

Cathedral wrangle

Clergyman concedes concerns in diocese

By JOANNE McCARTHY

EMBATTLED Newcastle Anglican Bishop Brian Farran has ended a bishops' conference in the city this week by supporting the rights of aggrieved parishioners preparing a formal complaint against him.

In a statement issued last night during the closing dinner of the conference, Bishop Farran acknowledged the concerns of parishioners about his leadership of the diocese.

The statement follows confirmation in the *Newcastle Herald* yesterday that a group of prominent Newcastle Anglicans met the head of the Anglican church in Australia, Archbishop Phillip Aspinall, last Sunday to discuss their concerns.

The preparation of their formal complaint to the church's episcopal standards commission about the bishop's handling of a number of matters in the past two years was raised at that meeting.

The complaint includes controversial professional standards board hearings in December involving four priests that will result in the diocese defending its handling of the matters in the NSW Supreme Court in May.

Bishop Farran said he "welcomed" the transparency the complaint process offered.

"Whilst I am unsure of the exact basis for the complaints



CHALLENGES: From left, Bishops Kay Goldsworthy, Brian Farran and Garry Weatherill at the dinner to mark the end of the three-day National Bishops' Conference in Newcastle last night. — Picture by Simone De Peak

ANGLICAN bishops said the church needed to state their "case for faith" in the face of criticism when the three-day National Bishops' Conference ended in Newcastle last night. Conference co-ordinators Bishop Garry Weatherill and

You've got to have faith: bishops

Bishop Kay Goldsworthy said it was the informal sessions where bishops raised and discussed controversial issues facing the church, including the way

the Bible was interpreted to deal with several features of modern society such as same-sex marriages.

The bishops also spoke about a year plagued by

fires, floods and cyclones, and shared experiences of how the church had helped their communities not only make sense of the disasters in a spiritual sense but provide practical aid.

Naomi Davidson

that are being levelled at me, it is within the rights of those who feel aggrieved to make a complaint against me to the episcopal standards commission," he said.

The complaint also includes the handling of issues at the cathedral parish, which an internal diocese report in February found had

experienced a "very difficult" 18 months.

Bishop Farran's announcement in the cathedral last Sunday that a warden, Simon Adam, would be barred from holding any office in the parish for three years after a breakdown in his relationship with Dean of Newcastle James Rigney led to heated

debate at the parish's annual general meeting on Monday.

Mr Adam described the bishop's action as a case of "shooting the messenger".

Last night Bishop Farran said he was "very aware of the concerns of some members of the cathedral community and I wish to assure everyone involved that I take these

concerns seriously".

"I was, and still am, very aware of the emotion surrounding this issue and sensitively communicated these findings to the cathedral congregations."

He thanked his fellow bishops and colleagues who had been "overwhelming in their support for me this week".



SAXON BIRD

Surf title officials warned

THE Gold Coast's top cop warned organisers of an Australian surf lifesaving titles event they would be accountable if a competitor died in the dangerous surf, an inquest has heard.

Superintendent Jim Keogh told the Brisbane Coroners Court yesterday that he made the comments to officials just 1½ hours before NSW lifesaver Saxon Bird died.

Bird, 19, died after a stray surf ski hit him in the head in rough seas during the Australian Surf Lifesaving Championships on the Gold Coast on Friday, March 19 last year.

Mr Keogh said he told officials three times that they could face a coronial inquest if their risk-management decisions — including whether to move the event — weren't carefully considered.

He told them to be aware any decisions they made "would have to endure scrutiny".

"I felt it important to bring to their notice that they would be brought to account for any decisions or actions they made pursuant to the continuance of this event," he said.

Mr Keogh said he was worried organisers could have been taking concerns about the power of the rough surf too lightly. The inquest continues.

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Bali victim slams ALP view of bill

By IAN KIRKWOOD

BALI bombing survivor Paul Anicich says Newcastle MP Sharon Grierson has "abandoned her own people" by speaking against a bill to help victims of overseas terrorism.

The private member's bill was introduced in November 2009 by Opposition Leader Tony Abbott after speaking with Mr Anicich and other Hunter victims of the Bali bombings.

Labor has opposed the bill in debate, with a vote expected on Thursday, March 24. Ms Grierson told Parliament on Monday she understood "the importance of this debate for the people of Newcastle" but said the government still



SUPPORT: Paul Anicich with Tony Abbott in 2006.

could not support the bill.

Despite "common concern" on both sides of the house for the issues involved, she said Mr Abbott would do "little to nothing" to help any victims.

Paterson MP Bob Baldwin said the government had

done nothing in the 15 months since the bill was introduced.

"Whether it is providing support to those who were orphaned, Isaac and Ben Zwolinski, when their mother and father, Fiona and Colin, were killed or whether it is providing support to Bruce Williamson, who was affected, or indeed his children, Adam, Duncan and Megan — they need our support," Mr Baldwin said.

Mr Anicich said he was angry with Ms Grierson and the government.

"If she had reservations about this bill she had 15 months to get in touch with any of us about it and I don't believe she has," Mr Anicich said.

Arrests over pizza delivery attack

By TIM CONNELL

AN 18-year-old man and three youths will appear in Maitland Local Court today charged with violently robbing two pizza delivery workers at Woodberry.

The man and three 17-year-old males were arrested yesterday and taken to Maitland police station over an alleged

robbery that took place on Tuesday night.

Two male employees of a Thornton pizza shop, 21 and 13, were delivering to an address in Eagle Close about 9.30pm when three males allegedly appeared from a nearby lane.

The older worker left the vehicle and was allegedly punched in the face and or-

dered to hand over pizzas and money. A male allegedly punched the car's passenger-side window and demanded money from the 13-year-old boy. He handed over a small amount of cash.

The trio allegedly fled down a lane to a white Toyota Hiace, allegedly driven by the fourth member.

They were refused bail.