

MEDIA RELEASE

The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle announces new child protection advisory council



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The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has officially announced a new independent child protection council which will provide local Bishop, Bill Wright, with advice on protecting children and vulnerable adults.

In a statement released yesterday the Diocese says the nine-member council will help rebuild a sense of trust within the community about Maitland-Newcastle Diocese's commitment to protect children and vulnerable adults.

Bishop Wright said the Diocese 'has a sad history which sees us now at the forefront of safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults', '...we aim to continually push forward with any activities which minimise the risk for people suffering in the future,' he said.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the establishment of the Council indicates the willingness across much of the Church leadership in Australia to now look to lay experts to help address the many issues around the abuse of children and others.

'This Council is yet another sign that the Catholic Church is prepared to take new, innovative approaches to ensuring children and vulnerable adults are as safe as possible in our parishes, schools and welfare organisations,' he said.

The official launch of the Council comes just months after the Church announced the establishment of a new, independent agency which will set, audit and report on the compliance of dioceses and religious orders with child safe and vulnerable adult protection standards.

The new body, Catholic Professional Standards, will provide for the first time, a transparent and rigorous process by which the community can determine if a diocese or religious order is fully compliant with both statutory child protection requirements and also standards designed specifically for Catholic bodies such as seminaries and parishes.

It is a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee with its own governance structure and board to be made up predominantly of lay professionals.

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.