

Community Resource

Extract of Letter from St Patrick's College Board



You will be aware that late last year there was an announcement regarding the establishment of a Royal Commission into institutional responses to allegations of sexual abuse of children. The first sitting took place on Wednesday 3 April 2013 in Melbourne.

The Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers and Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) recently issued a joint statement supporting the establishment of the Royal Commission and the intended outcomes of these hearings. The statement acknowledges and regrets that incidents of abuse of innocent and vulnerable children have occurred in institutions conducted by the Christian Brothers. The statement offers a sincere apology to those affected by abuse and to all those whose lives and hopes have been devastated as a result.

The joint statement from the Province and EREA also indicates support for the provision of care for those affected by abuse to allow them to move towards healing, to share their experiences of abuse and to allow them to seek redress. The statement supports the Royal Commission's intentions to ensure the protection of children from abuse in the future, and to see that institutions working for children act with accountability, integrity and due care.

In their Lenten Pastoral Letter, the Bishops of New South Wales also welcomed the opportunity for those affected by abuse to obtain a just hearing, for processes within institutions to be scrutinised and for the whole community to find ways forward. The Church in Australia has established a Truth, Justice and Healing Council to ensure that there is full cooperation with the Royal Commission.

The Bishops highlight three things that should be kept in mind as the Royal Commission progresses. First, these terrible sins and crimes, and their mishandling by Church authorities, have done great damage. Secondly, child abuse is not the whole story of the Church, far from it. Thirdly, the current crisis is an opportunity for purification of the Church.

St Patrick's College also acknowledges its support for this Royal Commission. The college welcomes the commitment to ensuring that the hearings address responses to allegations of child abuse by a broad range of institutions, government agencies and church organisations from all denominations that care for, or have previously cared for, young people.

There is never an acceptable excuse for those who have abused or would consider the abuse of young people. This breach of position of trust has led to unimaginable consequences for those vulnerable young people and their families who have suffered as a result of these incidents of abuse. As a Christian community we are committed to justice, support for, and sensitivity to those affected by abuse and to protecting the young people entrusted to our care from being exposed to situation where abuse may occur.

In the same sense of fairness and compassion, we also acknowledge and support the many authorities, institutions, caregivers, teachers, priests and religious who have faithfully given nothing short of wholehearted and absolute dedication of their lives to young people.