

CLERGY PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Version: 1.0
Contact: Registrar

Date of Issue: August 2022
Review Date: August 2028

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

To help plan and support clergy during this important time, clergy are asked to provide a parental leave plan to the Bishop as early as possible. This plan should outline intended leave dates, any anticipated needs, and how clergy and their local ministry can be best supported during their time away.

When taking a period of parental leave, the following types of parental leave can be considered:

1.1 Government funded parental leave pay

The Australian Government offers Parental Leave Pay for care of a newborn or adopted child at the national minimum wage. Parental Leave Pay is a flexible payment that can be shared between parents.

Clergy are encouraged to explore Government Parental Leave Pay in the first instance if eligible.

1.2 Paid parental leave

The Bishop, clergy, and parish will work together to create a paid parental leave arrangement that supports clergy during pregnancy, while on leave, and as they transition back into ministry. This leave can be tailored to suit individual circumstances and will consider both the needs of the clergy and the parish's ability to provide support.

This might include:

- Full or part-time remuneration during leave
- A pro-rata arrangement (eg. one day per week)
- Topping up the clergy's remuneration so they get their full remuneration when accessing government-funded Parental Leave Pay
- 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 unpaid parental leave following the birth or adoption of a child. The duration will be agreed upon with the Bishop, and extensions can be requested. The unpaid parental leave can be taken as a single continuous period, flexibly, or a combination of both. Clergy can take paid leave such as annual leave or clergy personal leave at the same time as unpaid parental leave.

2. 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.

3. 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)
- Adjusting work duties to accommodate the physical, emotional, and practical needs of the clergy member, ensuring tasks are appropriate and manageable
- 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

The Bishop may request clergy to provide a medical certificate that states they are fit for work.

4. Keep In Touch

The diocese values its relationships with all members of clergy and wants 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.

5. Return to Ministry

The total period of parental leave would not exceed 24 months. 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 where possible.

6. 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 days 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 days from the arrangement prior to going on parental leave
- Providing additional supporting ministry during the return to ministry phase

Final working arrangements will be confirmed by the Bishop following conversations with clergy and the parish.

7. Parental leave for stillbirth or infant death

Clergy who experience a stillbirth or the death of an infant during the first 24 months may also take leave. They may choose to return to work, reduce their planned leave, or take their planned parental leave. The Diocese cannot compel clergy to return to work or cancel their planned leave.

Parents experiencing a stillbirth or loss of an infant may also take clergy personal leave, unpaid parental leave, or unpaid parental leave supported by Government payments they are eligible for.

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

Amended 11 November 2025

<i>Policy History</i>	
<i>Policy created</i>	February 2022
<i>Policy reviewed</i>	August 2025
<i>Policy amended</i>	November 2025