



What happens now for our Diocese?

Bishop Shane's appointment as Archbishop-designate of Brisbane raises many questions.

The Church, in its wisdom, provides continuity even in times of change, and has it all worked out. From the moment of appointment to the eventual installation of a new bishop, there is a clear and well-established process to ensure the Diocese of Sandhurst continues to be cared for and well-governed.

Dr Chris Cotter and Fr Adi Indra have outlined those steps in a nutshell, so you can understand what's happening and feel assured as we navigate this transition together.

Understanding the Road Ahead

When does the Diocese become 'vacant' (*sede vacante*)?

When Bishop Shane is installed as the Archbishop of Brisbane on 11 September 2025.

What can and can't happen when the Diocese becomes vacant (*sede vacante*)?

The general principle of Canon Law is that "while the see is vacant (while there is no bishop), no innovation is to be made", which means that existing programs and initiatives should continue, including:

- Development of Cathedral Square
- Implementation of the Strategic Mission and Pastoral Goals
- Diocesan Formation Support Plan
- Pilgrimage to the Australian Catholic Youth Festival



What happens between the announcement on 18 June 2025 and the Diocese becoming vacant on 11 September 2025?

Bishop Shane remains the Bishop of Sandhurst, but his powers are limited to those of a Diocesan Administrator.

What happens to various positions and bodies in the Diocese?

The following ceased on 18 June 2025 (date of announcement):

- Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar for Education. Since then, each has received delegation of his previous powers (effective until 11 September 2025).

The following lapse on 11 September 2025 (date of *sede vacante*):

- Sandhurst Mission and Pastoral Council
- Council of Priests

The following continue to function:

- College of Consultors
- Diocesan Financial Administrator (Business Manager)
- Diocesan Finance Council

What happens after the Diocese becomes vacant on 11 September?

- The College of Consultors convenes to elect a Diocesan Administrator within eight days, i.e., before **19 September**. The Diocesan Administrator must be a priest who is at least 35 years old.
- At the same time, the Apostolic Nuncio commences a process of consultation to prepare recommendations about a new bishop for the Dicastery for Bishops, which reviews these recommendations and then presents them to the Pope.

What happens in the short period between the day of vacancy (11 September 2025) and the election of a Diocesan Administrator?

- The College of Consultors assumes responsibility for the Diocese and has the power of a Vicar General.
- The College of Consultors is presided over by the priest who is senior by ordination.

What does the Diocesan Administrator do?

- Exercise the administrative power of a Diocesan Bishop.
- Adhere to general principle during *sede vacante*: “While the see is vacant, no innovation is to be made”.
- May appoint one or more priests as ‘Delegate of the Diocesan Administrator’, with the powers of a Vicar General or an Episcopal Vicar.
- May convene the members of the former Mission and Pastoral Council and the Council of Priests for advice as, for example, a ‘Diocesan Administrator’s Advisory Council’ or ‘Pastoral Advisory Council’ and an ‘Assembly of Priests’.
- May delegate confirmations and building blessings to appropriate priests.
- May suspend parish visitation program (though parishes may still wish to use the preparatory framework as a self-review tool).
- After one year the Diocesan Administrator may appoint parish priests.
- Ceases functioning when the new bishop takes office as the Bishop of Sandhurst.

What are the guiding principles for the Diocesan Administrator?

To lead with *fidelity and continuity*.

- Ensure the continuity of the Diocesan Bishop’s work.
- Exercise the role with humility and restraint, mindful that he is not the Diocesan Bishop, yet the essential mission of the Diocese must carry on.
- Remain faithful to the direction set by the former bishop, as departing from it may lead to unnecessary disruption and lost momentum.



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst