

Response from Bishop Bill Wright on the Royal Commission

Wednesday 02/03/2016



'This week Cardinal Pell has provided evidence to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from Rome. This evidence has helped to complete the disturbing picture of how badly the church performed when dealing with reports of child sexual abuse at the time.

I don't intend to provide running commentary on Cardinal Pell's evidence, which is ongoing. Ultimately it is the Royal Commission's role to hear and assess that evidence.

Anyone who is a survivor of abuse or has lived their life in the Catholic Church will be finding it difficult to hear the manifold failings of the church to protect children, and this is especially true for those within our local community with the sad history of abuse in our region. Zimmerman Services, our Healing and Support Team, was established to assist those affected by abuse. This has included supporting survivors to provide evidence in private sessions to the Royal Commission. I invite anyone needing support at this time to make contact with Zimmerman Services on (02) 4979 1390.

The evidence before the Royal Commission makes clear the need for structured, thorough and independent oversight for all organisations who provide services to children. It also shows the need for a consistent response to those who have suffered abuse. I express my strongest support for the establishment of national redress scheme and uniform child protection standards as a way forward for the community.

The Catholic and Anglican Bishops of NSW have recently called on the State Government to extend the NSW Ombudsman's oversight of all church and community group activities involving children. I encourage the local Hunter community to join us in advocating this change by talking to their local member.

As Bishop of the Diocese, I remain committed to protecting children and working with survivors to support them on their individual journeys toward healing.'

- Bishop Bill Wright
Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

For all diocesan media enquiries call the Communications Manager, Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle on 0419 263 901.