

Media Release from the
Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn



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New Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding in the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Archbishop Christopher Prowse, the Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, today announced the establishment of a new Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding (IPSS) within the Archdiocese.

The Archbishop said, "I have instigated and aim to fully implement a governance structure that brings our survivors of sex abuse from the margins into the centre of our pastoral response."

The Archbishop is responding to the recent weeks' focus on the Catholic Church as part of the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse, by announcing this new Institute.

Archbishop Prowse said, "This is a most challenging time for us all, especially over recent weeks. The Royal Commission has uncovered afresh the pain and deep wounds of survivors and their families and friends."

"The real heroes arising from this darkness are the survivors themselves," he said.

"Some survivors have spoken most positively of Church officials once the abuse was reported." However, Archbishop Prowse said, "Too many, regrettably, have spoken of being confronted by a brutal and defensive Church governance structure that refused to take responsibility."

"The aim is to support survivors with the reassurance that all our communities are safe, our children and vulnerable people are truly cared for, and the spiritual dimension of all we do is not compromised by unethical and criminal behaviour," the Archbishop said today.

Ms Jane Cronan will manage the Institute alongside the director, Mr Matt Casey. If anyone wishes to discuss matters pertaining to professional standards in the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, staff at the new **Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding** would be happy to assist you.

Media Enquiries

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A new approach to safeguarding

The newly formed Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding hopes to be a national leader in its field, as Matthew Biddle explains...

THE Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is taking a "revolutionary" approach to the way it manages the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable people, according to manager of the newly-formed Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding (IPSS) Jane Cronan.

The IPSS commenced its work in October 2015, and aims to ensure that the Archdiocese delivers a consistent, comprehensive and proactive approach to safeguarding across all its parishes and agencies.

Previously, individual agencies and organisations within the Archdiocese have managed their own safeguarding policies and procedures. Similar arrangements are in place in most other Australian dioceses.

"What Archbishop Christopher wants now is an Archdiocesan response to child protection and safeguarding, which is fairly revolutionary in Australia," Mrs Cronan said. "This is an incredibly courageous decision.

"We're hoping to lead Australia in these responses across all dioceses, because I think eventually every diocese is going to need something like this Institute.

"What we're trying to do is bring consistency. We want to make sure that the policies, investigations and responses look similar in form, no matter what corner of the Archdiocese you're in."

Working closely with Mrs Cronan will be the IPSS' director, and former Archdiocesan professional standards officer, Matt Casey.

Mr Casey said the Institute would handle everything related to child protection and safeguarding in the Archdiocese, including policy, training and formation, healing of victims, compliance, and investigations.

"We're the people who will respond when somebody might bring a complaint, be it historical or current, about somebody associated with the Church," he said.

"We will also be developing training and formation for every part of the Archdiocese, including the Archbishop's Office of Evangelisation, all the parishes, Catholic Education, CatholicCare,



From left to right, Helena Kesina, Jane Cronan, Matt Casey and Meg Lillcrop, who together form the Archdiocese's Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding.
PHOTO: LOUI SESELIJA

and Marymead."

The pair have extensive backgrounds working in the area of child protection. Mr Casey, who was a NSW detective for many years, first investigated a case of child abuse more than 40 years ago.

Mrs Cronan's background is in law and education, having worked as an assistant Attorney-General and prosecutor for child sexual abuse in the USA and later as a teacher in the Archdiocese.

Despite the challenges involved in working in child protection, both Mr Casey and Mrs Cronan agree that the work is also highly rewarding.

"Working with the victims is both the hardest and the best thing," Mr Casey said.

"You've got to look at some stuff that challenges you, and you have to keep your faith strong because you see some things that are absolutely heart-rendering.

"But I thank God for the opportunity for us to do this work. Being able to go out and do what you can to help someone is priceless."

For Mrs Cronan, it's the response from the victims that keeps her motivated each day.

"The hardest thing is the shame that you feel when you meet a victim and the harm that's been caused, especially if it's at the hands of the Church," she said.

"But the best thing about this job is the offering of support and healing - listening to them, finding out what they need, and how we can respond to them."

One of the major goals of the IPSS is to provide a safeguarding environment, by developing an "awareness of our theological mandate to respond to vulnerable people and keep them safe", Mrs Cronan said.

"Hopefully by building and educating about a safeguarding

environment, people will know what to look for... and that is what we want," she said.

"Often people will say 'I didn't think that felt right' or 'I didn't think that should be happening', and if people are feeling that way, they're thinking and responding.

"That's how the ordinary person helps in safeguarding, they take the responsibility they have for their own children and move that on to all children in the parish. If they see something that doesn't seem right, they talk about it and they bring it to attention. They have as much light as we do to shine in the dark corners."

As part of the formation process, the IPSS will visit parishes and schools in the near future to speak about the components of a safeguarding environment, because, as Mr Casey points out, protection of vulnerable people is everyone's responsibility.

"It's not sufficient for people within the Church to stand back and say it's all these dreadful priests and bishops' fault," he said.

"The responsibility rests not just with the Church leaders, for what has happened and for what needs to happen. The responsibility rests with everyone."

While he acknowledges there will always be a need for improvement, Mr Casey said attitudes towards child protection have come a long way since his first case in the 1970s.

"When I first started, judges had to give a warning to juries that sexual assault complainants and children were unreliable witnesses," he explained. "I can still remember even in the late '80s, talking to colleagues in the police force... people arguing that child abuse was not real crime. Even in those days there was no recognition of the long-term harm and damage that is done by sexual abuse.

"The big change has been that we've recognised that, and more importantly, we've recognised that not all people who abuse children are paedophiles.

"But when you're dealing with paedophiles, they're not going to change, they can't change, so your response has to be far more decisive and long-term. We've now developed a fairly comprehensive understanding about it, but that simply wasn't the case many years ago when I first started.

"Now people are far more conscious and the attitudes towards sexual abuse and the culture that is building around it is far more protective of children and vulnerable people."

Although he believes the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been "painful", Mr Casey said future generations would view it retrospectively as a defining moment in the history of Australian Catholicism.

"As a Church we're going to be able to look back on this and say it has been a wonderful opportunity," he said. "The Royal Commission has really been, and will prove to be, an absolute gift because it's focused us as a Church, as a faith community across the country, on dark corners that perhaps we didn't want to look at."

Child sexual abuse and the Catholic Church in Australia

Healing medicine: Collective responsibility



ARCHBISHOP'S MESSAGE
ARCHBISHOP
CHRISTOPHER PROWSE

DEAR people of God in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is over its halfway mark. By 2017, after five years, it would have completed possibly 50 public hearings. It is estimated that about one third of these hearings would have examined Catholic schools, dioceses, parishes and other Catholic organisations.

I am grateful for the work of the Royal Commission. It has shone a bright light of truthful investigation into a shameful and disgraceful area of our shared Church life. Over a long period of perhaps 60-70 years, we are now aware and condemn the acts of some Church personnel against too many of society's most vulnerable children. Their actions sicken us. Their betrayal of the most basic of Gospel tenets is absolutely appalling. Humbly, once again, we ask for the forgiveness of the survivors, families and friends.

Indeed, the real heroes arising from this darkness are the survivors themselves. Over the years, sitting down and listening to many sad testimonies has been a most challenging experience. What has been revealed, however, is not simply their direct abuse by cowardly Church personnel. They have courageously spoken about the indirect re-traumatisation by the wider Church over the years. Some survivors have spoken most positively of Church officials once the abuse had been reported. Too many, regrettably, have spoken of being confronted by a brutal and defensive Church governance structure that refused to take responsibility. Some survivors have felt part of the problem by remote Church leaders, who have delegated responses to well resourced legal teams. Some survivors bemoan the Church's poorly



The new IPSS team - from left to right, Helena Kesina, Meg Lillicrap, Jane Cronan and Matt Casey.

PHOTO: LOUI SESELJA

managed follow-up that lacked any moral leadership. Rather than being subjects of Church healing, too many victims have spoken of feeling like objects of a powerful and closed Church culture that is prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to protect its clergy and reputation.

However confronting it is for all of us to hear such comments, we thank these survivors for their truth-speaking and honesty. We believe what they are telling us. It is like an 'examination of conscience' for us all. It reveals an appalling recording of collective irresponsibility of the Church at various times and levels.

We need to reflect carefully and respond practically in the times ahead on the ethical/moral and theological implications for us of these distressing testimonies. All of us are involved in this. There is a kind of collective responsibility to help heal what in the past has been some sort of diseased social arrangements in regard to child sex abuse by Church personnel. Among so many other aspects, according to the above testimonies, it seems to have marginalised almost automatically many victims to the periphery of our pastoral care. This needs our most urgent and immediate attention and action.

In regard to the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, I wish to thank those responsible over many years for the enormous work done in the area of professional standards. In more recent times, I have instigated and wish to fully implement a governance structure that brings our survivors of sex abuse from the margins into the centre of our pastoral response. It is a whole of Archdiocese strategy. It will ensure we offer what the survivors are asking for: the reassurance that all our communities are safe, our children and vulnerable people are truly cared for, and that the spiritual dimension of all we do is not compromised by unethical and criminal behaviour.

I have called this new structure our Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding. It is still a work in progress. In this edition of the *Catholic Voice*, you will read further details about this pastoral initiative. You may wish to contact my office (archbishop@cg.org.au), Matt Casey (matt.casey@cg.org.au) and Jane Cronan (jane.cronan@cg.org.au) with your feedback. I hope each one of us has learnt lessons from the Royal Commission so far, and are open to its future recommendations. Also, we are learning from other Australian and overseas protocols. My

hope is that this new Institute will certainly respond to the needs of victims, their support and healing. It is liaising very closely with the police and governmental bodies set up to protect children. It will also ensure that all compliance issues regarding our personnel who work with children and vulnerable people are checked and verified. Also, and more broadly, the Institute will continue to highlight the faith dimension of victim support, as well as child protection, and lead the Archdiocese in the training and development of all of us in child safeguarding.

My prayer and determination, as this Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding establishes itself fully, is that it will be a genuine healing symbol with credibility and best practice of our taking up collective responsibility. The brutal facts of child sex abuse within our Church community over the years cannot be denied. It is an abhorrent and shameful social sickness, which ought find no place in our midst. We rely on the healing medicine found only in our union with Jesus, our Saviour and merciful Lord, to carry out what is urgently required.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse
Catholic Archbishop of
Canberra and Goulburn



Catholic Church establishes new body to handle abuse complaints in Canberra, Goulburn

Updated Wed 9 Mar 2016, 6:46pm

The Catholic Church has established a new body to handle sexual abuse complaints in the ACT region.

Archbishop Christopher Prowse from the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese has launched the Institute for Professional Standards and Safeguarding.

Archbishop Prowse said the move was in response to the recent focus on the church's responses to child sexual abuse through the royal commission.

"Too many [survivors], regrettably, have spoken of being confronted by a brutal and defensive church governance structure that refused to take responsibility," Archbishop Prowse said.

"The aim is to support survivors with the reassurance that all our communities are safe, our children and vulnerable people are truly cared for, and the spiritual dimension of all we do is not compromised by unethical and criminal behaviour."

Archbishop Prowse said the institute would be headed by a lawyer and former senior police officer.

"The manager [Jane Cronan] is a wonderful woman with a legal background, particularly in this area," he said.

"The director [Matt Casey] is a former senior detective."

Archbishop Prowse said he accepted that many victims would see the move as coming too late, but hoped the church could be part of a "transparent" solution working closely with police.

"Victims can contact us directly... so that victims can have direct access to us, rather than have to go through the bureaucracy or lawyers," he said.

"We're really trying to make it more victim-friendly.

"We're trying to streamline our structure so the victims themselves can be listened to and have their needs attended to in an immediate way."

Huge step forward, child welfare campaigner says

Child welfare campaigner Damian De Marco said establishing the institute was "a huge step forward" from the church.

"At the moment everyone is so aware of it, the risk is low," he said.

"But if those key architectural problems aren't addressed then the problem isn't necessarily going away. It could come back again."

Mr De Marco said while victims could also go straight to police for criminal matters, the institute provided an opportunity for the church to prevent abuse before it occurred.

"The problem with abuse and neglect is that there are so many grey areas, which wouldn't necessarily be classified as a criminal offence," he said.

"The police deal with criminal offences.

"And when it comes to paedophilia there are more often than not indications that something is wrong well before a crime is committed, and that's where something like the institute can step in.



PHOTO: Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn Christopher Prowse said the new institute would be run by a former lawyer and police officer. (ABC News: Dylan Anderson)

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PHOTO: Campaigner Damian De Marco said the institute provided the opportunity for the church to prevent abuse before it occurred. (ABC News: Tom Lowrey)

"They can identify those problems and nip them in the bud before damage is done to children."

Topics: catholic, child-abuse, sexual-offences, canberra-2600, act, goulburn-2580, bega-2550, nsw

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