

Bishops Crypt Consultation



What is happening?

The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is currently facing a space constraint in the temporary crypt located under the altar in St. John the Baptist Oratory. Various solutions to increase crypt space are being considered by the Diocesan leadership and we are looking to consult with our parishioners and other stakeholders to gain feedback and make an informed decision.

Why now?

The temporary crypt at St. John the Baptist Oratory has served us well for the past 30 years, but it has now reached its capacity. The Diocese now needs to find a more permanent solution with increased capacity for future decades.

A new crypt will provide ample space to accommodate Diocesan needs and ensure that we have a lasting and respectful resting place for the bishops.

What locations were considered?

In early 2022, the Diocesan Administrator established a Working Party to address the need for a more permanent crypt. The Working Party includes Adrien Quain from Meighans Funerals, Anne Warren, the Regional Business Manager from St. Benedict's Inner Newcastle Parish, and Mr. John Tobin, Parish Finance Council St Benedicts Inner Newcastle. From the Diocesan Shared Services, the team comprises Deb Mastello, Information Management Officer, Mitchell Green, Senior Finance Business Partner, and Kurt Daley, Construction Manager. Representing the Bishop's Office are Matthew Muller, Chancellor and Chair, and Amanda Zaicos, Support Officer.

The sites considered include:

- Sacred Heart, Campbell's Hill
- St. John the Baptist Oratory/Shrine, Maitland
- Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newcastle West

Assessment of locations considered

Location	Opportunities	Concerns
Sacred Heart, Campbell's Hill	Historic site Bishop Murray is in Campbells Hill Cemetery	Not owned by the Diocese Not at the Cathedral Lack of security Build a new mausoleum near the church Build new mausoleums under the floor of the church Site relativity obscure
St. John the Baptist Oratory/Shrine, Maitland	Historic site for the Bishop's residence Centrally located	Not owned by the Diocese Not at the Cathedral Build new mausoleums under the floor of the Church The caskets would be in the water table The Oratory is not open to the public – access would be an issue Flood risks
Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newcastle West	Centrally located at the Cathedral Typically, bishops are interred in or near their Cathedral Cathedral is open every day and in constant use	Not owned by the Diocese Build new mausoleums under the floor of the Church The caskets would be in the water table

Why Sacred Heart Cathedral?

The Sacred Heart Cathedral, with its historical significance and central location, is an ideal site for this new crypt, offering both accessibility and reverence. The Sacred Heart Cathedral presents several opportunities for the establishment of a more permanent crypt.

The Cathedral's daily accessibility make it an ideal site. It is a longstanding tradition for bishops to be interred in or near their cathedral, and the Sacred Heart Cathedral, being in constant use, provides a fitting and respectful environment for this purpose.

For these reasons the Working Party preferred the Sacred Heart Cathedral as the site for the new crypt.

What issues need to be addressed?

There are some concerns to consider with using the Sacred Heart Cathedral as the crypt site. The Cathedral is not owned by the Diocese, which could complicate the process. Additionally, constructing new mausoleums under the floor of the church poses a significant challenge, as the caskets would be situated in the water table, potentially leading to issues with preservation and stability.

Crypt options at Sacred Heart Cathedral

The Working Party developed requirements for a future crypt and engaged EJE architects to prepare some viable options for consideration.

The Working Party is seeking feedback from our parish communities on their thoughts and preferences.

The feedback we receive from our parish communities will be taken into consideration when the Working Party makes recommendations to the Bishop prior to the decision being made.