

MEDIA RELEASE

Pope Francis appoints leading Wollongong welfare worker to Vatican child protection commission



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Pope Francis has appointed Kathleen McCormack, the founding director of CatholicCare in the NSW city of Wollongong, to the Vatican's child protection body.

Ms McCormack is among eight new members of the commission, led by American cardinal Sean O'Malley, to advise him on safeguarding children from sexual abuse. The appointments were announced overnight in Rome.

The 17-member Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, was announced by the Pope in December 2013.

It now consists of eight women and nine men, both clerical and lay, with new members coming from Australia, Britain, Colombia, New Zealand, Philippines, South Africa, United States and Zambia. It includes two survivors of child sexual abuse within the Church.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said Kathleen McCormack will be a passionate and committed representative for people sexually abused in the Church in Australia and around the world.

"This appointment is an important recognition of Kathleen's life work spent in the service of children and other vulnerable people," he said.

"It also recognises the work being undertaken in Australia to address the crisis of child sexual abuse.

Ms McCormack said she is honoured to be appointed to the commission and is ready to take up the challenge.

"This Commission is about best practice in the future, not just for the children in our Church, but for the children of our world. It's about the Church wanting to lead in the safety of children," Ms McCormack said.

"We've been through a lot in Australia, and although we have many policies and procedures in place, we still need to do much better. I believe the wisdom we will gain from the Royal Commission in Australia will be invaluable to the Pope's Commission.

"I give this commitment to abuse survivors in Australia: when I take my seat on this Commission the only interests I serve will be theirs and the only outcomes I will endorse will deliver abuse survivors justice and compassion."

Peter Ingham, Bishop of Wollongong, said he welcomed the Pope's appointment.

"This appointment brings great honour to Kath and, indeed, to the Diocese of Wollongong. It is well deserved.

“Kath brings much knowledge and expertise to the area of child protection and more importantly, great dedication and commitment,” he said.

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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/>

Kathleen McCormack AM

Kathleen McCormack AM (Australia) was Director of Welfare of CatholicCare in the Diocese of Wollongong for 29 years. Kathleen was the first employee, developing the agency into a quality assured provider of social services with staff and volunteers numbering over 300 and a turnover of \$14 million.

Kathleen is a social welfare worker, with a Masters of Management from the University of Technology, Sydney. During her time as Director of CatholicCare, Kathleen worked extensively and held leadership roles in Family Services, Child Protection, Out Of Home Care and Ageing and Disability Services.

She has been involved in successful lobbying campaigns to Federal and State Government and has played an integral role in the development of Child Protection protocols and Professional Standards in NSW.

Kathleen has provided support to victims of sexual abuse in the Diocese of Wollongong. In the mid 1990's she initiated a series of international speakers to visit Australia on the importance of a 'Culture of Safety'.

She is a strong advocate for training and professional development of religious and diocesan personnel on child protection, particularly screening and selection protocols, monitoring and supervision systems, policy development for the prevention of abuse and best practices to protect the most vulnerable.

Kathleen has actively assisted in the establishment of church and community-based organisations, boards and committees. She was a pioneer in establishing peak bodies such as Catholic Welfare Australia (now Catholic Social Services Australia) and co-founded Centacare (now CatholicCare).

She has represented the Diocese on committees such as the National Catholic Association of Family Agencies, Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission, NSW Catholic Social Welfare Committee and the Australian Catholic University.

Kathleen received a Member of the Order of Australia as part of the 2007 Australia Day honours list. Upon her retirement in April 2014, Kathleen was awarded a Papal Honour by Pope Francis as a Dame in the Order of St Gregory the Great.