



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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15 December 2017

Pastoral Letter to the People of the Diocese of Rockhampton

My Dear People,

After sitting for almost five years, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse released its Final Report on 15 December 2017.

I welcome the release of the report and congratulate the Commissioners and their staff on the commitment and diligence they showed to the task entrusted to them by the Commonwealth Government. I also thank the survivors of sexual abuse who courageously provided their testimonies to the Royal Commission, which so greatly assisted the work of the Commission and informed their final report.

Whilst the responses of many Institutions to Child Sexual Abuse was examined by the Royal Commission, a great many of the public hearings conducted focused on the Catholic Church. The failings of the Catholic Church to keep children safe and respond justly and compassionately to those who were abused by members of the Church were laid bare. I once again offer a heartfelt apology to all who the Church failed so badly, and I commit to doing all I can to assisting them with their lives today.

As a leader in the Catholic Church, I will very carefully read the Recommendations contained in the Royal Commission's Final Report and then work, in partnership with our Church communities, to ensure the recommendations are at the heart of all we are doing to protect children from harm, ensuring that we respond with care and compassion to those who are still suffering from the abuse they suffered in the past from Church personnel.

I commit to continuing to work tirelessly to ensure that the Diocese of Rockhampton is a safer place for all people, children and adults alike.

To that end, I will work closely and collaboratively with leaders in all our Agencies; Diocesan, Catholic Education, Centacare and our pastoral ministries, to develop and implement best practice safeguarding policies and procedures; as well as reviewing the governance of the Diocese to ensure what is put in place continues to be contemporary and effective.

Much has been done in the Professional Standards and Safeguarding space over the past few years that I have served as your Bishop. The Diocese has developed and implemented a Safeguarding Policy for use across the Diocese. I have appointed a Manager of Professional Standards and Safeguarding, Mr Daniel Donnini, and a Pastoral Response Worker, Mrs Jill Yates. Our Parishes have appointed a Parish Safeguarding Representative as a local contact person, who assists with the task of ensuring that all parish activities are safe. I invite you to join

with me to continue to foster the ongoing development of our Safeguarding practices across the Diocese.

I would encourage you to read the final report of the Royal Commission which is available on the Commission's Website www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au.

Although I sorrow at the past failings of the Church which the Royal Commission has highlighted, I am heartened for the future by the positive way in which the Church through the Truth Justice and Healing Council has engaged at all levels with the Royal Commission.

Now that the Commission has concluded its work, we as a Church must build on what we have put in place over the past few years to protect the children and the vulnerable members of our society, to ensure that as Pope Francis has said, the Church is '*a safe and secure home*'.

Please pray that we have the courage, the commitment, the vision and the wisdom to carry out this sacred task.

Yours in Christ



Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton