the Holy Souls: Special Mass for those who have died in the past year and the lighting of a prayer candle for each.

Christmas - Carols and Masses.

Throughout the year Masses with school children attract parents.

Common devotions, prayers and customs include: Rosary - prayed personally and in a group after Mass at St Patrick's and at St Bernard's; Morning prayer of the Church each day before Mass at St Bernard's; Benediction – occasionally in Lent with Evening Prayer; Stations of the Cross – publicly on Good Friday morning and done individually during Lent; personal prayer before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour; First Friday and First Saturday Devotion; Visits to the church and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; Praying privately and with others; Meditation; Lenten Prayer; Morning and Night Prayers; Visits to the Blessed sacrament; Use of Holy Water; Prayer before Statues – having photos taken near statue of St Patrick; personal prayer for the Holy Souls during November.

These devotions, prayers and customs mean a lot for those involved but do not attract the majority of parishioners. They are part of people's religious and cultural background; they keep faith alive – express love and gratitude for God's love. They can be signs of repentance bringing comfort and consolation; and thanksgiving for Christ's life and teachings, death and resurrection.

They are an outward show of love and appreciation to Mary as Mother and Helper.

People also seek protection of God through blessings, medals, holy pictures, images for display and veneration in their homes.

Religious outlook and mentality

There are differences of mentality among parishioners. The people have as their religious understandings and images the following:

*Image of God:* Generally a positive image of a loving God, Blessed Trinity, Father, Creator, Almighty, Love, Friend, Source of all being; but also Judge.

*Devotion to Christ:* as a warm loving forgiving understanding Leader, Friend, Saviour, Carpenter, Crucified One, Divinity. Others may see Jesus as just a Good Prophet.

*Our Lady:* Jesus' loving Mother, Intercessor, Role Model, Our Mother, Advocate, Without Sin, Disciple, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Mt Carmel. (Sometimes she is seen by some as more important than Christ because she is seen to be more favourable to us than Christ)

*Saints:* people who intercede for us and are models of Christian life; they are our family

*The Church:* is understood very differently by people. There is a range of concepts which include an emphasis on: a building, a place to talk to God, House of God, where we can meditate, place of history holy gathering place where 'church people' go to pray;

Other people see church as us: people of God, family of God, community a sign to the secular world, Christ in the World, A Sacrament of Christ,

Others, especially young Catholics, see the official church as: patriarchal, outdated and old fashioned, and therefore as irrelevant and out of touch.

Church sometimes has the image of being 'bogged down in bureaucracy' and forgetting its aim 'to be a living organization'.

*The World:* images of the world vary from: 'a Godless, morally bankrupt place' to 'a mother' and 'a responsibility given to us', beautiful, amazing but to a large degree in a state of crisis, a place to explore, sacramental, creation, vulnerable, finite, resources depleted, requiring our stewardship; one dot in a lot of space, getting warmer, fast moving, fearful, aggressive, a bit of a worry, always in conflict, a place of wonder, a lot of good happening in the world but the media focuses on the bad things.

### *Attitudes and understandings*

Some have an individualistic concept of spirituality, of salvation and of fulfilling obligations: going to Mass and the sacraments and thinking 'that is enough' – a functional relationship.

For some 'Church' can often have an image of formality, of being distant and cold. Many do not have an affective relationship with the Church. They may turn to God, to Christ, Mary, the Saints in times of need, sickness, in a desire for guidance and protection, to give thanks...but on their own and without experiencing any support of a community. Religious practice is sometimes motivated by tradition, obligation, fear, need for forgiveness and consolation, thanksgiving, love of God...

*Religious practice* is sometimes motivated by motivated by tradition, obligation, need for forgiveness and consolation, thanksgiving, love of God, hope for the Lord's intervention, the experience of grace in one's life (an 'epiphany' experience), through an experience of crisis/ near death experience; a faith caught from others through their witness, faith linked with a sense of belonging to a community.

### *Religious behaviour:*

Some stress the need for reverential silence in the church building, especially because of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Others tend to greet and speak to one another on the occasion of communal prayer. Many tend to be 'private' in their faith, and do not talk about their faith or about God. In the past they were never encouraged to do so or taught a method of doing so. When faced with the problems of the world there are two attitudes – flight from the world or embracing the world. Some have hopelessness. Others have a hope which leads them to want "more understanding of God and more understanding of the world."

## PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF PASTORAL CARE OF THE PEOPLE AS A WHOLE

We are lacking contact with the 87% of our Catholics at Mass on Sundays.

We don't know how to make contact and the best way to do it.

We don't contact the 87% outside of Mass – only if they happen to come to Mass.

We do not know what we have to give the 87% outside of Mass.

What we offer in an ongoing way is only for those who come to church.

There is a small percentage of the worshipping community who carry the whole parish.

Current devotional practices mean a lot for those involved but attract only a small number of parishioners.

There is a difficulty of getting through to the majority – what we invite them to is not meeting their needs.

There is a strong individualistic concept of spirituality, of salvation and of fulfilling obligations (e.g. going to Mass and sacraments is enough) rather than being communal.

There is a lack of collective understanding and vision of faith.

There are differing concepts of church and many do not see themselves as church.

Almost all of our young people no longer come to Mass and we do not know how to help them reconnect with the church.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The parish is not in touch with or reaching out to the vast majority of parishioners. We do not know them. What the parish offers the 13% who come to Mass does not have relevance to the 87% with whom the parish is not in personal contact.

#### **LEVEL 2.      Pastoral Care of Small Neighbourhood Church Communities**

Nothing to report at this time.

#### **LEVEL 3.      Pastoral Care of the Family**

It is estimated that the number of Catholic families in the parish is approximately 3,143 with 8,107 members. Of these 1,179 (37.5%) are Catholic couples, and 256 (8.1%) are single parent Catholics. Of the total number of marriages, 51% are mixed marriages. Of these 1,231, (39%) are a Catholic married to a non-Catholic Christian; 374 (11.9%) are a Catholic married to a non-Christian person. The total number of Catholics in a mixed marriage is 1,605.

Religious expressions in the family range from daily prayers to very little. Some pray the rosary daily, have crucifixes, statues, holy pictures and devotional sayings in their homes, and some have statues in their gardens. Some have a devotional place set aside where a candle is lit for prayer and meditation. People pray at meals and with their children as they go to sleep.

There are those for whom religion has a pre-eminent place in their lives. Others attend Sunday Mass and Advent and Lenten devotions; for some religion has little or no place.

Others tap into the highlights of Christian life – Easter, Christmas, 1<sup>st</sup> Communion, Funerals - which gives them a sense of being connected in some way.

People who practise their faith see the transition from primary to secondary school as critical as they trace a widespread falling off in religious expression of young people from this point. They call for the community to support youth and their families.

Many young people seem to have very little awareness and appreciation of marriage as a sacrament and some see little or no place for God in their marriage. Those who have faith have an idea that it is a life-long commitment made before God.

It is mandatory for all couples to attend a Centacare marriage preparation course offered by Broken Bay Diocese.

Apart from Family Groups and the My Dad experience there is no continuing pastoral care of couples and families.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAMILY

Families do not disclose their problems. They do not advise the school when there has been a marriage break-up. They try to cope with their problems on their own or with the support from the wider family.

Families are very protective of and guard their privacy.

We are not aware of the ordinary life situation/ life experiences that families are going through.

We do not know their needs.

Families are left very much on their own. We do not connect with their daily lives.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

We are not taking into account the normal life situations of families. We do not know what to present

to them and are not providing what is needed.

#### **LEVEL 4. Pastoral Care of Specific Categories**

This has to do with helping specific sectors or categories of people to discover and fulfil their role in society, in the light of faith.

Pastoral Care of Children: Nothing to report at this time.

Pastoral Care of Youth: There is a small youth club with 5 members.  
There is nothing further to report at this time.

#### **THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL**

We are not aware of the pastoral needs of specific groups because we do not connect with their life situations; we do not know what to present to them and are not providing for their needs.

#### **LEVEL 5. Pastoral Services**

##### **5.1 Evangelisation and Catechesis of all Children and Adolescents**

Most catechesis is through the two Catholic schools and the parental catechesis in preparation for reception of the sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and Eucharist. There is a Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC) in addition. Catechists teach classes in the local State Primary Schools. 'Godstart' program is a way of keeping in contact with pre-school children and their families between the event of infant baptism and the baptised child beginning school. The yearly contact helps parents with ideas on how to communicate faith to their little child.

Many parents are not evangelised and do not come regularly to Mass, so their children's catechesis is often being presented in a vacuum.

Children who receive instruction in the R.C.I.C. program may be the children of parents in the R.C.I.A. program, or they may have missed out on Baptism at an earlier age. The program is administered over 9 weeks, beginning in December, and then resumed in the weeks leading up to Easter when the children receive the sacraments. Each of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Penance and Eucharist receives two weeks' instruction with a final week of preparation for reception of the sacraments.

A parishioner coordinates and is assisted by another parishioner, in the presentation of materials from the parish sacramental programme for children's catechesis.

The program is effective as a program of this type can be, but there is no planned follow-up either to keep in touch with or to draw them into continuing catechesis for young people after they receive the sacraments at Easter.

#### *Formation and Training*

Their level of formation varies considerably. Some have done courses presented by the Catholic Education Office.

Others have not had significant specific formation. In recent times the Family Program has been restructured and documented in sufficient detail to permit catechists with limited formation to make up a significant contribution to the preparation of the children. It is becoming more difficult to obtain voluntary catechists and work is in hand to significantly revise the current arrangements in an effort to set it on a more professional and sustainable footing. Less than half the voluntary catechists have participated in the Catechist Training Programs offered by the Catholic Education Office.

#### **PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF EVANGELISATION AND CATECHESIS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS**

A lack of access to public secondary schools means a lack of catechesis. It is not known how many adolescents are affected.

The parish loses track of parents and children after they graduate from the parish primary schools so a lack of connection results. Almost all are affected.

The parish does not run Scripture programs or catechesis other than RCIC and young people who are motivated and wanting more go to other faiths which do run specific youth programs.

We do not have people with youth, energy and expertise, who are supported by the parish to reach out to young people where they live their lives so they can be drawn into a catechetical program and into parish life.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

Many children and most adolescents are not being reached and catechesis is done in a vacuum, not reinforced by witness of faith life in the family or by regular participation in parish life.

## 5.2 Parish Schools

Two Catholic Primary Schools educate between them 735 children of whom 425 are Catholics, 54 are from other Christian denominations and 9 are unbaptised. The distribution of students and staff for each of the school follows.

### St Patrick's Catholic Primary School Asquith

*Students:* total numbers of students: 273 Boys: 145 Girls: 128

Of the children 238 are Catholic and come from the parish while 26 students have been baptised in other Christian communities. None are unbaptised. 198 Catholic students reside within the parish, and 23 of the non-Catholic students reside within the parish boundaries.

#### *Staff:*

There are 20 members of the Teaching School Staff of whom 3 are male and 17 female. Of the staff, 7 Catholic staff are from the parish, 12 live elsewhere and 1 member of staff is Non-Catholic.

The principal school-related organisation is St Patrick's School Asquith Parents and Friends Association whose role is to foster Catholic principles within the school community. They provide a support group for the Principal and Staff and organise social activities for the social interaction of the school community, as well as helping with fund raising. They participate in working bees and school maintenance.

The Motto of the school is '*Faith*'

The school song fosters the values of *Growing in Faith, Everyone's welcome, Gather as one and Believing in God.*

The Relationship with the rest of the Parish is as follows:

- This happens in a number of ways, largely due to the work of our Parish Priest and his rapport and relationship with the schools. These include:
- Regular meetings of the Parish Priest with both Principals in the parish over coffee to discuss various common issues and specific needs.
- Ongoing rapport and relationship with the school staff. Informal visits to school; Classroom visits
- Daily Mass attendance by school for Mass of the day in parish. Homilies by all clergy are pitched for the children of the school
- Occasional whole school Masses (usually once or twice a term)
- School participation at occasional Sunday Masses (Grades take on some of the Ministries of the Mass)
- Close liaison of Parish Priest and schools over issues of enrolment, recruitment of school staff and other issues.

## St Bernard's Catholic Primary School, Berowra Heights

*Students:* total numbers of students: 215 Boys: 119 Girls: 96  
The majority of the children –187– are Catholic and come from the parish.  
28 students have been baptised in other Christian communities and 9 are unbaptised.  
All 28 non-Catholic students are residing within the parish boundaries.

### *Staff:*

There are 16 members of the Teaching School Staff of whom 2 are male and 14 female. Catholic staff from the parish are 6 in number, while Catholic staff not from the parish total 10 and 1 member of staff is Non-Catholic.

The principal school-related organisation is St Bernard's School Berowra Parents and Friends Association whose role is to foster Catholic principles within the school community. They provide a support group for the Principal and Staff and organise social activities for the social interaction of the school community, as well as helping with fund raising. They participate in working bees and school maintenance.

The Motto of the school is '*Honesty*'

The school song fosters the values of *Mercy; Gospel values; we are a welcoming community.*

The Relationship with the rest of the Parish is as follows:

- All St Bernard's School students participate weekly in the weekday Parish Mass.
- Religious Education Programmes in the classroom regularly include units of work that require outreach / liaison with the wider parish community
- St Bernard's School has a newly created and implemented Social Justice Programme that includes outreach / liaison with the wider parish community
- The School Sacramental Programme is parish based and all education sessions are complemented / "backed up" in the classroom
- All classes have a special "Weekend Parish Mass" they are responsible for coordinating
- School "social events" are open to the wider parish
- All Parish Events are widely publicised and promoted within the school
- School resources are available to the wider parish community

### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

For most of the children and their families, once they leave the parish primary schools their links with the parish become tenuous or are severed.

## 5.3 Pre-Sacramental Catechesis of Adults

A. In connection with the Baptism, and reception of the Sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and first Eucharist of their children

### *Baptism*

Parents receive both *instruction* from a priest or deacon in an initial meeting and a *liturgical catechesis* as they are required to attend two Masses for the anointing and then for the baptism of their child. No formal catechesis of the Godparents takes place.

On the last Saturday afternoon of the month preceding the celebration of the sacrament, the parents meet with a priest or deacon for instruction. They must then attend a regular parish Sunday Mass on the following weekend for the Anointing and Naming and Preparation of their child, followed in two weeks by the Mass in which their child is baptised. Attendance at all sessions is mandatory for parents in order for their child to proceed to reception of the sacraments.

The parents' catechesis is provided by the priests of the parish, by the deacon, and by a lay sacramental team. The lay members are volunteers, who possess a mature and informed faith but

who are offered no formal initial or ongoing training.

#### *Confirmation, Penance and first Eucharist*

The sacramental program is administered fully by the parish and not by the parish schools. As parents are required to fully prepare their children for reception of these sacraments (the Confirmation programme begins in September, Penance takes place in the following Lent, and Eucharist for reception on the feast of the Body and Blood of Christ) a similar programme is followed for their catechesis in preparation for each sacrament.

Parents of all children including those at Catholic and State Schools are required to request enrolment in the program, then attend a talk as a group with the parish priest. After this there follow two mandatory workshops led by a lay pastoral worker. Then there is an interview by a lay member of the parish with the child, with the parent present in support. It takes place about two weeks prior to reception of the sacrament. Attendance at all sessions is mandatory for parents in order for their child to proceed to reception of the sacraments.

A Sacramental Team coordinated by a lay member of the parish prepares the program from Diocesan material and coordinates delivery of the program. The lay members are volunteers, who possess a mature and informed faith but who are offered no formal initial or ongoing training.

It is as effective as this kind of approach can be. There is no follow-up to test the effectiveness of the program and to connect with and support the parents in the ongoing faith formation of their children in the context of their own life situations. Parents are left to their own resources after the sacraments have been received.

#### *Marriage.*

During one to three interviews with the celebrant prior to the wedding, the couple are made aware of the sacramental nature of marriage and assisted and supported in the required preparation. There is also a mandatory attendance of a Centacare marriage preparation course run by the Diocese over some weeks. This program includes opportunities for the couple to speak to married people of mature and informed faith.

Apart from the discernment of the celebrant, there is no follow-up process to find out how effective the catechesis has been, and as with the other sacraments, the couple are left to make their own way in faith.

#### *Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.*

No catechesis as such is given except the sacramental catechesis which occurs during the ceremony in the experience of the Word and sacrament.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF PRE-SACRAMENTAL CATECHESIS FOR ADULTS

*Baptism:* Many adults who were baptised as infants and are now parents have not been evangelized and regard the liturgical sacramental catechesis (travelling to the other church in the parish for one of the two Masses) as a burden.

*Confirmation, Penance and first Eucharist:* Many parents have not been evangelised and as there is no process to continue a catechesis connected with the realities of their life situation, they are left to fend for themselves.

#### **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults**

The catechumenate for adults preparing for baptism, confirmation and Eucharist and the preparation of baptised Christians into full communion with the Catholic Church.

The R.C.I.A. begins in October each year when a team of parishioners conducts weekly gatherings and continues to the end of Easter, then follows a further nine weeks of gatherings up until Pentecost, after which the candidates become part of the wide parish community. Several team members have extensive R.C.I.A. experience and some members have been candidates in earlier years. While the materials used previously were written by a scripture scholar, these are now no longer used, and the weekly topics are prepared and presented by the local team.

It is effective in providing formation for candidates through instructing them in a warm, welcoming group atmosphere in private homes. A primary concern is the lack of ongoing support for new Catholics after Baptism.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF INITIATION OF ADULTS INTO CHRISTIAN LIFE

The primary concern is the lack of ongoing support of new Catholics after their baptism and some fall away.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

In pre-sacramental catechesis adults are either not disposed to receive formation that is mandatory if they or their children are to receive the sacraments or if they are disposed (as in the RCIA) they are then left to themselves when the program ends.

### 5.4 Liturgical Celebrations

#### *For Sundays, Feast Days, Sacraments, Funerals*

There are 6 Masses each weekend, 4 at St Patrick's and 2 at St Bernard's.

At Sunday Mass, as well as the Priest Celebrant, there is often the Deacon, Lectors, Servers or Acolytes, Extraordinary Ministers of Communion, Musicians, Singers, and Collectors. Sometimes the choir is made up of youth.

During Mass people generally join in the singing and responses.

Baptisms are celebrated during Sunday Mass with anointing on one Sunday and Baptism two weeks later.

Funerals are celebrated with a Liturgy of the Word and sometimes with a Requiem Mass followed by a graveside internment or cremation

The Parish Liturgy group has approximately 5 members.

An Altar Society attends to the worship requirements and people provide flowers for Sunday and feast day celebrations.

The following are involved in various ministries and services:

Acolytes 19; Altar Society 7; Altar Servers 34; Catechists 25; Church Cleaners 26; Children's Liturgy 22; Commentator 1; Eucharistic Ministers 68; Lectors 54; Liturgy Group 5; Musicians 21; Organists 5;

All new liturgical ministers are required to attend initial training programmes in the parish and are encouraged to attend refresher courses wherever possible. Some people participate in giving services as ushers, collectors, presentation of gifts, children's Liturgy of the Word, providing morning tea after Mass etc.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

The same people do the same jobs all the time at St Bernard's.

Some who need initial formation do not participate.

The initial formation is too short to meet the needs of some.

Some lack time to participate in longer programs of training.

There is no ongoing regular formation for liturgical ministers.

Relatively few people of the parish, especially youth and young people, participate in the

community's Sunday worship.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The parish is not managing to engage the majority, especially the youth, for whom liturgical celebrations are not a priority.

#### **5.5 Prayer and Spirituality**

How the parish comes together for prayer, and the ways in which prayer and spirituality are promoted:

- Liturgy of the Hours in Lent every morning at St Patrick's
- Liturgy of the Hours once a week in Lent in the evening at St Bernard's
- Praying the psalms communally before Mass each day at St Bernard's

Small numbers take part.

At Asquith there is a Charismatic Prayer Group of about 4 people who meet on Wednesday nights in the parish meeting room.

At Brooklyn a group meets for Mass once a month and for weekly prayer using a format such as a Gospel passage and photocopied prayers which are recited.

Both these prayer groups are open to all and are advertised in the parish.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF PRAYER AND COMMUNITY SPIRITUALITY

The style of prayer available is of interest to only a few members of the parish.

Nothing is offered that might appeal to the wider section of the parish.

People feel that they do not have the time to participate.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The parish does not offer prayer and spirituality that touches the lives of the majority.

#### **5.6 Promoting Human Development**

##### Services of Charity

*Times and special circumstances when people need some help and support, guidance or counselling are:*

Serious sickness or death in the family, birth of a child, loss of a job, family and personal crises, newcomers to the district, gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, separation and divorce, loss of many kinds, accidents and injury, physical psychological and sexual abuse, domestic violence, loneliness, or when they are down after being affected by life events

*Circumstances when help is needed on a more regular basis are:*

In times of chronic illness, for the elderly frail, people who are living alone, long term unemployment, isolation from family members who are living interstate, when spouse has long term depression, single parent families often need a network of support, times of prolonged unemployment or underemployment, young pregnant single mothers, women who have had an abortion, people with permanent disabilities, lonely people "who hide behind a smile"; advocating for or liaising with people who are in trouble, psychological illness and mental problems, times of stress with kids (especially teenagers or young adults), when people are finding it difficult to cope with daily life Supporting people on long waiting lists for hospitals, and those on long waiting list for aged care

(Nursing Homes), urgent cases of sick and elderly living alone, driving people to hospital/ doctor appointments, advocating or liaising for someone who doesn't understand circumstances they find themselves in and offering non-judgmental support.

*The St Vincent de Paul Society* has a conference at St Patrick's and one at St Bernard's. The 14 members give emergency support to the poor and the disadvantaged.

A Seniors Group, including members from both ends of the parish, meets every second month. They visit people who are sick, lonely, needing comfort and support. The group has been in existence for 2 years.

### Services for Justice and Peace

There is a Social Justice Group. It is a group of interested parishioners who meet regularly to discuss and help address injustices in our local area as well as internationally and bring an awareness of these injustices to fellow parishioners. The Asquith Group meets at 8.00 pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of each month (excluding December) in the Parish Hall.

Over the years the Group has been involved in many activities. As far back as 25 years ago we ran a very successful Refugee Resettlement Programme being responsible for helping well over 300 refugees settle in Australia. These people came mainly from Vietnam with three families from Poland and a couple of South Americans. A highlight was the July 2004 Ordination to the Jesuit Priesthood of one of the children involved in the programme.

We have been active in taking up petitions (examples - Mandatory Sentencing and East Timor) and advising and encouraging parishioners to write to the appropriate person on many issues.

Over the years we have organised collections - examples include Caritas when emergencies have occurred, Amnesty, SVdeP (food, clothing and donations), Exodus Foundation (food), annual clothing collection for the Homeless in Kings Cross, collection of children's books for a centre in Redfern, Mothers' Day gifts for the women in detention at Villawood and the House of Welcome.

Since becoming more structured in May 1999 we have concentrated on four areas: Overseas, Australia, Local and Awareness. Examples include:

- raising money for the Mercy Sisters in Lima, Peru to help the women and children living on "garbage dumps" to build a Meeting Room where they have been taught skills to help them "take control of their lives" and to assist in bringing water to "their streets".
- contributing to an aboriginal centre in Darwin
- combining with Hornsby Shire Council in: setting up a Youth Centre in Hornsby, run by a group of local doctors; taking part in organising a highly successful multi-cultural forum "Growing Peace in Hornsby" (Muslim and Christian speakers) at Pennant Hills and are currently working with them on their Diversity Action Plan
- running community awareness programmes on a regular basis, not only for our parishioners, but invitations sent to surrounding parishes, schools (State and Catholic), other churches, through newspapers etc. Speakers have included: Patrick Dodson, Chris Sidoti, Tom Uren, Barbara Holborow, Frs Patrick McInerney, Tom Rouse, Brian Gore and Charles Rue. We had a film night "Molly and Mobarak" with guest speaker Maqsood Alshams, an asylum seeker. In October we had a Mental Health evening with speakers covering a broad spectrum of mental health issues including Depression and Bipolar.

There is a network of Social Justice Groups in many parishes and those south of the Hawkesbury meet regularly, support each other and where possible combine efforts for greater impact. The evening held recently at Pymble with Fr Frank Brennan is an example of this co-operation as was the visiting of parishioners to the Villawood Detention Centre on a monthly basis.

*Issues needing to be addressed*

We feel we need guidance/education in advocacy to help us get to the people who have the power to make and influence decisions on behalf of all in a situation of social injustice. We would like to be able to analyse a situation before "jumping in" - and then take action in education, advocacy and service.

### Missions Abroad

There is an annual collection conducted by the Propagation of the Faith with a visiting speaker in the parish on Mission Sunday.

A special collection is taken up in support of a mission conducted by the Sisters of Mercy in Peru. The parish supports the selling of handcrafts made by local people in Peru.

The Lenten Project Compassion is collected and sent to Caritas for overseas aid.

### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

In its services of charity, action for justice and peace and support for Missions Abroad the majority of parishioners are lacking awareness of the needs of people and the issues in an informed way and any action that does happen is done by a few.

## **5.7 Ecumenical Movement**

The parish belongs to two Ministers Fraternal: Hornsby Ministers Association and Berowra Ministers Fraternal. The priests of the parish attend the Berowra Fraternal. There is talk of combining the two fraternal.

There are combined ecumenical State School Celebrations at Easter and Christmas.

Two Scripture Teachers are employed at Asquith High Schools. The parish contributes to the wages of the teachers.

The Catholic Womens League and the Mt Colah Uniting Church have very friendly joint activities.

The parish participates in the World Day of Prayer each year.

Issues which could be addressed are:

The need for more committed prayer together with other communions.

The need to give more united Christian witness through some common action; eg care of the environment etc

### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

We don't have a person or parish group to be the contact liaison body with the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission.

We have come so far ecumenically but now apathy has set in and we have no sense of urgency in responding to Jesus' prayer "that they may be one."

People in mixed marriages are not being invited or helped by the parish to grow ecumenical marriages.

### THE BASIC PROBLEM

As parish we are not in contact with the Diocesan Commission through a liaison person/group and therefore are not in a position to be influenced by new initiatives.

## **6. Pastoral Workers and Their Formation**

Here we consider general formation of pastoral workers, that is, of all those regularly involved in the parish in some specific way. There are over 200 people involved in pastoral work.

Some regular ways of serving as pastoral workers are: liturgical, catechetical, care, spirituality, justice and administration.

Many are involved in multiple ministries and help out in a variety of ways when called upon. Although willing, sometimes they grow quite weary.

People take advantage of formation courses offered by the diocese.

#### Concepts of Church

The varying concepts of church held among the pastoral workers are representative of the spectrum of views of church held by the wider parish community.

Some see their work as: helping the priest or feeling obligated; others see it as a call and they identify themselves as church and feel a personal responsibility; for some here is an awareness of the need to help people have a personal relationship with Christ.

There are no religious communities in the parish.

### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF THE ONGOING FORMATION OF PASTORAL WORKERS

There are not enough people involved.

Formation is irregular. To some extent workers are left to themselves without ongoing support and education in the spirituality and theology of Vatican II.

There are differing concepts of what the church is.

There is a lack of personal invitations to participate in ministries.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The pastoral workers of the parish have no common shared vision and there are not enough people involved.

### **LEVEL 7.     Structures for Decision-Making**

#### **The Parish Council**

The parish council is a pastoral council. It meets monthly. The council's membership comprises: the parish priests, the deacon, two parish school principals and representatives who are nominated and chosen from among the parishioners.

Canonically the parish council is an advisory group. They arrive at decisions through a process of achieving consensus. The parish priest takes the final decision.

#### **Parish Structure**

There are no geographical subdivisions in the parish although there is still a strong St Patrick's and St Bernard's mentality. The primary schools have distinct 'catchment' areas but although the parish has two churches it is beginning to operate and is promoted as a single community. As there are no decision-making bodies in geographical sub-divisions of the parish people are nominated by parishioners for membership on the Parish Council.

Many do not know what the decision-making bodies are and how they operate. People are invited to nominate members.

### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF STRUCTURES FOR DECISION MAKING

Many do not know what the decision-making bodies are and how they operate.

Some people do not know who the decision-makers are.

There have not been sufficient acceptances of nominations to have an election.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

At present the decision making body is not seen to be representative of the global parish

community.

## **LEVEL 8. Structures for Making Proposals and for Planning**

Special proposals and plans are generally instigated by the Parish Priest following the recommendations of a parish group or a parishioner or the diocese.

The parish finance committee can become involved if there is a significant expenditure required.

The parish priest or a member of the finance committee communicates the progress of matters either from the pulpit or in the weekly bulletin.

Public meetings are organised on special proposals. An example of this is the proposed new parish centre to be located in Berowra. Open meetings have been held in this regard.

Parishioners are free to discuss matters with our parish Priest or any member of the finance committee.

### **PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF STRUCTURES FOR MAKING PROPOSALS AND FOR PLANNING**

People are often invited to participate but don't respond or hear.

We don't have a plan to reach the 87% outside the church going group.

We are lacking in our ways of planning more regular functions throughout the year.

We are lacking in our invitations to people to come to parish functions.

We do not plan to give information about who to contact for help.

The processes need to be made more visible.

### **THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL**

There is no long-term strategic plan and the processes are not sufficiently visible to promote participation.

## **LEVEL 9. Structures for Communication**

Means of communication with parishioners are:

Weekly Church Bulletin, Web Site; Email; Phone; Weekly Special Ministers take the Church Bulletin to the housebound parishioners; Pulpit Announcements; Church Notice Boards; Advertising in the Local Newspaper; Schools' Newsletters.

Newsletters are published weekly and reach Mass goers.

Mail-outs and Parish Updates are through the year and are sent to all known Catholic households. Other strategies are used as required. They reach those who come to Mass and the parents of children attending the parish primary schools.

These official parish communications are prepared by the Parish Priest and the Pastoral Centre Manager.

The editorial policies are: no political content, no advertising by parishioners unless in a church or school context.

They are effective in providing basic information to those who come to Mass.

The ability of the newsletter to impart information is very important for those without any other link with the parish (eg through the schools).

### **PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF STRUCTURES OF COMMUNICATION**

Non-Mass goers do not seem to know the way the parish communicates and are not reached by the parish in a systematic way.

Communication can be impersonal and information is more geared to Mass-goers.

## THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The majority is not reached systematically and communication is impersonal and geared mainly to those involved.

### **LEVEL 10.      Assets and Finance**

A Parish Finance Committee and a Parish Maintenance Committee assist the parish priest in his responsibility for administration of the temporal goods of the parish.

The mission of the Parish is served by the following:

A Church building and land located in Royston Road, Asquith

A Parish School is located on the Berowra Property

A Parish School is located on the Asquith Property

A Presbytery on the Berowra property

A Presbytery located in Brooklyn

Leased property in Hornsby that serves as the Parish

Vendors interest in the property located in Haldane Street, Asquith that previously served as Parish Centre/Presbytery.

Cash held in the Parish's bank accounts maintained with the Commonwealth Bank.

#### The condition of the buildings

The physical Parish assets of both Church buildings were inspected and assessed by a firm engaged by the Diocese approximately two years ago. An occupational Health & Safety inspection of both Church buildings was also undertaken at that time. The results of both reports are available for inspection at the Parish Centre.

The condition of both Church buildings can only be described as fair. Both Church buildings are in need of major renovation/repair and are not Occupational Health and Safety compliant. It would be fair to say that \$500,000 will need to be funded to bring property to perfect status.

#### The use of the buildings

The Church building, grounds and contents located in Berowra are utilised for Church services approved by the Diocese and/or our Parish Priest. In addition to this, the Church building is also used for private prayer by Parishioners and on rare occasions for meetings of groups in the Parish.

The Church building, grounds and contents located in Asquith are utilised for Church services approved by the Diocese and/or our Parish Priest. In addition to this, the Church building is also used for private prayer by Parishioners and on rare occasions for meetings of groups in our Parish. The Parish Hall in Berowra is utilised by the Berowra Parish School, the Warrina Street Kids before and after school care centre, by our Parish groups for social functions and for meetings of groups in our Parish.

The Parish Hall in Asquith is utilised by the Asquith Parish School, the Paddy's Playgroup, by Parish groups for social functions and for meetings of groups in our Parish.

The Presbytery in Berowra is occupied by our Parish Priest for his personal use.

The property at Brooklyn is owned by the diocese of Broken Bay and is utilised by the parish for the accommodation of the Assistant Priest. The Brooklyn Prayer Group uses the property once a month for a prayer meeting.

The leased property in Hornsby serves as the Parish Pastoral Centre for our Parish's administrative functions.

The property located in Haldane Street, Asquith is not utilised by the Parish. The Property is currently cleared and is part of a unit development. Upon completion of the development, the Diocese in consultation with our Parish Priest will assess whether to accept a unit in final settlement or seek a cash payment.

#### The functional value of the buildings

The Church building, grounds and contents located in Berowra are fully functional for Church services.

The Church building, grounds and contents located in Asquith are fully functional for church services.

The Parish Hall in Berowra is a fully functional multi-purpose building.  
 The Parish Hall in Asquith is a fully functional multi-purpose space within a School building.  
 The Presbytery in Berowra is a fully functional residential premises.  
 The Presbytery located in Brooklyn is a fully functional residential premises.  
 The leased property in Hornsby is a fully functional commercial office space.  
 The property located in Haldane Street, Asquith is not utilised by the Parish. (Refer to previous comments.)

#### The existing funds and debts

Financial Budgets are drafted on an annual basis by the Finance Committee and are reviewed on an ongoing basis to reassess actual figures versus budgeted figures.

Investments are assessed on a needs basis by the Finance Committee. Investment decisions lie with our Parish Priest who operates within Diocesan guidelines.

As all physical assets are deemed to be owned by the Diocese, the only assets that the Parish maintains are its cash at bank. The Parish does not have any loans outstanding.

The Parish assets and liabilities as at 30 September 2006 can be summarised as follows:

ASSETS	\$	\$	
Parish Bank Account	194,412		
4 Term Deposits	58,259		
Petty Cash	400		
Rental Bond	8,500		
Other	769		
Ancillary Fund	43,072		
LIABILITIES			
Unpaid Creditors		8,199	
GST Liability		336	
Superannuation		578	
Employee Entitlements		27,159	
Pastoral Clearing A/C		1,690	
CWF		7,040	
Ancillary Clearing		207	
Deposit on Haldane St.		192,056	
SUB-TOTAL	305,413	237,267	
SURPLUS	68,145		
INCOME (Jul to Sep)			VARIATION TO LAST YEAR
Envelopes	40,876		-2,708
Loose Collections	8,059		-965
Other	4,412		-5,305
Richies IGA Benefit Card	2,662		Na
EXPENDITURE (Jul to Sep)			
Administration		1,560	130
Altar & Church Requisites		740	-6,313
Audit, Accounting & Legal		315	-587
Donations & Gifts		298	298
Employment		17,503	-1,611
Insurance		6,607	-6,183
Office Expenses		7,660	-145
Pastoral Programs		1,466	-2,028
Rates		0	-444
Repairs & Maintenance (Parish)		2,211	-12,637
School Expenses		156	55
Superannuation (Clergy)		0	-990

Telecommunications		2,403	-102
Travelling & Car Allowance		6,371	247
Utilities		1,111	-554
Rental of Parish Centre		8,932	-603
SUBTOTAL	56,008	57,335	
PROFIT/LOSS	-1,326		

### The sources of income

In excess of 95% of our Parish income is sourced from Parish collections at weekend Masses or from special collections. A group of 40 people are rostered to count the money from the Mass collections

The remaining income is sourced from donations, interest income from term deposits and rebates from Catholic Church Insurance.

### Who organises these means of obtaining funds and with what guidelines?

Our Parish collections are conducted within Canon Law and Diocesan guidelines. Investments are at the discretion of our Parish Priest and within diocesan guidelines.

### Who administers property and finances and with what guidelines?

At a local level on a "day to day" basis, our Parish's property and finances are administered by our Parish Priest in consultation with the Parish Finance Committee and the Parish Maintenance Committee.

The administration of our Parish's property and finances are overseen by Diocesan representatives.

Special proposals and plans will be overseen and coordinated by the Finance Committee with special input. A current example of this is the proposed new Parish Centre to be located in Berowra. The Finance Committee is overseeing this project with the assistance and guidance of a parishioner with expertise in the building profession.

### Who is responsible for maintenance of buildings and property and how are they organised?

At a local level on a "day to day" basis, the maintenance of our Parish property is administered by our Parish Priest in consultation the Parish Maintenance Committee. Our Parish Finance Committee can become involved if there is significant expenditure required.

The maintenance of our Parish property is overseen by Diocesan representatives.

## PROBLEMS SEEN AT THE LEVEL OF ASSETS AND FINANCES

There is a need for publication of an annual report of finances to the parish.

Only a small proportion of the people contribute financially.

There is a lack of funds

### THE BASIC PROBLEM AT THIS LEVEL

The burden of the ongoing financial responsibility is borne by a minority of the parishioners and there is a lack of ownership of responsibility among many.

## **LEVEL 11. Secretarial and Other Technical Services**

A well-equipped Parish Pastoral Centre is located presently outside the Parish boundaries in the Hornsby Mall. There are plans, awaiting approval, for a new Pastoral centre to be built at Berowra.

A Pastoral Centre Manager oversees administration staff and organises all administrative and some

pastoral details as directed by the Parish Priest.

Secretarial Services pertaining to all Parish Ministries and Sacraments are provided. The Pastoral Centre oversees the hiring of parish facilities for St. Patrick's and St. Bernard's. The Pastoral Centre uses the Parish Data System (PDS) for parishioner records and financial records.

The Centre fosters liaison between all groups and the Diocesan Curia and School Staff. The Centre does the bookkeeping and uses the MYOB.

The services are organised with the following areas of responsibility:

**Pastoral Centre Manager:** Supervision of administrative work and responsibility for operation of administrative functions including the ordering of supplies for both churches; liaison between Diocesan Personnel, Catholic Schools Office (CSO) and primary school staff; maintenance of staff records; attending to private and confidential matters for clergy; organizing mail-outs and volunteer staff; seeing to the maintenance of the yearly calendar.

**Administrative Assistant:** Financial matters and MYOB  
**Permanent Volunteer (1 day per week):** Baptisms and Godstart, general administration.

They have extensive experience of the life of the parish and manage the day-to-day administrative work to a high standard.

The services are very effective as long as parish groups follow the correct channels. People commented on the quality of the Parish Bulletin.

#### PROBLEMS SEEN AT THIS LEVEL OF SECRETARIAL AND OTHER TECHNICAL SERVICES

There is a need for another member of staff in the Parish Office.

The Pastoral Centre is outside the parish boundaries and the parish, having the burden of rental premises, experiences the delay in council's approval for the new building permit.

#### THE BASIC PROBLEM

There is a need for approval to be given for a new office building to serve the parish and the need for another member of staff.

### STEP 3 RETROSPECTIVE VIEW

### (LOOKING BACK)

Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic community has become a parish in its own right quite recently, on 25 June 2006. Prior to this, it had been the two Parishes of St Patrick's, Asquith and St Bernard's, Berowra.

In seeking to understand the present situation of the new parish, we looked at the previous history from the 1950s onward to see how it has influenced the present. In doing this, we took account of the wider history of the church and society from then till the present day.

1950s

#### IN SOCIETY

What was happening:

Immigration continued to increase the Australian population with the shiploads of Ten Pound migrants filling the migrant hostels; the Labour Split and the formation of the Democratic Labour Party; the National Civic Council was at full strength; the Korean war, dress became more casual; in 1956 Melbourne hosted the Olympic Games and the world came to us; the mass uptake of television in 1956 'shrank the world'; the six-penny bottle of beer; the Snowy Hydro scheme; full employment; high wool prices; stable government under Prime Minister Bob Menzies' long domination of Australian Federal politics; National Service; "Red under the Bed" Communist scare;

the Baby-boomer generation were being born in large numbers; homogeneous society; the ice man, the dunny man, the bread cart and the clothes prop man; 6 pm closing of hotels; SP bookies; credit squeeze at the end of the 1950s; few women in the workforce but slightly more acceptable because of the World War II ; women had to retire from teaching on marriage; economy geared for one family breadwinner; new Queen visited Australia in 1954; the great acceptance of the Holden, Australia's own car from the late 1940s, and the increasing household ownership of a car; Bill Halley and the Comets -Rock and Roll arrived from America, from whom almost all popular films and music arrived.

How we were as society:

On one hand, the slow pace of life was still the norm with little stress; we were conservative, homogeneous, a bit of a 'backwater'; more secure and trusting as children could play unsupervised in the street; optimistic; authoritarian in the structures of society; riding on the sheep's back; egalitarian; tall poppy syndrome; women couldn't get a loan; not too sophisticated; secretive within the family; resilient and creative; punishment was still permitted. Hangings, though rare, were still permitted. A fear (terror) of Communism and Communists, but the referendum to ban Communism was defeated. The advent of improved life-saving drugs after the war meant that fewer people died from infectious disease. There were mass inoculations against TB and Polio. Aboriginal people still not recognised in law; railway travel important; Berowra out in the country. On the other hand there were the slightest signs of change and the beginnings of a new affluence: a concerted advertising of new white goods such as refrigerators and washing machines, beginnings of new tastes in foods etc.

#### IN THE CHURCH IN GENERAL AND IN THE PARISH

What was happening:

Mass was in Latin; Pius XII reduced laws of Eucharist fast from midnight to 3 hours before Communion; Catholic Youth Organisation; strong sodalities; 1953 Eucharistic Congress; 1958 Evening Mass allowed; Communion on the tongue and under one form only; indulgences emphasised; mixed marriages discouraged – sacristy weddings; fear of mortal sin;

Corpus Christi Procession; Saturday afternoon queues for confession; women wearing headdress at Mass; family rosary; consecration of houses; pre-marriage talks; Dr Mannix in Melbourne; Asquith Parish founded in 1951; First parish priest drowns in January 1952; extensions to church at Asquith in 1954; Sisters of Mercy from Waitara commence a new school at St Patrick's in 1958; Blessing and official opening of new St Patrick's school buildings in 1959.

The Marian Year in 1954; large classes in the Catholic schools (up to about 120 not uncommon) taught by Religious sisters, priests and brothers; Redemptorist Catholic Missions emphasizing fire and brimstone; Sodalities continued; Irish superstitious practices and beliefs added to the doctrines of the church; Catholics feared the doctrines of communism infiltrating society and their schools, a view held by the National Civic Council. They feared being swamped by 'the yellow peril'; there were rumblings about the provision of buses and state aid for schools; Bishop Fulton-Sheen's radio and television presentations and Dr Rumble's radio replies; seminaries buildings were extended; big processions on Corpus Christi and St Patrick's Day continued; beginning of the liturgical movement – the 'Dialogue Mass' in Latin;

How we were as church:

A bit of a ghetto mentality; full churches; dances ended before midnight; Catholics socialised with other Catholics in a church environment; loyalty to the faith important; laity supported and built new schools and new parish churches unquestioningly; continued the long established devotional practices and traditions on the whole; we still could not attend other church services; big families; there were big numbers in religious orders, a sense of religious being separate and 'closer to God'; discrimination of Catholics continued; Catholic life revolved around the clergy -'priest as boss'; Catholics still felt the need to declare their identity through mass public events and take pride in their catholic faith over and against the Protestants.

1960s

## IN SOCIETY

What was happening:

Baby-boomers; flower power; bikinis; the Wyndham Scheme in education; the Vietnam War; the conscription birthday ballots for the war were unpopular; Menzies was still in power and society was still stable politically; the birth of Pop with Elvis, the Beatles, and the Woodstock Festival; the political assassinations of JFK and his brother Robert, and Martin Luther King; the rise of the protest movements – against the Vietnam War, conscription, discrimination against Aboriginal people, women's lib. 1967A referendum was won to count the Aborigines in the census; more students entered tertiary education; authority was questioned and often rejected; in 1961 the contraceptive pill gave women control over their fertility and the birth rate began to drop; more women entered and stayed in the workforce; the number of migrants meant that banks and hospitals provided interpreters; the aboriginal station hands walked off at Wave hill, aboriginal station workers were awarded equal pay and conditions which resulted in most landowners turning them off their properties; Freedom Ride; decimal currency was introduced; and the mass media fuelled debate about institutions and traditions in society; a time of energy and change; phenomenon of the Beatles; drive in movies; in 1968 the protest riots across the world; 1969 moon landing; "all the way with LBJ"; still strong affiliation with Great Britain; gay rights movement in USA;

How we were in society:

We were experiencing the strong ferment of change in many ways; drugs became popular although still illegal; people from all levels opted for higher education; more permissiveness as authority began to break down; experimentation with ideas, beliefs, substances; lifestyles. We protested with the television cameras bringing the action into almost every home.

## IN THE CHURCH IN GENERAL AND IN THE PARISH

What was happening:

Vatican II from 1962 – 1965; Mass in English; the priest facing the people; change in confession; Humanae Vitae in 1967, but Catholics embraced contraception in large numbers; the issue of authority was rising in the church as well as in society; the mass media encourage people to begin to question aspects of their faith; people still entered orders in large numbers, but large numbers left; a time of rapid change in doctrine and many changed practices were introduced without clear explanation;

In the parish, the Asquith school was extended in 1961 and again in 1967. Steady expansion also took place in Berowa, with the beginning of the construction of the Church hall in 1969.

How we were as church:

We were confused and had a sense of loss; sad, many were unwilling to go with the changes, while others (often in the same community) were jubilant; we did things because "Rome said" which was not the spirit of Vatican II. Some were very optimistic, idealistic, sensing the possibilities. We sang new songs, found the changed liturgical structures and expression difficult to get used to; some were introduced to the new German catechism.

1970s and 1980s

## IN SOCIETY

What was happening:

"Its Time" campaign and change of government to Labour after 16 years; conscription by ballot continued for the duration of the war; the end of the Vietnam war; the vilification of returning

soldiers; the boat people arrived in large numbers and were accepted and integrated into Australian society; Hippies; Nimbin; Sunbury Rock Festival; the introduction by the Labour government of free higher Education and free health care through Medibank and more generous unemployment benefits; dismissal of the Labour Government in 1975; the big pilot strike of the 1980s; computers and calculators were the start of a technological revolution affecting homes, education and businesses; a further influx of Asian refugees; the start of the two income family; Order of Australia introduced; cassette recorders; space race continues; two income family become more the norm; big supermarkets constructed; more air travel to all points outside Australia; single mother's pension; trading hours extended; cold war continues; the surprise of the sudden fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989;

How we were:

Initially accepting of Asian refugees, later there reawakened the dormant 'yellow peril' fears of loss of culture as society continued to change rapidly; a 'greed is good' mentality was widespread throughout the Western world, spread by the media. The cities became exciting through the diversity of cultures and Australians began to eat out often and to explore and enjoy the wide range of cuisines. People began to have friends from every nationality; students were keen to acquire the new ideas and to take up the new opportunities for employment; manufacturing industries began a steady decline as Australia began to rely on cheap imported goods which put many men working in blue collar jobs out of work and into early retirement; an "earthquake in society's mores"; more permissiveness; people felt free to do anything, to go anywhere and to travel the world; to try any style of life; to escape the restrictions; capitalism perceived as being the victor over communism; rampant commercialism and consumerism leading to individualism - looking after "Number One"; economic rationalism; instantaneous fast food chains; subjectivism - if I think it's right it's right; serious weakening of the notion of the community and the common good.

#### IN THE CHURCH IN GENERAL AND IN THE PARISH

What was happening:

Pope Paul VI visited Australia in 1970; a Eucharistic congress was held in 1973; Billy Graham came and preached to large crowds; churches were packed; dances, fetes continued until the introduction of the 'Wells Scheme' from America (planned giving) and in the 1970s there were still big attendances at parish school meetings. Parishioners build their own church/hall and in 1970 there is the opening of the church /hall at Berowra; then parishioners commence the building of the church at Asquith in June 1970 and take 15 months of daily work to complete it; there was a great sense of a united spirit in the parish; in 1973 Berowra parish is established taking in Brooklyn and the orphanage; in 1974 the first Parish Council was formed at St Patrick's; 1975 Marian Congress; in 1980s Sydney Archdiocese is divided into three, Broken Bay being one of the new Dioceses; in 1986 John Paul II came to Alice Springs and spoke with the aborigines.

How we were as Church:

In the wider church divisions were beginning to appear which split the church, with some trying to return to a culture we used to have, while others were happy for people to be able to have their own opinions; a huge reduction in the number of people entering orders, while older members continued to leave; people no longer came together for the social aspect of the church; devotions such as Novenas which had been popular dropped away and there was a breakdown in the long remembered culture. In its place came baby-sitting clubs. People began to fear that Religious Education programs in their schools were ineffective as their children began to drift away from the practice of their faith as they left school.

In the parish itself the experience of building the church/hall and the church gave people a great sense of common purpose and included people of various ages including the youth. It unified the people and gave them a feeling of doing some very good together.

1990s to 2006

#### IN SOCIETY

What was happening:

The Keating Labour Government oversaw extremely high interest rates and the 'recession we had to have'; the Howard Government was elected in 1996 and is still in power; the neo-conservative achieved political power in both the US and Australia; the two Iraq wars; Australian troops often overseas on peace-keeping duties or fighting alongside the US; East Timor involvement (twice); De-regulation and privatization of the workforce; Almost every home connected to the world-wide-web of the Internet through home computers; mobile phones proliferated; the Rising housing prices and a fear of rising interest rates and living costs; the 'McMansions' suburbs; One Nation; the war on terror after the destruction of the World Trade Centre on Sept 11, 2001; Government policies designed to get people off welfare and to help those who already have so they can manage better, so the needy are left to charity; Tampa and fear over boat arrivals; Detention centres as a response to border security issues; Cornelia Rau . Davis Hicks; user pays; the end of free tertiary education.

How we were:

Dollar-driven; litigious; no-one accepts responsibility for actions; the rapid increase of single person housing over this period across all age-groups; an individualistic society; less socializing; a tension between what is legal and what is right; big changes in relationships as people become physical very quickly; a growth in divorce and cohabitation reducing the number of couples who marry; very mobile both locally and through air travel; consumerism; a growth in multi-national companies who take over small and independent companies; manufacturing moved off-shore; rise of grey-power still changing society; families are shrinking and women postpone having children until after they have achieved financial security; HIV Aids and In-vitro fertilization; Stem cell research on embryos;

#### IN THE CHURCH IN GENERAL AND IN THE PARISH

What was happening:

The long reign of John Paul II; more centralized in Rome; Sydney Archdiocese divided in the Jubilee Year; cessation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> rite of reconciliation after the Ad Limina visit by the Australian bishops to Rome in 1998; exposure of priestly and religious sexual abuse cases and cover up by Mary MacKillop; growth of the church in Africa and South Korea; laity felt betrayed by the official church; any leadership misconduct highlighted by the mass media; a new pope Benedict XVI elected in 2005.

In the parish Fr Patrick McMaugh retired and Fr. John Hannon was appointed Parish Priest in 1998. In 2002 with the retirement of Fr. Dennis Callahan as the parish priest of Berowra, Fr. Hannon was asked to extend pastoral care to the people of Berowra, but was himself transferred to the parish of Manly in June 2003. Fr. Robert Borg was appointed priest of both Asquith and Berowra parishes and Fr Stephen Hamilton appointed as Assistant priest. In April 2004, David Huntley was ordained a permanent married deacon, and was appointed to both parishes. The Diocese of Broken Bay has twinned both Asquith and Berowra parishes and at present both communities are beginning the journey towards becoming one parish community. In April, 2006, the Promoting Group of the Movement for a Better World presented a retreat "Spirituality for our Times", with this Analysis and Diagnosis taking place in October-November, 2006.

How we were and are:

In Australia young families do not participate much in church activities as in the past; fewer young families are at Mass; disillusionment; discouragement; weariness can easily set in for pastoral workers and committed people; disappointment too that so many clergy in Australia and overseas have been successfully prosecuted in the courts; so many people affected have given up on the church; rebuilding of trust is needed; effects on children must be dealt with compassionately;

Here at Ku-Ring-Gai Chase the communities of St Patrick's and St Bernard's, while having had a common ancestry and life until 1973, have been separate parishes until recently. Each parish had developed its own style of life. Now it is as though the two former parishes are experiencing something like being put into an arranged marriage from outside. This poses the challenge of both

having to make great adjustments. This requires that the people live a new style of life based on a spirituality of relationships; lived with the courage of faith, the patience of hope and the compassion of love.

What is the main influence on people's lives now?

Disappointment and loss of trust in church leadership because of instances of sexual abuse and the way the church has responded; we are now looking for new ways of being church; many committed Catholics are very disappointed in the Catholic education their children have received since the 1970s– the time of confusion meant that little took root; for younger generations the church is not the focus any more; Mass congregations have been becoming smaller and older. But a sign of hope is the disproportionately large presence of Asians and other recent migrant peoples at Sunday Mass although their needs, like those of various age groups, are not necessarily being recognised or met.

## **FACTORS COMING FROM OUR HISTORY**

Reflecting on parish life within the wider context of society and the church we saw running through it the following tendencies:

From the end of the 1950s on into this new millennium change has been gathering pace and has been sweeping over us. It has been overturning social and moral values, attitudes to authority, our ways of thinking and behaving – all aspects of life: personal, work and family life.

Media induced values – permissiveness, materialism, secularism, consumerism, individualism have infiltrated us.

Un-preparedness for and uninformed and inadequate catechesis in the implementation of Vatican II brought **confusion and frustration**; there are generations without an informed Christian-Catholic frame of reference for life, and an involved minority trying to implement the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council in the parish and a large majority who have lost their bearings and connectedness.

Today's lifestyle is busy, stressful and the economic climate is often oppressive for persons, families and relationships. This is linked to a consumerist and individualistic culture.

As we reflected on the history and the various tendencies we identified the dominant tendency which we noticed from the end of the 1950s and especially from the 1960s onwards. It is still gaining ground and having the strongest influence on our lives. It is seen to be the growing affluence, materialism and consumerism. This has led to an exaggerated self-interest, and an individualism which is a pre-occupation with 'me' rather than 'us'. This tendency is dispersing us.

## **STEP 4 PROGNOSIS OR RANGE OF POSSIBLE FUTURES.**

In this step we asked ourselves what might be the possible ways that we could face this basic tendency. We did this using three questions.

### **What would happen if the basic tendency goes unchecked?**

Our worshipping community will become smaller.  
We will withdraw into isolation, a private life and faith – each 'praying' at home only.  
Growth will be stifled and there will be no creativity.  
Our parish life will fall away.

### **What would happen if we try harder to improve existing services and practices?**

We become more and more tired. It would wear out the pastoral workers.  
Eventually we would dwindle out.  
We could change jobs and keep going a bit longer with some rests.

It might only pick up a little.

How can we intervene to reverse this basic tendency?

We can reach out and investigate and adopt the best practices from other places.

We can have an identifiable plan.

We can embrace / choose 'mission' to give purpose to our community.

In the language of St Paul we can 'capture' for Christ the captive audience in our schools and turn them around.

We can form smaller communities within the larger community so people experience church and faith as personal relationships.

## STEP 5           DIAGNOSIS

For this last step we recalled the key idea of the Ideal Model of Parish in the pastoral/ theological description in order to interpret the situation of the parish in faith. We also kept in mind the elements of our ideal of Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish.

### THE PARISH, PART OF THE DIOCESE, IS AN

<b>ORGANIC</b>	functions like a body, with all the necessary systems and structures for communication, participation, co-responsibility, subsidiarity, all are aware of being part of the whole, which has need of each one; each has a part to play; all working together in harmony, for a common purpose. "You together are Christ's Body." (1Cor. 12:27)
<b>AND</b>	
<b>DYNAMIC</b>	generates life and growth, through a community process of reflection-planning-action, guided by the Holy Spirit; a common sense of direction; "The Spirit will lead you to complete Truth."(John 16:13); on the move, adapting and responding in faith to the needs of the church and society
<b>COMMUNION</b>	shared life in Christ; faith, hope and love are the basis of all relationships; sacrament of unity in diversity, "Father, may they be one so that the world will believe" (John 17); living dialogue and reconciliation; experiencing Christ present in their midst; community life-style; persons known, valued and helped to grow in freedom
<b>OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD</b>	sense of identity and belonging together; freely choosing God's will. "You will be my people and I will be your God." (Jeremiah 13: 33); identified in a common vocation and mission: sacrament of universal salvation.
<b>OF THE BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES</b>	Church and visible in the neighbourhood "Let your light shine before people." (Matthew 5:16) close relationships; open; regularly reflecting of life in the light of God's Word.
<b>OF THE FAMILIES</b>	domestic Church, where children first meet God; "By their example parents are the first preachers of faith to their Children." (L.G. 11); where all are educated to life and faith, to freedom, dialogue, justice, mutual service and the common good; cornerstone of a society of love.
<b>IN A CONTINUING JOURNEY OF GROWTH IN FAITH</b>	whose life is a journey of faith; continually being evangelised open to change, to conversion, to deeper living of the Gospel, continually evangelising 'bringing the Good News into all levels of society and by its influence transforming society from within.' (E.N.18,19); pilgrims on a path towards holiness.
<b>IN WHICH THE PRIEST PRESIDES</b>	presides in love, as a shepherd, unifier, spiritual leader; promoting and animating Church-community to grow in Christ. In the diocese, the bishop is the visible principle and foundation of unity." (L.G. 23) The priest shares this unifying role.

### **"Ideal" Parish of Ku-Ring-Gai Chase**



In our society, there has been a momentum of constant and rapid change. One particular aspect of change here is that over the past years since the 1920s Ku-Ring-Gai Chase has changed from being a series of isolated rural villages to feeling the pressure of being part of a mushrooming suburbia in search of its own identity.

A majority of people (82.4%) live in their own homes but 37.4% are paying off mortgages and another 14% rent their dwellings. Most are caught up in a life style that leaves less time or inclination for other than immediate issues. Linked to this is the fact that we are linked to a materialist, secularist, consumer society which breeds a self-centred individualism and puts emphasis on 'having more' rather than on 'being more in relationships'. It undermines relationships of trust and cooperation and leaves people without transcendent horizons, feeling and seeing little need for God.

The present economic situation, with its prevailing system of economic rationalism, based on pragmatic decisions, which take little account of people and their needs, has led to job insecurity, stress and anxiety. There is little permanency of employment, and people accept to work longer hours, even unpaid or underpaid, in order to keep their jobs. Many people no longer have lifetime tenure in their work because short-term contracts are the main way of negotiating employment and work conditions. Unemployment (2.4%) is lower than the State average but underemployment is a reality in our society and creates the hidden underclass of the working poor. Either situation causes a loss of self-esteem and motivation, inequality, depression... This financial insecurity leads to stress on persons and on relationships. Added to this is the need for the majority of young people to have to leave the area to buy their family home elsewhere. There is a rental crisis in the district.

The media, especially the Sydney TV channels and the satellite TV, is a dominant force in our culture. There is less focus on local community news and issues. However, in our district a sign of people wanting to counteract this and have some community connectedness is the interest shown in the Hornsby and District Bush Telegraph and the Berowra Bush Telegraph.

People's ways of thinking, attitudes, values, ideas and habits are being powerfully affected by the mass media. Too often we are being fed a diet of self-indulgence, permissiveness, violence, sexual promiscuity and shallow thinking and values which trivialise commitment and relationships. The media often presents a minority view as though it were a majority viewpoint and we are led to think that TV standards are the norm. There is concern and often anxiety about the way society is going, about the future, about the decline in social, moral and religious values in private and public life.

In all this, people become confused, feel powerless, and often retreat to a 'live and let live' attitude, focusing on themselves, despite their desire for the situation to change. Stress-related illnesses, breakdowns and suicides are on the increase in society.

In our predominant Anglo-Celtic culture a certain reserved, undemonstrative and diffident nature, which is sometimes experienced as stand-offish, the respect for their own and others privacy a naturally difficulty in communicating in depth, the way much is taken for granted and left unsaid in relationships, the fear of intruding and of rejection, increases a tendency towards an individualistic and private lifestyle.

There is a sense too in which a modern day wolf has attacked the flock, us as a people, and we are scattered and "gone astray". The consumerist mentality puts people into a mode of 'shopping around', picking and choosing from a smorgasbord of sources, as they search for meaning and spiritual experiences. They do not feel bound by loyalty, even in relationships when the going gets tough.

So in this busy lifestyle, in which people feel stressed and to some extent second rate, unimportant and powerless, the individualistic and consumerist culture with an emphasis on my rights, my interests...without transcendent horizons, is having a disintegrating fragmenting and in some ways alienating effect on people and on relationships.

### **Identity as a Catholic people**

Among the Catholic people there is a range of differing and sometimes conflicting concepts of

Church. In common with the rest of Australia the effects of an unprepared, uninformed, and inadequate implementation of the Second Vatican Council can still be felt here. A changed way of doing things was not preceded by an effort to help Catholics grasp the Church's renewed understanding of itself. In some people this has resulted in confusion, disorientation, frustration, anger and resentment that something of value has been lost and not replaced. In the 1970s, the 'life-situation approach to catechesis', while valid in itself, was often not implemented with enough background knowledge and skills. This resulted in a whole generation lacking a cohesive Catholic synthesis for their beliefs and a solid foundation of criteria for deciding and acting.

Some still have an individualistic idea of Church, of salvation, a privatised faith and an individualistic spirituality and continue in a tradition that stresses a religion of law and obligation. There are those who go to Mass, live good lives, but have no concept of Church beyond that. Some have a 'that's enough' mentality. Not joining in, but distant from the actions of the parish they tend to be reactive to changes. A congregation of about 1100 (13%) are at Mass regularly and over 150 of these are involved in some way in the parish. A majority of people seem to have only a limited understanding of faith and of themselves as Church ( "*The parish should*"... is different to "*We the people could*..." ) Some of these come to Mass occasionally, at Christmas and for the celebration of Sacraments such as first Communion. Others are fairly nominal.

The changes in society, shifts in population, more anonymity, coupled with the loss of popular devotions and religious traditions that brought Catholics together, the decline in religious practice, the resulting loss of regular contact with 87% of Catholics, means that many parishioners remain invisible and anonymous until and if they make contact. The consumerist attitude of 'shopping around' so prevalent in society influences people's attitudes to sacraments. People approach the church to 'get things' and then withdraw to their normal life without feeling any need to make a commitment to a community. In many cases such occasional contacts then lapse until the next occasion. Those with little contact have only a minimal sense of belonging to and identity as Church and of the relevance of the Church to their daily lives. Many Catholics remain isolated strangers and even some who regularly come to Mass do not get to know other fellow parishioners. This can be true for Catholics who come here, who have no young children, and may not know many. Sometimes younger Catholics move away from home and they do not persevere in going to Mass because they do not know anyone there.

In some ways the Church has a somewhat negative image for some of the Catholic people. The young often see it as something that older people go to, outdated, old fashioned, and therefore irrelevant to their daily life. Some who have been separated, divorced, remarried, or are gay feel hurt and cast aside, not accepted by the Church. For many, Church is somewhat remote, with an image of formality, of being distant in its relationships. They do not have an affective link with the Church-parish and do not know where they fit in. Diffident and lacking in self-esteem people do not know if they have anything worthwhile to offer the Church that the Church would want.

The parish comes originally from an Anglo-Celtic culture where communication is often more by means of what is not said, keeping things to oneself, and this shows itself on a faith level where many feel unable and inadequate when it comes to communicating their faith and spiritual convictions. The religious devotions that do exist and involve relatively small numbers often revolve around saying prayers like the Rosary but do not necessarily lead to explicit communication of faith. Though some have taken part in adult education, Bible courses and lectures and group sharing, for many the Bible is an unopened book.

So the loss of contact with and isolation of the majority who have little sense of being Church and of the relevance of the Church's faith and practice to their daily lives, the lack in so many of their Catholic faith, a busy lifestyle with tired and exhaustion which seems to leave little time or energy or need for God, inadequacy in communicating faith effectively, all combine to bring about disconnectedness from God, from parish and even among those who come to Mass. For many there is little sense of a common vision, purpose or identity.

This situation is compounded for us. We were two parishes, different in our style of life. Through a pastoral, administrative decision at the diocesan level we are now one parish canonically. However we have just been born as a new entity and have no real identity as yet.

## Family Life

All that has been said so far is felt most keenly in families. They endure the consequences and are trying to survive as families in an environment that in many ways is hostile to family life and values.

The nuclear family, whose extended family is often distant physically, feels isolated, unsupported, pressured and stressed from different quarters: from an economic and social system which presumes a two-income family, from financial and job insecurity, from longer working hours, from going greater distances to work, lack of time and of communication skills. All these put pressure on relationships. Added to this are laws, ways of thinking and attitudes which devalue the family and parental authority, as well as intrusion of the media and the disvalues they propagate.

Family members suffer emotional insecurity in the face of uncertainties of the future. There is an increasing and tragic breakdown of relationships and marriage (40% in Australia but fortunately less here in Ku-Ring-Gai Chase at present), with consequent problems and sometimes conflict regarding the custody of children, maintenance, child support, and property. There are more single parent families. While people have a high ideal of marriage, of family life and of fidelity in relationships, the 'no-fault' divorce laws, increased numbers of marriage break-ups, society attitudes, all make it easier for people to stop trying to make fragile and stressed relationships work and many lack skills in communicating and in resolving conflicts. The high incidence of separation and divorce in Australia brings a certain distrust in the institution of marriage. Living together before marriage and without intending to marry is quite common.

The current emphasis on 'self', the impact of individualism and consumerism, self-interest and self-indulgence, undermine family unity and harmony. The idea of 'me first', of individual rights without mention of responsibilities, can lead to arguments. At the same time, parents struggle with their role/s, feeling that so many things are required of them. So families live with many stresses and have a sense of deterioration in family communication and relationships. Grandparents have the responsibility of helping to keep the families of their children together and can feel the weight of the burden when they would like to live an easier life.

In many Catholic families, there are few expressions of faith or religion. In the parish a majority of Catholics (51%) are in 'mixed' marriages, and the loss of religious practice and habits of prayer at home and as a family, added to the pressured pace of life, militates against the family being a little community of faith, hope and charity. Furthermore, some Catholics have remarried after being divorced or have not regularised their relationship, and they feel cast aside, hurt, not accepted, and alienated by the stance of the official Church. Many parents lack knowledge and understanding of their faith and deep Christian convictions so they feel inadequate in discussing or communicating on questions of faith. Participation in the catechesis of their children is thus difficult for some and there is a growing resistance in them.

## Youth

Many young people seem to have little awareness and appreciation of marriage as a sacrament. For them the Church seems remote from the struggles of their daily lives and there is no ongoing pastoral care of the family as family. Often bereft of their natural extended family, they do not find in the way the Church organises itself, an extended Church family that would support them and help them to experience the closeness of God in their lives. The church does not provide them with any forum to discuss their real concerns about the chaos of the world around them. The church seems concerned only with its own existence and keeping its organization functioning.

So the hostile environment and pressures from outside, the stress within and the lack of pastoral ways to support and affirm them leaves families, especially youth, vulnerable and under siege. Preoccupied with surviving and with what is immediate to them, with little experience of the closeness of God to them, they are not in condition to carry out their primary role as the Church at home.

In this context, for many youth faith education and worship is linked more to school than to family or

parish community and is often left behind when school is left. The parish loses its contact with most of its children once they leave the parish primary schools. Schools often do not differentiate between students who come from a Eucharistic family and those who don't. Especially in secondary schools those who go to Mass are sometimes pressured by others for whom Mass is not a priority or not 'cool'. As parish, we are yet to find ways of gathering our young people and of helping them to discover their vocation and meaning in life. The time before the transition from primary to secondary school seems to be a critical moment for creating some kind of bonding among youth and between youth and the parish.

## **Communication**

The means the parish uses for communication are mostly geared to those who come to Mass. The Links and Parish Updates is an initiative to make some contact, however impersonal, with all known Catholics. The vast majority of Catholics are adrift, left to fend for themselves to a great extent. The parish has not yet developed the social structures which would draw people together. There are no effective ways of contacting, informing, consulting or offering a forum for ideas to be voiced and acted upon. There is a lack of fresh and creative ideas in church structures presently existing. We have lapsed into routine and repetitive ways, and we lack alternatives. This lack of structures results in an overall lack of communication, spirit, relationships and involvement and coordination of our efforts. The absence of effective structures contributes to a lack of identity and a lack of feeling part of the church. There is no sense of building something together like we did in the 1970s when the church hall and the church were a coordinated joint venture that all aspired to. This needs to be rediscovered but in a new way, to meet the needs of our people.

For some, there are opportunities and occasions of involvement which lift them up, but these are short-lived; there is a lack of continuity; they take some steps on a journey, but things are missing for the next part and it is as though the beginning of the journey is also the end and they drift away.

There is no review among the people of the parish and a lack of networks and grass roots structures to connect people up. While there are experiences of faith which touch them at times, there is not that relational style of life and community witness, which would reconnect them and help them grow.

**In conclusion, the BASIC CHALLENGE/ PROBLEM as far as we can understand it at present seems to be:**

**The Catholic people and their relationships, style of life and family are affected by the stress of feeling that they are always having to catch up with rapidly changing times and by the isolating and alienating consequences of an individualistic, permissive and consumerist culture. They lack the affirming experience of participating in societal decisions that shape their lives and are inclined to be diffident, disengaged and passive.**

**The same can be said of us as parish. We are not in touch with the majority of our parishioners whom we do not know, who are "gone astray", who are left to themselves and go unrecognised in the way they live. Most have little or no sense of themselves being church because "the parish" is different to "we the people". Nor do they see the relevance of the church's faith and practice to their daily life. Our style of life, our priorities and our busyness leave little energy and time for God. Many lack confidence and they doubt that they would have anything worthwhile to offer the parish.**

**In a work society often oppressive of family life, families are insecure and vulnerable and are left largely unsupported by the parish. They are preoccupied with surviving economically and wonder what the future holds for them. With few expressions of faith in the home and little experience of encouragement that comes from faith in the closeness and tenderness of God they struggle on their own and often do not know whom to turn to for help. Most young people, having left their school community, have neither a continuing community of faith nor a sense of belonging to the parish. They do not see the relevance of the church nor do they see any interest on its part in the things that concern them.**

**Many experience disconnectedness from God and from the parish and we lack the inclusive structures and a relational style of life which would reconnect us and help us act and grow together as one new parish. At present we lack both a sense of identity as a Catholic people and a common vision which would empower us to move beyond ourselves as parish. We need to develop together ways of living at the service of the Reign of God and communicating effectively a faith related to life and steeped in the joy of the Gospel.**

## **PROBLEMATIC SITUATION: OBSTACLES AND POTENTIALS FOR GROWTH**

In concluding the reflection and interpretation in faith, we can begin to see the real obstacle situations, which are impediments to achieving the ideal. We tried also to see the potentials for growth within those obstacle situations. These are redeeming features, signs of God's saving Presence in His people.

The following thoughts are given as supplementary ideas. They arise out of the problematic situations identified in the parish.

### **Level 1: Pastoral Care of all as a Whole**

There is the pressured and often isolating lifestyle, materialism, secularism and consumerism which breeds self-centred individualism which puts focus on "me" rather than "us"; there is bombardment with false values by the media, putting more emphasis in fact on 'having' than on relationships; there is anxiety and stress in the face of financial insecurity. In many ways people are turned in on themselves and their own problems and often feel and see little need for God. In fact, in their lack of confidence in themselves they often lack an identity both personally and as a community. In their feelings of powerlessness they live with a passive resignation and malaise brought about through their loss of self-esteem.

There is the fact that, for many, the demands of their lifestyle and the feeling of 'always having to catch up' leave little time for religion and they have few habits of religious practice. A majority of Catholics, even though they approach the parish at times for sacraments for their children and send their children to Catholic schools, have little personal experience of the closeness of God and of the relevance of the Church's faith and practice to their daily lives.

The prevailing consumerist mentality leads people to 'pick and choose what they want and when they want it' without becoming too involved and without links of loyalty and commitment. In regard to church and religion, this leads people to take advantage of the services the church offers, when and as it suits, to the extent that they want. Sacraments become something they 'get' from the church, an end in themselves, rather than a beginning or a celebratory moment that is linked to and part of a whole shared way of life. This is an attitude that also affects relationships.

All this represents an **OBSTACLE** situation in regard to convoking people to a continuing journey of

faith, to growth as people of God, a community of hope lived and communicated, serving the common good. It is an obstacle to commitment, to growth.

Another **OBSTACLE** situation lies in the image, sometimes quite negative, that some have of the Church – as ‘old fashioned’, as ‘outdated and therefore irrelevant’, as ‘bogged down in bureaucracy’, as forgetting its aim to be a living organization, and as having many difficulties and not reaching out to people so that they are then wanting to know it. There is less and less religious affiliation and this is in the context of a wider society which tends to be dismissive of the Church, in which the Church’s image is tarnished by the scandal of sexual abuse caused by priests and brothers and even more soiled by the official Church’s response too often aimed primarily at protecting itself as institution.

At the same time people suffer this loss of social, moral and religious values, and search in some for meaning to life. Even though the Church rarely goes out to them, they maintain their link as Catholics and continue to identify themselves as Catholic on the five-yearly national census. They see the Church as having something to offer them at times, make the effort to establish contact and take on the temporary and small commitments required of them at those times. They involve themselves in things that touch their lives, eg. working for the school. Added to this is the faith and sense of belonging however minimal – that brings them to ask for Sacraments and services, to join the worship community on special occasions, and to pray to God in times of trouble and need. When the parish reaches out to them with a human face of understanding and solidarity in times of crisis, there is a response of pleased surprise that the Church is this way. Within the negative image is an expectation that the Church be ‘different’, closer, and understanding. All these redeeming features represent a **POTENTIAL** for the ideal of parish we want to bring about.

In addition, to the extent that the individualism of society is linked to an individualistic concept of faith, salvation, spirituality, and relationship with God with an emphasis on religious practice, law and obligation, it is part of an **OBSTACLE** situation. In the past this was balanced by a strong Catholic identity and religious culture, but this is no longer the case and now its absence leaves people ill equipped to combat the secularist tendency. Conflicting concepts of Church and Church teaching cause confusion and add to this situation which is an **OBSTACLE** to building an evangelising community, able to offer convincing reasons for faith to those around them.

However, within this situation there is a steady relationship with God, prayerfulness, a desire to accept and follow God’s will, and this is **POTENTIAL** for building Church-communion and for making a journey of faith together.

The cultural character of many: private, undemonstrative, uncommunicative in the sense of leaving a lot unsaid and having difficulty in communicating deeply; the diffidence, fear of rejection, the caution about not invading another’s privacy, the reluctance to reach out to strangers, especially of another culture, the appearance of being stand-offish, is also part of an **OBSTACLE** to relationships of trust and dialogue. Linked to this is the very small number of people of other ethnic groups in this dominantly Anglo-Celtic section of multicultural Australia, and therefore the limited opportunities to discover the richness of other cultures and religious traditions.

But the ready kindness and generosity in times of need, the quiet giving of practical help without fanfare, the respect for privacy, the friendliness and neighbourliness once barriers are overcome, the valuing of sincerity in relationships, the fact that when reserved Anglo-Celtic people get to know people of other cultures here in the parish they do have an empathy for them, are all part of a **POTENTIAL** for building a community of faith and hope, expressed in charity.

### **Level 3: Pastoral Care of Families**

The fact that our economic system favours two income families; that many social, legal, and economic norms and systems threaten and work against marriage and the family; that families feel unsupported; that the media, especially TV, attacks family values, promoting exaggerated individualism and consumerism, permissiveness; that there is a decline in and confusion about social, moral, and religious values and standards – is all part of an environment often unsupportive and even oppressive of family life.

Added to this is the growing rate of separation, divorce, common-law relationships, the cycle of living together, marriage or having children outside of marriage, break-ups, new relationships, blended families... the effect on children, the fact that there are vastly different interpretations of the very word 'family', even the ambiguous use of the word 'partner' – all this shakes people's confidence in marriage as an institution and as a Sacrament, and the possibility of permanence in relationships. These factors represent an **OBSTACLE**. However, despite being unsupported by society, distant from and without the encouragement and practical help of living among an extended family, and being left alone to a great extent even by the Church, many couples, parents and families continue to hold Christian values and ideals and try to live them. They strive for true and lasting relationships. All this shows a goodness, resilience, loyalty, and capacity for constancy, which is **POTENTIAL**.

The pressured and busy life-style, the real or perceived need for two incomes, the longer working hours and holding down of several jobs, time spent travelling to workplaces further a-field, reduces time spent in the family, and this adds to the emotional insecurity, especially for children, and to breakdown of communication and relationships. In addition, families are paying off mortgages on houses and trying to keep up with the demands of a materialistic society, and the 'need' to have everything at once. This situation is an **OBSTACLE** to persons experiencing family as community, caring for one another's needs, and to creating an environment, that helps members grow in Christian rather than materialistic values, and in openness to the wider community. But the concern of parents about the future of their children and the good of the family, their sacrifice in trying to cope with this lifestyle and to give of themselves to provide what they see as necessary for their families, such as sending their children to Catholic schools, driving them here and there, providing material things, is **POTENTIAL** for building up the family as domestic Church.

#### **Level 4. Pastoral Care of Specific Categories**

As regards youth we have very little information, though all that has been said so far pertains also to them, and more so. We can add the following: for many, Church is linked more to the time of school life than to faith experience in the family and parish community; in this vacuum they are prey to the influence of society which is often dismissive of Church, and subject to pressure by peers who see going to Mass as 'uncool'. Furthermore, they often experience the liturgy as boring, not engaging, not attracting. To some extent, they feel isolated from society, Church, parents, because of the generational gap in ways of thinking, attitudes, behaviour.... All this is an **OBSTACLE** to gathering youth and to their seeing and experiencing themselves as Church, and being a 'prophetic voice'.

Yet they are open to spiritual values and religious experience. They believe in God basically as 'Someone caring', as 'Someone who looks after us'. They are questioning and searching for values to live by. In the rejection of what they perceive as irrelevant there is an honesty and a desire for authenticity. They can be very honest and true in their relationships with one another. They can go to great pains to care for one another and they expect loyalty from one another. When invited to get involved in action to benefit others they can be motivated to give of themselves generously to build a civilisation of love. They are attracted to the Gospel when they see goodness in deeds not just in talk. They have a capacity for gathering around what interests them including worship with a more spontaneous and open style. This kind of openness represents **POTENTIAL**.

#### **Level 5. Pastoral Services**

##### **As regards Catechesis of all Children and Adolescents**

Catechesis, sacramental and otherwise, is often given in a vacuum since it is not reinforced by religious practices at home or by the active and regular participation of the parents and children in the sacramental life of the Church. The receiving of sacraments is regarded more as an end in itself rather than a beginning or as expressing a way of life. To that extent it is unrelated to life. While the sacramental catechesis involves parents, this involvement is often not based on their own conviction of the relevance of faith to daily life and their deep faith convictions. There seems to be an **OBSTACLE** here to a life of faith as Church-community and to communicating a faith which is relevant to life. However, the fact that parents do involve themselves when asked, that children and parents do this sacramental preparation together, is **POTENTIAL** for a parish-based catechesis

related to life.

### **As regards Pre-Sacramental Catechesis of Adults**

The fact that parents want baptism for their children, the Church's blessing on their marriage, etc. but do not follow this up with continuing relationship as Church is an **OBSTACLE**. The fact that they do want the Sacraments for themselves and their children, take part in the required preparation and in doing so are open to the possibility of experiencing the Church as relationship/community all indicate **POTENTIAL** for growth.

The **OBSTACLE** as regards the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is that the intense experience candidates have of sharing faith and life in a small group turns out to be temporary. The expectation that what they have experienced will be a permanent feature of their life as Catholics does not eventuate; after an experience that lifts them up they can feel let down. While some find their place in some smaller group in the Church, many are left to fend for themselves, and this causes disappointment that something they experienced as life-giving has not been sustained. At its worst the situation of isolation can even lead them to fall away. The **POTENTIAL** is in the living memory of their experience of the newness of relationships and in their desire to continue this and in their response to any personal invitation to be involved in the Church's pastoral efforts.

### **Level 6 Pastoral Workers and their Ongoing Formation**

Differing concepts of church, faith, salvation, prayer, different assumptions as to what the Church is on about, confusion regarding Church teaching, judgmental attitudes based on moralistic and legalistic tradition, a certain lingering viewpoint that this is really the priest's work, a person or group's possessiveness of their own 'turf', feelings of inadequacy and anxiety indicate the presence of an **OBSTACLE**, a block to working together to evangelise, to having a shared vision, to sharing leadership and responsibility, to communicating faith with clarity and conviction and at the same time with compassion and understanding. The dedication of those involved, their love for the Church as they understand it, their desire to communicate to others what they value so much for themselves, their attitudes of service in carrying so much of the burden, is all **POTENTIAL**.

The reluctance of people to respond to invitations to be involved, their natural shyness, diffidence and timidity, lack of self-confidence, the "I've got nothing I can offer" self-diminishing attitude, fear of criticism, and our usual way of inviting involvement (i.e. through a general impersonal invitation and filling out a form) all constitute an **OBSTACLE** to recruitment and formation of pastoral workers. The fact that they respond generously in situations where they are convinced of a real need that they can help answer, represents a **POTENTIAL**.

### **Level 7 & 8 & 9: Structures for Decision-Making, for Proposals and Planning and for Communication.**

Any **OBSTACLE** on these levels lies in the fact that a majority do not see themselves as Church, in the limited understanding they have of what it means to be Church, in the tradition we have of dependence on the priests.

The **POTENTIAL** is in the changing attitudes to authority, in the people's experience of having a say and being heard in other forums, in the growing participation of laity in the life of the Church, in the desire of persons and groups to make a difference in favour of what is better, in the dawning awareness of the dignity of baptism and the goodwill on all sides to build up a participative Church.

As regards structures of communication, the Catholic people's lack of experience of being evangelisers, of seeing this solely as the priest's work or something that the 'sects do', their diffidence at the thought of knocking on doors, their reserve, their fear of intruding on the privacy of others all represents an **OBSTACLE** to creating a personal evangelising network of communication in their local areas.

People's realisation that something needs to be done, their readiness to be involved in what they perceive as necessary and good, and their concern about the need for the growing society and the Church to find their community nature and to live with a spirit of hope, all constitute **POTENTIAL**.

**Levels 10 & 11**

Nothing further to add.

**CONCLUDING STATEMENT**

In response to an open invitation from the parish priest, the people of Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Catholic Parish gathered to do this analysis and diagnosis of their new parish. This analysis and diagnosis has been a way for them to read the signs of the times in their own part of Australia. They have seen that there are signs of God's loving action and grace working in the lives of the people and that there are also obstacles in the problematic situations which the parish faces.

In Mark 10:17-22 Jesus was approached by a rich young man who was seeking the fullness of life. Jesus looked steadily at him and loved him. He looked into his heart and saw all the goodness in the young man. This is what the parishioners of St Patrick's and St Bernard's have been doing with their parish. They have taken on the same attitude as Jesus towards their parish – looking steadily at the situation of the parish with love during the pastoral meetings over the past two weeks.

When Jesus looked at and listened to the young man He identified something that was blocking the growth of the rich young man. He went to the heart of the problem that was preventing the young man from being all that he could be.

With honesty and with the courage of faith the parishioners of Ku-Ring Gai-Chase Parish, together with their clergy, have identified the fundamental problem blocking the parish from being all that it can be for God, for the people of the community and for society. They have identified the elements of the fundamental problem - the diagnosis – in their own way. It does not claim to be the final word. Valuable reflection can be done to discover further potentials for growth within the obstacle situations that the parish faces. These will help the parish know how to choose steps forward in the different fields of its pastoral action.

The parishioners, together with their parish priest, have decided that they will take on a process of journeying together towards the ideal model of parish which they had also dreamed up together as an expression of their Christian hope.

With Christ's help, through the guidance of His Spirit, little by little the parish will find its way of moving towards the ideal, and so always becoming its best and truest self. It will do so through the people planning the journey together in response to God's faithful call to move from being a crowd to taking on their identity as the People of God.

Mary Help of Christians is, according to the Christian Story, the woman of faith and the woman of the community. Her life was open to God's creative Spirit and God's saving action in the world. May she who is Model of the Church and Mother of all inspire the parish to choose the best ways of helping all the people to discover their dignity as human beings. May all the baptised learn to discover their newness of life in Christ as daughters and sons of God in the joy of the Gospel.

**St Patrick and St Bernard, pray for us.**