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News

## **Bishop defends actions**

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Diocese happy with my performance: Farran answers critics

THE Anglican Bishop of Newcastle, **Brian Farran**, has defended himself against a range of critics who have lodged official complaints against him under church Canon Law.

Speaking to the Newcastle Herald at an Anglican Women's Conference function at St Peter's, East Maitland, yesterday, Bishop Farran acknowledged unrest at Christ Church Cathedral but said the broad membership of the wider Newcastle Diocese was happy with his performance as Bishop.

"I believe I have administered the diocese correctly," Bishop Farran said.

He said a review by Sydney University academic Professor Patrick Parkinson supported his actions.

Professor Parkinson, whose books include *Child Sexual Abuse and the Churches* and *Principles of Equity*, said his review was done in about August last year.

"That review involved examining the file in both matters and giving advice on the adequacy of the process," Professor Parkinson said.

As the Herald has reported in recent months, the church began Canon Law proceedings against the former dean of Newcastle, Reverend Graeme Lawrence, and another priest, Reverend Graeme Sturt.

The two have taken Bishop Farran and the diocese to the Supreme Court, seeking to stop the church from proceedings they say have been conducted with "oppression and unfairness".

One cathedral congregation member who lodged an official complaint said yesterday that he and others believed Bishop Farran was on an "anti-gay witch-hunt".

Bishop Farran disputed this, saying he had known Reverend Lawrence for many years and the controversy surrounding him was "one of the most painful experiences of my life".

Bishop Farran also used Canon Law to defrock a Terrigal priest, John Gumbley, over sexual liaisons he had with various women, including one from his church.

Bishop Farran said he could not comment on matters before the court but in general terms, priests owed a duty of care to their congregations.

While most of the focus on sexual abuse and priests had been on the Catholic Church, Bishop Farran said the Anglican Church had its share of problems and had begun taking action to rectify things.

At least nine church members have lodged complaints with the church's General Synod in Sydney for hearing by its Episcopal Standards Commission.

But Bishop Farran said the commission had not formally announced it would investigate the complaints.

In a recent letter to ministers in his diocese, Bishop Farran said none of his opponents had shown "the courtesy to tell me what the complaints are" or to give him a copy of what was alleged against him.

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