



Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Catholic Bishop to lead Thousands Across Regional Victoria

When Bishop René Ramirez RCJ is installed as the ninth Bishop of Sandhurst on 30 July 2026, he will assume leadership of one of regional Victoria's largest and longest-serving community organisations.

While best known for its churches, the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst reaches into almost every community across central and northern Victoria through its network of schools, healthcare, aged care and community services.

Established in 1874, the Diocese spans more than 45,000 square kilometres – from Kerang in the west to Corryong in the east, and south to Bright and Euroa – serving communities across a region stretching through the Goulburn Valley, Campaspe, Loddon Mallee, Ovens and Murray districts.

Across that area, the Diocese comprises 38 parishes and serves more than 93,000 Catholics. It also supports 55 Catholic schools educating almost 19,000 students, six early learning centres, St John of God Bendigo Hospital, Catholic aged care services and a broad network of community organisations.

Working alongside agencies such as CatholicCare Victoria and the St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies), Catholic organisations provide counselling, emergency relief, family support, refugee settlement, prison chaplaincy, youth programs and assistance for people experiencing hardship. Every year, these services support thousands of people, regardless of their faith or background.

"The role of Bishop extends well beyond leading Sunday worship," Greg Westbrook, Diocesan Business Manager, said. "The Diocese is part of the fabric of regional Victoria. Our parishes, schools, welfare agencies, hospitals and aged care services contribute to the wellbeing of communities across central and northern Victoria every day.

"The appointment of a new Bishop is significant because it marks the beginning of a new chapter for an organisation that has been serving the region for more than 150 years."

Bishop René RCJ becomes the ninth Bishop of Sandhurst and the first Filipino-born bishop to lead the Diocese. His appointment comes as Australia's Catholic Church becomes increasingly multicultural, reflecting the changing communities it serves throughout regional Victoria.

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