

Subject: Archbishop's Statement**Date:** Tue, 20 Oct 1998 10:14:34 +1000**From:** msullivan <m.sullivan@bne.catholic.edu.au>**Organization:** BCEC**To:** users@bne.catholic.edu.au

The following is the statement released by Archbishop Bathersby concerning Fr. Ron McKeirnan

Miss Terry Creagh

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MEDIA STATEMENT

by Archbishop John Bathersby concerning
Father Ron McKeirnan

Archbishop John Bathersby said he felt great sorrow for the victims of sexual abuse and offered his apology to them and their families on behalf of the Church.

The Archbishop made the comments following the court appearance today of a priest of the Brisbane Archdiocese, Father Ron McKeirnan, who pleaded guilty to sexual offences against youths during the sixties and seventies.

Father McKeirnan had stood down from his position as Coordinator of Faith Education Services, Brisbane Catholic Education, on 16 August 1996 to allow a number of complaints against him to be investigated.

Archbishop Bathersby said that in the past the Church had little awareness, and certainly no clear understanding of sexual offences against children and minors. As a result a number of young people were badly hurt by some who ministered to them on behalf of the Church. 

He said the Church has now adopted a national approach to this problem and measures have been put in place in the recruitment, training, and pastoral care of its ministers that should make sexual abuse by ministers a thing of the past.

"The needs of the victim are a priority in our national approach", he said.

"The Church wants an open environment where the victims of abuse are encouraged to talk openly, and begin the long journey to complete healing with the help of professional counsellors, family and friends.

"It is very important that any sexual abuse that has happened in the Church should be openly and honestly addressed because of the destruction it causes to people, and because it betrays Christ whose Gospel the Church preaches."

He said the Towards Healing program, after five years of development, began operating nationally in Australia in 1997. Its essential features are its independence from the Church, its confidentiality, and the assessment of the complaint by professional people experienced in such matters.

The Church is also discussing a document that defines ethical standards and the code of conduct expected of clergy and religious in pastoral situations. As well it has established a treatment program, not only or even primarily for offenders, but also for any clergy or religious who may have psychosexual problems.

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