



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse of Children

MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DIOCESE OF WOLLONGONG REGARDING THE ROYAL COMMISSION

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As you are aware, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been conducting public and private hearings throughout Australia since early last year. The Diocese of Wollongong has been called to appear before the Commission, commencing Tuesday, 24 June 2014, and continuing until Friday, 4 July 2014. The hearing will be held at Governor Macquarie Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney.

In a media release dated 4 June 2014, the Royal Commission said:

“It is anticipated that the hearing will look at the relationship between the Diocesan Bishop (and, in his absence, the Diocesan Administrator) and the Holy See (Vatican) in matters concerning preventative and disciplinary action taken in response to allegations of child sexual abuse against John Gerard Nestor.

“The scope and purpose of the public hearing is to inquire into:

- 1. The response of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong to allegations of child sexual abuse, and related criminal proceedings, against John Gerard Nestor.*
- 2. Any other related matters.”*

As we move into this important time for the Diocese, I renew my heartfelt apology to victims of sexual abuse by Catholic Church personnel. I also apologise to their families and all who have shared their suffering. Victims and their families must receive respect, justice and compassion. I am conscious that the pain of those who have suffered abuse and of their families may be heightened as the Royal Commission moves into this next phase.

I have been asked to appear before the Royal Commission in person, together with others who have held or hold a role relevant to the matter under consideration. It is my intention and that of others called on behalf of the Diocese, to continue to fully support the work of the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission will continue to scrutinise the child protection practices of institutions and, in time, will develop recommendations that will result in greater protection for children throughout Australia. The leadership of the Diocese is committed to continue to be proactive in implementing any safeguarding practices that will ensure the protection of children.

Any person with a complaint of mistreatment or abuse is strongly urged to come forward to the appropriate authority. If the complaint is of a criminal nature, please notify the police through the Police Assistance Line on 131 444. You are also encouraged to contact the Royal Commission Support Line on 1800 099 340. If you need assistance with this, or if the matter is not of a criminal nature, you can contact the Catholic Church's Towards Healing Helpline on 1300 369 977 or contact the Diocese on 1800 225 922.

I am mindful that, even if not directly affected, parishioners, students, parents, clergy, seminarians, religious, staff and volunteers, may be disturbed by what is reported during the public hearings. Should you feel that pastoral support or counselling would be of assistance to you, please contact the Diocese on 1800 225 922 and the appropriate support can be arranged.

I affirm again the commitment of the Diocese to work with the Royal Commission and I invite all people of the Diocese to join me in prayer that our combined efforts may lead to the greater protection of children and to justice and healing for victims of sexual abuse.

A handwritten signature in black ink, starting with a cross and the name 'Peter Ingham' in a cursive script.

Bishop Peter W Ingham DD
BISHOP OF WOLLONGONG

Wollongong
4 June 2014