

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish

Serving the communities of Wauchope, Long Flat, Beechwood and Pappinbarra.

Catholic Presbytery
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18 December, 2001

Most Rev Francis Carroll DD
Archbishop of Canberra & Goulburn
President of the Australian Bishop's Conference
Conference Secretariate
GPO Box 368
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Archbishop,

I am writing to voice my grave concerns about recent reports from Vatican City (see attached) in regards to new sex abuse norms.

As you may or may not be aware, I have followed closely the Churches reaction to matters of abuse since the Wood Royal Commission in 1996. What has concerned me the most is the damage that abuse cases have caused and can cause the Church and the wonderful office of priesthood.

With this in mind I voice the following concerns:-

- ❖ My first concern is that centralising the procedures takes away control that local Bishops may have in relation to a sex abuse case. If procedures are now centralised where does that leave such documents as 'Towards Healing' and 'Integrity in Ministry' that the Australian Bishops have published? I am also wondering if these new norms are now in force and if they are then when are we to be briefed about and when are we to receive copies of these new Vatican norms & procedures?
- ❖ The second concern I have is with the fact that the Vatican has used the term 'probable'. The new norms require local Bishop's to report 'probable' cases of clerical sexual abuse against minors to the Vatican's doctrinal congregation. What happens if an erroneous allegation is made against a priest? If an allegation is made, what happened to obtaining proof of guilt before being reported or charged? Is it a case that because I love children I'm 'probably' a child abuser and therefore must be reported to Rome? Or is it something else?
- ❖ My third concern is that the Australian Bishops have worked very hard to be accountable, open and transparent in their dealings with these cases. They even won praise from the

Royal Commissioner in his final findings for the work they had done. Why is Rome now covering up by taking these issues back under 'pontifical secrets'?

Archbishop, many a good priest has been affected by the sins of those few who have abused their priestly office. It is my view that these moves by Rome will do nothing to restore people's confidence in the way the Church deals with these matters. Nor will it restore the confidence and esteem of those good priests who have had to endure the adverse publicity and shame that a few have brought upon us.

I look forward to hearing your response.

God Bless

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul." The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below.

Fr. Paul Gooley
Parish Priest, Wauchope.