

MEDIA RELEASE

Royal Commission to hold hearing into Diocese of Wollongong



5 June 2014

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will hold a public hearing into the response of the Catholic Diocese of Wollongong into allegations of sexual abuse against John Gerard Nestor.

The hearing, which will commence on 24 June in Sydney, will look at the relationship between the Diocesan Bishop (and, in his absence, the Diocesan Administrator), and the Vatican in matters concerning preventative and disciplinary action taken in response to allegations of child sexual abuse against Nestor.

Nestor was a priest when he was charged with an offence involving sexual abuse of a child. He was acquitted on appeal.

Despite the acquittal, the Church stood Nestor aside as a priest because the bishop of Wollongong at the time, Philip Wilson, was of the view that Nestor was a danger to children.

Nestor sought recourse to the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome. Ultimately, however, at the insistence of Bishop Peter Ingham (who became Bishop of Wollongong after Philip Wilson), Pope Benedict XVI dismissed Nestor from the priesthood.

These canonical processes took many years to resolve.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council said it appears clear that canonical issues have struggled to keep pace with the realities of how to deal with clerical sex abuse cases in Australia.

“One thing does need to be made very clear: there is nothing in Canon law that stops priests or bishops reporting the crime of child sexual abuse to the police in Australia,” Mr Sullivan said.

Anyone wishing to be part of the hearing can contact the Commission through its website at <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/public-hearings>

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

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

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au
For more information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>