

Dear Father / Pastoral Minister

The following Media Release has been made available to all regional newspapers throughout the Diocese today. Should you be contacted by a media representative, would you kindly refer the call to Mr Gerard Delaney, Diocesan Media Officer, on the telephone numbers indicated below.

Father John Grace

8/8/2002

Bishop Heenan Convenes Meetings on Sexual Abuse

Catholic Bishop of Rockhampton, Brian Heenan, has convened a series of gatherings to consider the issue of sexual abuse in the Church which has been revealed in recent years.

The gatherings will be held in Rockhampton (Aug 13), Bundaberg (Aug 19), Longreach (Sept 1), Mackay (Sept 9) and Emerald (Sept 17).

According to Bishop Heenan, the gatherings will be an opportunity for people to come together to gain a fuller understanding of the nature of the problem, consider the most suitable responses on a journey towards healing and reconciliation, as well as include a time of sharing for participants who wish to do so.

“Sexual abuse is an issue which must be faced with honesty and humility. Only then can we bring the healing and the hope of a safe and secure future for the generations to come.

“I can only attempt to appreciate the pain, suffering and trauma experienced by those who have been subjected to the violation of sexual abuse. The families and friends of victims are also confused and angered by the breach of trust from those they had formerly respected, and communities where these acts have occurred are hurt and oftentimes bewildered, wondering how they can remain active in their faith practice,” Bishop Heenan said.

A lay person will facilitate the meetings. People with expertise in the nature of sexual abuse, in counselling, and with knowledge of the Church’s response to date through the “Towards Healing” protocol, will also contribute to the discussion.

For further information please contact Gerard Delaney on 49313603 or 0413274176