



Facing the past Shaping a healthy future



MEDIA STATEMENT

July 5 2016

ROYAL COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING

The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle has welcomed the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Diocese has been working closely with NSW Police and the Royal Commission over the past three years providing a significant number of documents to assist with both police and the Commission's investigations.

The release of the case studies to be examined by the Royal Commission will be a challenging time for the Diocese and one of intense scrutiny, however it is an important part of facing the Diocese's past to help build a healthy future.

The formal apology to victims of abuse by Bishop Greg Thompson in June last year, was a critical step forward in the healing process and has given victims of sexual abuse the courage to come forward and tell their story.

The Diocese has also introduced a number of positive new measures, protocols and programs to assist both victims and parishes in dealing with the impact of sexual abuse.

One initiative was the development of Parish Recovery Team, which complements the work of the Director of Professional Standards.

This team of 12 is led by Gill Fletcher, an experienced external psychologist with both local and external facilitators trained in the recovery model, which was developed from research in similar responses to child abuse in Canada, The United States and Australia. The Recovery Team's role is to support parishes in their healing from revelations of abuse by clergy.

The Diocese has also appointed a Professional Standards Officer to support the Director of Professional Standards, Michael Elliot. Cathy Rose has 17 years experience as a police officer in the child protection unit and is already proving to be a great asset to the Professional Standards Department and the Diocese.

These new measures align with the Diocese's best practise redress system, which is recognised as leading redress system within the Anglican Church of Australia.

Significant effort has been made to improve the culture of the Diocese and this work will continue in to the future.

The following months will be a difficult time for all members of the Newcastle Diocese, some members will find the revelations of the Royal Commission hard to believe and others will be angry. Only working together will we overcome these challenges and begin to heal.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

1. The Diocese is not making any other comment at this time. The Bishop is not available for interview.
2. We would ask that in reporting on this matter you remind people that they can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, the NSW Police on 1800 333 000, and the Diocesan Director of Professional Standards on **1800 774 945**.

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