

## Sharing the sorrow

The long overdue guilty verdict handed down to retired priest Finian Egan last week is yet another sad and shameful story from the annals of the Catholic Church.

A few months ago I spoke with members of the Dioceses of Broken Bay at St Gerard's Carlingford, where Egan worked. With the support of the Bishop for Broken Bay, David Walker, I was impressed with how the community was trying to assist one another and find positive ways to help the victims of this terrible abuse.

Bishop Walker spoke strongly in response to the Egan case demonstrating the open and transparent position the Church is taking with the Royal Commission.

*"I again express my great sadness at the trauma and suffering victims have experienced. We continue to pray for the victims, their families and our communities...."*

*"Sexual abuse is against everything for which the Church stands. The safety and well-being of young people in our care needs to be our highest priority. Our commitment remains that we will ensure that any complaint of misconduct by any representatives of the Church in Broken Bay is acted upon in accordance with the law and the mission of the Church."*

Bishop David Walker

This week the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry will deliver its findings after an 18 month Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations. Like the Egan case, we can expect the Inquiry to be very damning of the Catholic Church.

At times like this it is easy to feel defensive, because as with everything, the *full* truth is never told, but this is an important, necessary process for the Church. We must be open and humble in explaining the past, our approaches, our disposition, and we must admit our failings. This is a time for the Church to demonstrate its maturity and to show respect to the people damaged by clerical sex abuse.

The truth needs to be told and victims need to tell their story. The Church will also have an opportunity to fully explain itself and to demonstrate the vast improvements and commitment it has made to safeguarding children.

The months ahead won't be easy for anyone, particularly people who have been abused. Everyone will be impacted – victims telling their stories, victims wanting, but unable to tell their stories, and of course their families and friends. In all cases this is a traumatic experience, and unfortunately for many it will re-open wounds that are so very difficult to heal.

# Blog

**TRUTH  
JUSTICE  
HEALING  
COUNCIL**

When the Truth Justice and Healing Council (TJHC) was first established 12 months ago I said the Royal Commission was a crucial time for the Catholic Church. We made a commitment then and we continue today to be honest and open with the interest of victims and their families always our number one concern.

I am confident the Church is making significant improvements in safeguarding children. The people working in the Church today are doing everything they can to heal the wounds and make the Church a safe, and loving place for everyone.

The issue of child sex abuse must remain a high priority not only for the Church and other Institutions, but also in domestic settings where the majority of abuse occurs. I say this not to avert attention from the responsibilities of the Catholic Church, but for the safety and well being of all children throughout the world.

Pope Francis said last week that as a Church we must yearn for something deeper. *“A communion that makes us able to enter into the joy and the sorrow of others and sincerely make them our own.”* Pope Francis

As more stories of clerical sex abuse are told over the next few months we share the sorrow of victims. Our hope is they will receive comfort in knowing the Church is listening, is sorry and is doing something about it.

Francis Sullivan

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