

Leadership Consultation

A leadership consultation was undertaken during March 2012. This involved engaging with the Clergy at their Twilight Conference, conducting regional meetings with Catholic School Leaders and facilitating a combined meeting for Diocesan Agency leaders. In all about 100 leaders from across the Diocese were engaged in this process.

The consultation considered leadership in the context of the Synod statements drawing on the experiences of Diocesan leaders as they reflected on both the capabilities and challenges of leadership in this environment.

Leaders were also asked about the types of resources and support that would be required for leaders to realise the vision of the statements in their context.

Realising the Synod Statements – Discussion of Examples and Themes

- Supervision means that we can walk beside the client. We recognise the giftedness and value of each person. We have a “culture of supervision” – we walk beside, we create a safe space, encourage vulnerability. Supervision is about honesty and saying what is going on, honesty helps people to grow. This allows you to walk with someone and help that person to make independent good decisions – leading to trust and participation. This process of supervision “goes down” and “goes up” – the values of the organisation are transferred through the management, to the staff and to the clients
- We have to remember that God was there before we were. We are working on God's mission, not our mission.
- We are called and gifted to leadership – this gives you confidence and courage when you have belief in your call.
- As leaders we can ask “how do I work with the wisdom that God shared with you?”
- An example of leadership was given around the IT system being down. In this situation a leader must chose a response. You need to keep a balance by asking “what is going to happen, how bad is this really?” If we keep the balance we can be calm and even see the funny side of things. It's in these critical moments that we are called to live out all the theory.
- Where is the “fun” in our leadership
- The incarnation is lacking an everydayness, which resonates with our humanity. In the humanity we find the humour.
- It doesn't connect with people if it's not fun. Humour is about connecting with people
- Humour disrupts what you are doing – to bring the deeper message out, to deliver the bigger messages

- In changing and challenging times –the changes to disability funding, going from organisation centred to person centred. This means that Centacare has to change their focus to be more like that of a commercial enterprise. It is important in a time of change like this to connect with staff on a personal level. The message to staff needs to be one of trust and confidence “you can trust us to do our job, to make the right decision on behalf of the people. We have been here before and we will get through this – we will manage this situation”

Leadership Stories

Reaching Out

Example One

Three schools found that reflecting on the charism of the religious tradition of their school had a large impact on the school and had been a project that developed a life of its own.

Three schools had started by looking at the life of the founding saint of their tradition. Once they had looked at the life of the saint there seemed an imperative to live the charism of that saint and the religious order that they had founded. This extended into architecture, school values and pastoral care, social justice initiative. This had helped make connections to the parish and also had become a common language amongst students, teachers and parents.

Essential to the leadership of this initiative was co-learning, looking at the density of an idea, modelling through talking about it, making it a priority. This vision had given people something to identify with, as it can be used to underpin a range of activities.

Example Two

Another school spoke of a social justice activity which started with one young teacher. This teacher was encouraged to go to an aboriginal community (by the parish priest) in the end four teachers went. Another visit was arranged to see how the school community could help this indigenous school community. This time 2 parents, 1 teacher and the admin assistant for the school went to the community.

Since then a relationship has been forged with a variety of activities that connect the school and the community, selling indigenous art, toothbrushes and shoes, laminating pouches.

The leadership for much of this project has been driven by the admin staff member Deb Orrick, who has the capacity to work with a wide variety of people drawing them into the ministry.

Example Three – Integrating Faith and Life

Standing up for the catholic identity of the school, advocating catholic practice amidst a mostly secular culture requires real leadership.

It has been a driver in the leadership team – “called to service in Christ.” We have a lot of sensitivity in the catholic faith; Catholic principals are key players in the whole story. How far are you prepared to go out on a limb?

Principal in one school reported making a conscious effort to have proper sacred space, prayer with scripture and reflection etc as the opening to P and F meetings.

The leaders have had to take ownership of the prayers and catholic character. Social Justice and pastoral care are the easy things to do – everyone agrees that these are good things. It’s harder to stand for the need to attend mass on Sunday, RE outcomes etc.

An example of a leadership given was the principal received feedback from a parent about the use of substitute teachers. The principal asked of the parent “have you been praying for the teacher to get better?”

Example Four - Mission Day

Mission Day was started under the leadership of Fr Jim McKeon. The day is the culmination of a term long mission focus in both parish and school.

Parish Social Justice Group and the school REC work together to decide what the focus of the day will be – last year it was an orphanage in India. They introduced the story to the school community. There are a number of activities around fund raising and education. This leads up to a school fair. The fair runs for the morning, and while money is the focus the spirit is palpable, of people working together. This then becomes the focus for the prayer assembly. Feedback from the community would suggest that this resonates with connecting faith and life

Example 5 – Mentoring

Social justice is on the school strategic plan; they wanted to change the emphasis from Social Justice just being something that we do for people overseas.

The three principals in the area have a regular meeting with Fr George, they discussed the question how can we get the students involved in service.

Year 9 at Maria Regina go to the local catholic primary school to mentor the students in reading and to help by running games. They take two lessons across the year and a lunchtime out of the timetable to do it. This has involved much co-operation and extra work from the teachers who have been very supportive of the initiative.

The students were offered some training including a session from Paul at Challenge Ranch in how to run games.

The biggest benefit has been seen in the year 9 students, it has really improved their self confidence. The primary school students also really enjoy it.

For an idea like this to work you really need to be committed to it – and it needs to be something that people can believe in.

Example 6 – Spiritual Leadership

The principal of a school has demonstrated leadership in the area of Catholic faith. He arrived at the school as was “out and proud” about his faith and their place as a Catholic school.

This was reflected in his catholic language. He opened up prayer places, provided opportunity for staff to pray.

This type of leadership was very empowering for the REC.

Young people want to be involved we just have to tell them why they are doing things.

Example 6 – Soibada

This project has grown from small beginnings. It is a collaborative effort between the school, parish, local council and parent community.

They are now looking at expanding this project to include – Kenya, Mozambique

Leadership Capabilities

- Availability
- Tolerance
- Non judgemental listening
- Applying different leadership styles for different groups (situational leadership)
- Identifying talents of different areas
- Uniting different groups under one leadership in Christ
- Understanding as leaders participate in Jesus leadership “do small things with utmost care”
- Be yourself
- Interdependent rather than independent
- Communion builders
- Reaching out to the unchurched
- Availability and approachability
- Who we are “coming out”, missionaries
- Listening
- Patience
- Bridge – preaching
- Context, not one size fits all. Know where the parish or group is at and act with the wisdom needed. Determining how you need to act depending on the situation (eg sometimes up front and make decisions, sometimes listening)
- Not looking up or down but engaging with them as equals
- Servant leadership
- Rise to the challenges set before us
- Two way communication and actively listen and express to others
- Interact with my experience and the experience of others
- Lead by example – willingness to minister “with” others
- Trusting the ability of others to minister
- Openness to wisdom, sometimes being in another (humility)
- Ability to recognise the giftedness (or potential giftedness) in the other and to work with them
- Welcoming anyone who offers their gift for ministry – never close the door
- Being aware of our combined giftedness and different gifts
- Finding ways to engender leadership in Youth
- Finding ways to engender leadership in schools
- Building relationships between principals, RECs, all teachers and parents (parents vision of parish or often the school)
- Challenge of reaching out to elderly people
- Build the relationship between school and parish
- Listening
- Seeing in a way that others can’t see
- Encourage, enable, calling forth
- Witness
- Be true to oneself
- Hospitality

- Compassion
- Courage
- Profession - God is present
- Liturgy and celebration
- Prayer
- Capacity to welcome and listen
- Identifying real needs
- Availability
- Calling forth the gifts and enabling
- Inspire hope
- Love the people
- Link the Eucharist to the lived experience
- Sacrifice personal interest for the common good
- Stay there and be present

Leadership Capability

Courage – leadership takes courage. This comes from your sense of morality and from relationship with Jesus. Even when there's a bit of self doubt courage helps you to push forward

Perseverance is vital, you need to keep doing and trying, because every event is an opportunity, each individual event.

Both these qualities perseverance and courage are only possible if you believe in what you are doing. If you don't believe in it, if it's not worthwhile then you won't do these things

We have a shared belief based on the mission of the church – it's easy to get support when you have a clear understanding of why you are doing something – this is the horizon that positions all our decisions

It important in any initiative to develop a logical process – this involves consultation, getting support for the idea, identifying the key players, having a driver, and the leader being an enabler.

Integrity – this leads you to what you should do.

Transformation is the key – there has to be a change of heart to make an initiative work. It's a skill to bring forth the gifts of others

Our core framework is our relationship with Jesus, we have a strong framework for guiding our actions, and it's also OK not to have the answers

All of the worthwhile initiatives have time for reflection built in – to assess how it's going. It's the ability to look back so that we can look forward.

Knowing and telling stories is an important part of building a vision.

The ability to listen and to empathise – it's not about solving problems it's about what can be done to move forward. One of the gifts of the admin staff member named as leader is the ability to take herself out of the frame, it becomes about the other person.

Being able to call forth the giftedness of others requires a generosity of spirit

It is essential that the community has confidence in the leader, we need to be strong in faith to lead faith communities.

Transparency, consistency, strategic, visionary

A spirit filled process develops its own energy. You get a sense that things are worthy in their own right, when something has a primal "rightness" they tend to go and develop – you are then a co-driver. Things that are not spirit filled don't move so easily and develop such life. When a project is moving like this it is necessary to do some gate keeping to prevent you from being over run.

With a new initiative you have to evaluate the energy and the need – if it peters out it wasn't meant to take.

Ideas like this are built from below, rather than imposed from the top. That way it is about identity, about ownership and belonging.

Sustainability – building something for the future, you need to keep in mind how things can run when people move on. If projects are not shared then they are not sustainable

There has to be determination about the vision, to really stick with it and a passion for what we are looking to accomplish. This is more than commitment and more than a strategic goal.

You need to set up structures that connect with the culture of the community

You need to invite people into the vision and use the skills that are in the community. If you want a big project then you have to learn to invite people to join you

We need to articulate where we see the spirit present. You witness it and then communicate how you felt.

Modelling is important – you need to be seen working at the coal face.

Realize that people want to make a contribution, we just have to work out how to give them a way to do it and in a way that draws on our catholic identity

We need to identify giftedness in people. Tapping people on the shoulder – you need to be able to do this well

Empowerment – when starting a project its important to start with a small group first, thrash it out, set you plans and then have a way that you can step back.

Essential to leadership is trusting that people have the skills to do the job, its scary for the leader and exciting for the people.

You need a well grounded vision and a clear set of expectations

The person of the leader is very important – it takes courage to challenge a culture to be better.

You need to be committed to your own vision but open to others. Being able to judge context is important

Evaluation is a vital part of the process.

There is great security knowing that we are all on the same ride, that we are doing the Bishop's work. This gives you conviction and certainly from a common message.

Having a “leadership team” is an advantage.

Having a strategic plan and annual plan

The opportunities for leadership development - networking, advice, study.

Relational and understanding community – if you are going to see what is needed you need to be in touch with people

Seeing ideas in another context and being able to take them on board and apply them in your context

Sometimes you have to make a decision and give it a go – not an autocratic style; people need some background to help them get on board

Listening and noticing things that aren't being said

People follow Jesus because of who he was – in this way we should follow Jesus, in modelling and relating to people

Accepting people where they are and for who they are

Having a willingness to change directions or to modify if things are not working.

What are the capabilities of Leadership

- Presence in leadership – this is about listening and waiting appropriately. Respecting people where they are. Waiting in an integrated and engaged way.
- Advocacy – advocating what we are about, and modelling what we are about. Part of this is transformation, from comfort zone into displacement.
- You can only challenge and invite people – you need tools to do this well, this is the most difficult step
- The mission is how do we give people skills, there are ways to help people flourish
- We need to be aware that we are not a knowledge people, but a wisdom people
- It's important that we know how to tap people on the shoulder and offer then support. You need to name "you could do this" to help stretch people
- Calling forth the gifts / recognising it/ encouraging it
- The universal call – scripture is full of stories about reluctance, self doubt, asking God to pick someone else
- Leadership in the wider sphere of the church – we need to offer people the sort of confidence that they are talking about in the example of Centacare – that we can manage these difficult times, we trust in God and that the Sprit will work.

Challenges

- Challenging people in terms of the vision – if they are not living it out
- Discipline – taking days off, prayer, time to work
- Patient
- Challenge of diversity in each parish
- Challenge of being genuinely welcoming
- Having different orders in the Diocese of Broken Bay
- To love the church and the people in it –even the ones who complain
- Cultural differences
- Legal obligations
- Gaining the confidence of the people
- Faithfulness and continuity especially in the face of difficulties
- How to respond creatively to needs
- Balance among competing demands and interest in the parish
- Maintaining integrity and personal witness
- Distinguish between parish and school communities
- Encourage pastoral leaders to draw out the gifts of people in diversity
- We need some heroes?
- Different models of leadership needed with international priests and priests on loan
- We need more effective communication in church and broader society
- Strong, credible catholic leadership
- To draw out talents/gifts/charism
- Personal approach
- Providing opportunities for individuals to realise their gifts

- Finding ways to build relationships (eg parents, teachers, principals)
- Language and culture (international priests)
- Legal requirements and implications
- Know what model we are working with
- Identify resources to deliver the model
- Delegation – “eyes on, hands off”
- How do we get the people to come back
- Know our own limitations – we don’t have all the skills
- Balancing the diversity in a parish – working with all
- Maintaining integrity and pastoral witness
- Staying faithful in the face of difficulties
- Having to “challenge people”