



**City of
Ipswich**

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**Tribute from Councillor Jim Madden – Council Ordinary Meeting 27
November 2025**

My Tribute is to Father Stephen Bliss, Parish Priest of the Ipswich Catholic Community, formerly known as St Marys Parish, who was recently appointed Franciscan Provincial Minister for Australia and New Zealand.

He will be leaving Ipswich later this month.

Much of what I have to say has come from an excellent article in the Catholic Leader on 12 November 2025 by Kymberlee Gomes, titled *Ipswich Parish Priest Father Stephen Bliss appointed Franciscan Provincial Minister*.

I first learnt about Father Stephen's appointment when on 10th of August he posted a video on his Facebook Page, taken in St Mary's Church, advising he had been appointed as Franciscan Provincial Minister of Australia and New Zealand.

Sometime earlier, Father started to receive phone calls from an unknown number. He assumed it was a scam number so he ignored them but then he thought, may it is a Parishioner who needs his help, so he decided to return the calls. To his shock it was the Minister General in Rome, the 121st successor to St Francis of Assisi, advising him of his appointment of Franciscan Provincial Minister of Australia and New Zealand.

Father said of his appointment as Provincial Minister "It was a shock to learn of the appointment" and "It is overwhelming in many ways to lead a group of men".

He said "It is disappointing to leave Ipswich, I have loved being here. The people have been good and kind."

Father Stephen said the Ipswich Catholic community is unique, and he will miss the people the most. He joined the Ipswich Catholic Community in 2016 and was appointed as Parish Priest in 2018.

In 2011, Fr Stephen was presented with the award for Outstanding Service to Franciscans International – an OSF.

Throughout his life he had been surrounded by a supportive community so wanting to help others came naturally to Father Stephen.

“I went to Clairvaux College at Upper Mount Gravatt before it became Clairvaux Mackillop College and I always wanted to help people,” he said.

“I had good mentors and role models in my life, and not only in my family but also teachers and sisters of St Joseph and the Christian Brothers.”

He remembered when the Franciscans would visit his school.

“I was always impressed that the friars would speak to the students and call them by their first name,” he said.

“I was so impressed by the respect that the friars showed the students, whether it be on the football field or giving us retreats.”

In Year 11, he grew more interested in the life of St Francis after reading a book about him – by chance – because it was the only one left at the library, and he had a book review assignment pending.

What impressed me about St Francis was his simplicity. He was all about living the Gospel and doing that in a simple way,” he said.

The book went on to say that could be done by showing respect, care and hospitality towards people.

“I think as a Church we have complicated Gospel living and St Francis modelled those values,” he said.

“And in my leadership, if I can encourage the brothers to be living practical lives and understanding real life situations of their parishioners, then we’re doing our job,” he said.

Father Stephen will now be moving from a pastoral ministry now to administration, which will be a big shift.

“My ministry at Ipswich has certainly taught me that there’s something about being available in a place for a shorter time and bringing the charism to life in that place and then moving on to something else,” he said.

As a religious order and as Provincial Minister, he said he would continue to strengthen communications with the local Bishops to best serve the local church.

Above all he said “Prayer was crucial. St Francis saw that every moment, every day is a prayer if we are attuned to God.”

Father Bliss assured me that when he takes up his appointment as Franciscan Provincial Minister for Australia and New Zealand, while initially he will need to move to Sydney, his plan is to move his office to Brisbane, because he is, in his own words, he is “a very keen Queenslander” and “supporter of the Maroons”.

All the best Father Stephen and I am looking forward to attending your Farewell Dinner tomorrow night and your Farewell Mass on Sunday.

Tribute to David “Lemsy” Lems by Ipswich Mayor Teresa Harding

I wish to pay tribute to a journalist whose name has become synonymous with Ipswich sport.

After more than four decades of dedicated service to our community, David “Lemsy” Lems is swapping his notepad and pen for a fishing rod. Lemsy is retiring after 41 years, a rare achievement in journalism where so few remain devoted to one community for a lifetime.

Across more than 4,000 weekend shifts, where you could find him on one of Ipswich’s many sporting fields, Lemsy has been the voice and the chronicler of Ipswich’s sporting life. From his early days as a cadet at The Queensland Times in 1984, through 37 years with that paper and later with the Ipswich Tribune, Fassifern Guardian and Moreton Border News, he has given our athletes, clubs, and supporters the recognition they deserve.

His pen and his camera have illuminated the achievements of more than 30 sports, ensuring that local triumphs were celebrated alongside national and international events.

While Lemsy reported on the Sydney Olympics, Commonwealth Games, and Queensland’s first Sheffield Shield victory, his greatest joy was always found closer to home, watching Ipswich sportspeople chase their dreams, from grassroots fields to the world stage.

He captured unforgettable moments including Western Pride’s historic 2017 National Premier League win, the Musketeers’ glory days in baseball, and countless grand finals in rugby league and hockey.

He understood that these were not just games, but milestones in the lives of our people and in the story of our city. Through changing technologies and

shifting media landscapes, Lemsy remained steadfast. He outlasted nine editors, won national recognition as Journalist of the Year, and continued to adapt so that Ipswich sport would never lose its spotlight.

His work has strengthened our reputation as one of Australia's great sporting cities. As he steps into retirement, with fishing guides and family time ahead, we acknowledge not only his professional achievements but the spirit with which he served. Lemsy has given Ipswich the gift of memory by preserving the highs and lows, the magic and the heartbreak, of generations of local athletes.

On behalf of Ipswich City Council and the people of Ipswich, we thank you Lemsy for his extraordinary contribution. His legacy will live on in the pride of our sporting community, and in the many moments of triumph he captured.

Thank you Lemsy.