

Archbishop's Office
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November 22, 2012
12/1275

RE : Royal Commission

My Brothers and Sisters in the Adelaide Archdiocese

As you are aware, Prime Minister Julia Gillard has announced that a Royal Commission is to be held to inquire into institutional responses to child sexual abuse in Australia. Also, on Wednesday the NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell announced a more focused inquiry dealing with specific issues raised in the media concerning the Diocese of Newcastle - Maitland.

This Royal Commission is a very important development in Australian society as a whole because it will be the first time when the horrendous issue of abuse will be examined in great detail on a national scale. It will enable people affected by child sex abuse to have a voice like they have never had before. They will be able to tell of their tragedies and be heard at the highest level - and in doing so it will help institutions, including our Church, to learn more about those experiences and, if necessary, better inform us about how we respond to these very difficult and complex issues.


Our Diocese will, of course, co-operate fully with the Royal Commission and the NSW Inquiry, and we will do so with absolute honesty and openness in an effort to do whatever we can to help shed light on the tragedy of child sex abuse. As people of God, we can only feel deep shame over the terrible betrayal of trust and the suffering inflicted on the abused and their families by those members of the Church who engaged in this most serious crime.

To all those who have been affected by clerical child sex abuse, I again express my deepest sorrow.

As I have said before, the reality of child abuse is by far the greatest crisis we have faced as a Church in this country. When we first learnt of the scale of this issue, the Church moved nationally to develop the Towards Healing protocols which were introduced in 1996. Our priority in the past decade has been to respond compassionately to those affected by child sex abuse and to put preventative measures in place to ensure the safety of the children in our parishes and communities. I believe that the Archdiocese of Adelaide has been at the forefront of child protection in recent years, introducing many initiatives that have been held up as best practice. Having said that, I acknowledge again that we need to and must do more; we cannot be complacent and we cannot and must not underestimate the hurt and hostility that child sex abuse has caused.

I believe the Royal Commission will be a watershed for the Catholic Church in Australia and I ask you to join with me in praying for those affected by child sex abuse and for our Church as we embark on this difficult but necessary journey.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Philip Wilson .". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Rev Philip Wilson
Archbishop of Adelaide