

24 February 2017

Dear Brothers and all in our Lasallian Mission,

The final public hearing into Catholic Diocese and Religious Orders by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* in Australia has now concluded. It has been a confronting and challenging experience for all in our Lasallian Mission. And it has been an experience, which I know has caused distress and disappointment.

During the hearing data released demonstrated the devastating extent of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Australia. The numbers released in relation to the De La Salle Brothers painted a truly distressing and confronting picture of historic abuse that is a part of our legacy.

I never thought I would see the day when the De La Salle Brothers would be amongst such a list tabling the number of alleged perpetrators and the shocking scale of child abuse allegations. Equally I never countenanced that our Institute in the District would have one of the worst records in respect of an individual location. Yet that is the sad but inevitable truth of what has been revealed.

There are no words to express how distressing it is to consider that these numbers represent a vast human tragedy and that some of our own, Brothers and lay people, have been responsible for such criminal abuse.

It is a matter of enduring regret and profound sorrow that children were so betrayed by those charged with their care.

We recognise that the effects of the sexual and physical abuse of children can often be lifelong and cause enormous pain and suffering for the abused, their families and loved ones.

For this we are unreserved in our apology.

It is also hard to accept the hurt and pain that the betrayal of our mission by those within our ranks, has caused to decent and committed Lasallians and all who work in our mission.

Our mission to help some of the most vulnerable young people in our community is an ideal that represents the highest level of humanity and compassion. And yet this aim that countless thousands have taken to heart, lived and practised has been forever tarnished by the dark legacy of abuse resulting from the criminal actions of some of our own.

Lasallians too have been betrayed and I acknowledge this with great sorrow.

The searing examination of Catholic institutions by the Royal Commission and our own acceptance of this dark chapter of abuse within our ranks has been distressing but necessary.

“for nothing is impossible to God.” (Luke 1: 37)

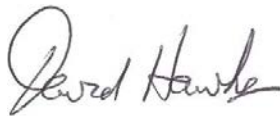
But it serves to remind us that truth, justice and healing are paramount if we are to move forward.

The words of Pope Francis delivered on the feast of the Holy Innocents are a timely reminder:

“The Church also weeps bitterly over this sin of her sons and she asks forgiveness. Today, as we commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents, I would like us to renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect in every way the lives of our children, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, let us adhere, clearly and faithfully, to “zero tolerance”

We hope and pray that such occurrences will never happen again as we continue the mission entrusted to our care.

Yours sincerely



Br David Hawke FSC
Visitor (Provincial)

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