

Farrell hearing, reform and more

This week we'll hear the final evidence in case study 44 about former priest, John Farrell and the response of the dioceses of Armidale and Parramatta to allegations of abuse.

Like all of the hearings it's been extraordinarily difficult for survivor witnesses and their families and for communities affected by abuse.

After three and a half years, this is the last public hearing that will focus exclusively on the Catholic Church, with the exception of the final hearing in February next year about the Church's response to the issues emerging from the Royal Commission's hearings and research and policy work.

It's up to the Royal Commission now to try and come to some sort of conclusion in the months ahead for final report in December next year and the Council will continue to provide whatever support is needed in order to do that.

Since the Royal Commission's work began in early 2013, Church leaders and their agencies have put in place many changes – policy, structural and governance – to standards that relate to children, young people and otherwise vulnerable people.

Some changes tweak existing arrangements, others have heralded a complete overhaul of the Church Authority's approach.

And optimistic as I may have seemed about the changes, announcing good intentions is one thing, actually making sure those changes translate into a safer, better place for children and young people is another.

It will take time and commitment to ensure its not just business as usual once the Royal Commission's spotlight is extinguished.

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