Anglican Parish of Bulahdelah, Tea Gardens with Karuah Parish Profile

The dynamic Anglican Parish of Bulahdelah, Tea Gardens with Karuah is searching for an evangelical Rector to lead our vibrant community. We are made up of three individual churches in the Port Stephens and Myall River area, north of Newcastle. Our Parish mission statement of 'Loving God, Loving People, Making Disciples' underpins our worship and our actions.

Our three distinct church communities are bound together by our thirst for Bible-based teaching, attention to prayer and God glorifying worship. Each Sunday approximately 115 people gather for worship across the Parish with increased numbers during holiday periods. We are led by the Spirit to engage in our local communities, demonstrating our love of Jesus, through compassion and witness. We are seeking a visionary leader with a pastoral heart who can inspire us to use our gifts for the glory of God's kingdom.

The Rector oversees the Parish with the support of a part-time Associate Minister. The Associate Minister, Rev Alison Williams, devotes attention primarily to our growing church in Karuah but also supports preaching, safe ministry and the overall mission of the Parish. Rev Alison has been acting as our Parish Locum while we recruit for our new Rector.

The Parish employs a part-time Ministry Support Lead who works closely with our ministry team, leads our volunteer administration team and aids communication within the Parish. We also employ 3 part time children and families workers covering a total of 3 days a week.

The rectory is a modern four-bedroom home with an office, positioned on a quiet street in Tea Gardens.

We have a strong Parish Council representing all three churches. Parish Council currently meets regularly every 2 months, with additional meetings called as needed. There is also a Ministry Leaders' Team which meets monthly, comprising the clergy, our wardens, our 5 licenced lay preachers and our Ministry Support Lead. We have a Mission's Team with representatives from the three churches who track and communicate regularly with our missionaries. Other working groups exist for special outreach events or building developments. We are thankful for the engagement of many faithful individuals across our three centres who are using their gifts to help the Parish to flourish.

A closer look at our three communities

It is a joy for the three churches to support one another and we celebrate the unique features of each community of worship.

St Andrew's Church in Tea Gardens and local community

St Andrew's Church in Tea Gardens is the Parish centre and the location of the Parish office and rectory. The church is located at the corner of Witt and Ogden Streets, and the rectory is roughly 5 min away by car.

Sunday worship is generally held at 8:30 am. Services are recognisably Anglican following a pattern of Morning Prayer with Holy Communion twice a month in a moderately traditional style.

There is a 'Next Steps' group which monitors and encourages the implementation of our vision agreed about 2 years ago. St Andrew's also hosts a wide range of weekday activities, including Parish prayer meetings, several Bible study groups, Know Your Bible groups, men's and women's fellowship gatherings and coffee mornings.

Outreach activities at St Andrews include services in the 2 local aged-care facilities, holiday beach services at Christmas and Easter, a community carol service, teaching SRE in the local primary school and a recently established, growing Playgroup.

Like the other Parish centres, St Andrew's has a thriving Op-Shop, managed and staffed by volunteers. This Op-Shop brings the community on-site providing an opportunity to support local people in need with practical items and prayer.

Tea Gardens and Hawks Nest are neighbouring coastal communities on the Myall River, known for their relaxed lifestyle, natural scenery and visitor-friendly amenities. The area offers a mix of water based and bushland activities. Local services include cafes, restaurants, shops, accommodation, health and community facilities, as well as tourism and ferry services that support both residents and visitors. Together, the two towns provide a peaceful coastal setting with strong community character and a focus on recreation, nature and local services.

St John's Church in Bulahdelah and local community

St John's Church in Bulahdelah is located in Stroud Street, approximately 30 kilometres from the Parish rectory in Tea Gardens.

Sunday services are held at 10.30am with a pattern of Morning Prayer, Praise Prayer Proclamation and Holy Communion once a month. Services have both a contemporary and moderately traditional feel. St John's is an important worshipping community for the town and the surrounding district.

Parish activities linked to Bulahdelah include a fortnightly Know Your Bible group, support of the high school SRE program and an onsite Op-Shop. The former rectory at St John's is leased to tenants. The church contributes to the Parish's wider ministry of pastoral care, discipleship and local community connection.

Bulahdelah is a small service and tourist town on the Myall River and a gateway to the Myall Lakes and surrounding natural areas. It has a strong country-town character, a compact centre, essential services, and a history shaped by transport, timber and mining.

Bulahdelah has a Central School, health services and community facilities. In development terms, Bulahdelah's position on the highway corridor and as a hub for the Myall region continues to shape investment. Bulahdelah's identity is marked by affordability, natural beauty and a close-knit sense of community.

St Columba's Church in Karuah and local community

St Columba's Church in Karuah is located at 414A Tarean Road, around 18 kilometres south-west of the Tea Gardens rectory. St. Columba's has a strong family and community focus.

The welcoming congregation has a warm family friendly style of worship alternating between Holy Communion and a more informal Praise, Prayer and Proclamation service. A once-a-month Messy Church congregation gathers at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon.

Outreach activities include Little Fish Playgroup, Big Fish Kids Club, Big Fish High School Group, School SRE and a busy Op-Shop, making it one of the Parish's most visible community-facing centres. In recent years, St Columba has held several outdoor events including Christmas carol services and an Easter service.

Historically, St Columba's is also significant: the timber church was built and dedicated in 1913, later extended with a vestry in 1963, and more recently has added an outdoor stage, a modern playground, and covered deck with a new entrance into the hall.

Karuah is a quiet riverside village on the Karuah River, known for its scenic setting, timber and oyster industry, and easy access to Port Stephens. It offers a small-town way of life with good road access and is undergoing significant residential growth with new subdivisions being added regularly. This is a younger community with diverse demographics including a 13% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Karuah public school has grown from an enrolment of 79 in 2011 to 160 in 2025 with 40% of students identifying as Aboriginal.

With its historic character and waterside location, Karuah provides a peaceful residential and tourist destination focused on nature-based activities, local produce and village services. We see much outreach opportunity in this growing regional centre focussing especially on younger families.

As a Parish we are blessed with

- A depth of lay leaders supporting both peaching and service leading,
- A culture of welcoming new members and visitors,
- Over 100 volunteers across our 3 centres serving in our Sunday services, op-shops, children and youth ministry and community outreach,
- A desire to support mission work locally, nationally and internationally,
- Home Groups that provide pastoral support and Bible reflection throughout the week,
- Church communities that are passionate about engaging in the local community,
- Congregations that are growing in the Parish,
- Musicians who contribute to both modern and traditional music,
- A strong Parish Council ensuring financial stability with a strong, practical approach to budgeting,
- Church buildings that are well maintained and a modern rectory that can accommodate a family in a lovely setting.

For a further look at our activities and our financial position please check out our papers from the AGM 2026.

Moving forward as a Parish

There is complexity in balancing our evangelical Parish within the Newcastle Diocese.

Our environment is a beautiful one with plenty of nature and coastal activity to enjoy. We are blessed with faithful worshipers who engage in their local communities. Together we hope to shine the light of Christ within our daily activities.

We recognise there are challenges with the geographical size of our Parish and with coordinating three unique centres. Most importantly, there are also opportunities to grow God's kingdom within each of our communities through eager disciples with hearts to serve.

If you would like more information about our Parish, please contact;

Steve Sylvester by email stevesyl1@icloud.com .

If you are interested in the position, we would love to hear from you.

Selection Criteria for our new incumbent

We are looking for an experienced leader who has the skills and acumen to:

- Demonstrate spiritually mature and effective leadership across the three churches, providing strategic direction, stability, and a strong sense of shared mission and purpose for the Parish.
- Provide sound, Bible-based teaching that is engaging, relevant, and accessible, while further developing the vitality and depth of the Parish's worship and prayer life.
- Foster discipleship and spiritual formation throughout the Parish by encouraging people of all ages and stages of faith to grow in Christian maturity and active participation in church life, identifying and exercising their gifts.
- Provide visionary leadership in community engagement and outreach, building strong relationships with other local Christian churches and maintaining a visible presence within the local community, including at ANZAC Day and Remembrance Services.
- Demonstrate an informed and compassionate understanding of the needs of both ageing and younger members of the congregation, fostering an inclusive, supportive, and intergenerational Parish environment.
- Provide compassionate and effective pastoral care to members of the Parish through appropriately delegated support structures and personal engagement.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to stable and sustained ministry through a willingness to serve the Parish for a minimum period of five years.

We are excited about the possibility of growth as disciples and using our combined gifts to glorify God. It is our prayer that a faithful servant is raised up to lead our Parish in furthering the Kingdom of our Lord.

We invite interested candidates to apply formally in writing.

In preparing your application, include

1. An introductory letter addressing the selection criteria, describing your experience and gifting.
2. Your CV including relevant academic and ordination credentials, past experience, family details and any other personal information you wish to share.
3. A video of a preached sermon
4. Names of three confidential referees and their contact details

Send your application to; Steve Sylvester by email stevesyl1@icloud.com .