

CLERGY PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

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Contact: Registrar

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Introduction

Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him - Psalm 127:3

The Diocese of Bendigo welcomes clergy with families, and we rejoice when a new child is brought into a family. We believe parents should be able to take time away from ministry following the birth or adoption of a child. This policy seeks to outline the provisions for clergy who need to take a period of parental leave to care for a new child.

Our policy aims to:

- give clergy the time they need to devote to their families
- support clergy through a period of parental leave
- ensure smooth transitions for the clergy at time of parental leave
- show that we value our clergy
- retain experienced clergy in the diocese
- attract clergy with families to the diocese

We commit to:

- understanding the needs of clergy when on parental leave
- providing flexible arrangements when going on and returning from parental leave
- communicating with clergy throughout the parental leave process
- keeping in touch with clergy who are on parental leave

Policy Scope & Coverage

This policy applies to remunerated licensed members of clergy and remunerated licensed lay ministers in the Diocese of Bendigo.

1. Parental leave

Parental leave allows clergy to take time away from their ministry for the birth or adoption of a child. The term 'parental leave' can include:

- government-funded parental leave pay
- paid parental leave

- unpaid parental leave

When seeking to take a period of parental leave, the following types of parental leave should be considered in the below order:

1.1 Government funded parental leave pay

The Australian Government provides Parental Leave Pay (PLP) for the primary carer of a newborn or adopted child at the national minimum wage for a maximum period of 18 weeks.

Dad and Partner Pay is also available if unpaid leave is taken in the first year after the child's birth or adoption. Eligible dads or partners can access up to 2 weeks of government funded pay at the minimum wage.

Clergy are encouraged to access the PLP in the first instance if they are eligible.

1.2 Paid parental leave

Two forms of paid parental leave are available to clergy, subject to negotiation with their parish and the Bishop:

1.2.1 Accessing clergy personal leave

Clergy receive a personal leave benefit as part of their standard remuneration package. This personal leave benefit can be accessed by clergy to enable them to take paid parental leave. This can be taken in addition to any government funded parental leave.

1.2.2 Paid parental leave funded by the parish or diocese

The Bishop, clergy and parish can negotiate to provide clergy with a period of paid parental leave to support them while pregnant, while on parental leave or while returning to ministry.

The paid parental leave may take the form of a pro-rata payment of their usual remuneration package (eg. one day per week) or other benefit as agreed, taking into consideration the capacity of the parish to support the payment and the needs of clergy.

Other benefits that could be provided upon negotiation include:

- Paying the clergy their normal remuneration during some or all of their leave
- Topping up the clergy's remuneration so they get their full remuneration when accessing government-funded PLP
- Giving clergy the option of taking annual leave at half pay during parental leave
- Paying the clergy their superannuation contributions while on leave
- Counting a period of unpaid parental leave as service for the calculation of annual leave

1.3 Unpaid parental leave

Clergy can request to take a period of unpaid parental leave when they or their partner give birth or adopt a child. The length of unpaid parental leave is to be negotiated and agreed between the clergy and the Bishop, with any requests for an extension of unpaid parental leave submitted to the Bishop for consideration and approval.

Clergy taking unpaid parental leave will be able to return to the ministry position they held prior to taking leave. If the position no longer exists, the Bishop will engage with the clergy person to identify another suitable position.

1. NOTICE

Clergy are to give at least 10 weeks' notice before starting a period of parental leave. If circumstances do not permit providing 10 weeks' notice, they need to provide as much notice as possible.

This notice period will allow the Bishop time to arrange ministry coverage for the parish or position during the period of parental leave.

2. TRANSITION

The Bishop, parish and clergy will work together to ensure a smooth transition in leaving and returning to ministry.

Considerations include:

- Risk assessment and risk management planning, particularly for new and expectant mothers, to identify any work, health and safety hazards (e.g. physical risks, working conditions, working arrangements)
- Provide flexible working arrangements as agreed
- Communicating regularly to ensure the needs of both the parish and clergy are understood
- Provision of any locum or supporting ministry both during parental leave and on return from leave with appropriate handovers

3. KEEP IN TOUCH

The diocese values its relationships with all members of clergy and endeavors to keep clergy on parental leave connected with the diocese.

Clergy on parental leave are not required to attend any diocesan activities, however can choose to attend diocesan activities for the purpose of 'keeping in touch'.

Activities may include worship services, deanery meetings, social catch ups or parts of Clergy Conference, Clergy Retreat and Synod as agreed to by the Bishop.

Clergy can also remain on the diocesan e-mailing list to keep up to date with diocesan news and activities. Alternatively, a ministry colleague can be nominated as a 'buddy' to forward important information to clergy while on parental leave.

4. FLEXIBILITY

The diocese commits to supporting clergy as they return from parental leave by providing flexible working arrangements.

This may include considerations such as:

- Transitioning working hours over an agreed period (e.g. two days per week in the first month, then three days per week in the second month, then returning to normal hours)
- A change in working hours from the arrangement prior to going on parental leave
- Providing additional supporting ministry during the return to ministry phase

Final decisions regarding the length, type and transitional arrangements will be confirmed by the Bishop following negotiations with clergy and parish involved.

Policy Responsibility

Bishop in Council is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

Related Documents: Internal

- CARD Clergy Attraction, Retention and Development Project
- Clergy Personal Leave Policy

Related Documents: External

- Australian Government Parental Leave Pay
[Parental Leave Pay - Services Australia](#)

Approved by Bishop in Council:

15 February 2022

<i>Policy History</i>	
<i>Policy created</i>	February 2022
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