



Anglican Parish of Hamilton

Diocese of Newcastle

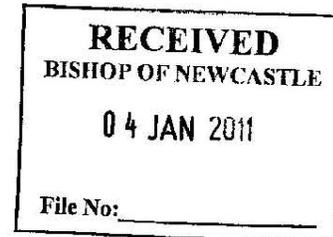
St Peter's Church, PO Box 467, Hamilton 2303

Telephone **REDACTED**

ABN 12059639293

26 December 2010

The Rt Rev Dr Brian Farran
PO Box 817
Newcastle NSW 2300



Confidential

Lord Bishop

We, the Parish Council of Hamilton, have decided to write to you regarding the matter of the Late Father Peter Rushton that has recently been highlighted in the Newcastle Herald. While we are aware that the press is not within your control, we are deeply concerned about the way in which this matter has been handled.

With such grave allegations, and presuming that you had some warning of the impending publication, it seems incomprehensible that Parish Councils, Rectors and Parishioners of the past Parishes where Father Peter served were not given more than twenty four hours notice before it was splashed across the front pages of the Herald. Further, comprehensive investigation surely should have involved consultation with these Parishes, before any response was made by the Diocese to the media.

As it was, we have all been left shocked, numb and hurt. We have had numerous enquiries from Parishioners and have not been able to provide any answers.

While we understand that many details are sensitive, not knowing anything definite except that stated by the Herald has been, to say the least, very limiting to our ability to consider and reflect on the allegations made against Father Peter.

As with any allegations, the right of the accused to the presumption of innocence should be paramount, although the rights and welfare of the alleged complainants and victims must also be stressed. This is no doubt difficult to balance, but not, we would have thought, impossible, and we are sure that this is what the Diocese strives for. The institution of the Church, and the integrity of its processes for dealing with abuse allegations are very worthy of protection, but should not seem to be our chief concern.

Rather, the people involved in any such allegation - not limited to the apparent victims and perpetrators - should be our first thought, in a response which makes it clear that while we condemn the alleged sin and crime, and support appropriate legal and administrative action, we also support all those affected and withhold judgement on anyone until after full investigation.

The press can, of course, always choose to put another slant on matters, and only report selectively on any Diocesan response to such news stories, but at least parishes can be given your original response before they see what the papers print. Being forewarned, if time does not permit consultation, would be better than first being aware of such matters in the Herald.

We would be grateful if your office could keep us informed of the progress and outcome of all investigations into this matter, as it develops, to the extent consistent with the interests of other parties involved.

Yours sincerely,



John Hann

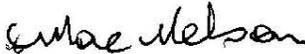


Susan Jones

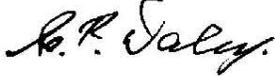


Jeff Horn

Mae Nelson



Gloria Daley



Kathy Qvist

