

FORMER PRIEST CONVICTED OF HISTORIC CHILD ABUSE



Tue 11 October 2016

A former priest of the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn has pleaded guilty and been convicted of 15 charges of historic child sexual abuse. He was sentenced in Wagga Wagga District Court on 11 October 2016 to 16 years imprisonment with a non-parole period of six-and-a-half years.

The Diocese has been working with NSW Police to see the matter resolved and endeavouring to care for those who have been harmed by the person in question.

Bishop Stuart Robinson, current Bishop of the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, acknowledged the significant failure of the Church in past decades to deal with offenders or to provide respectful, caring and compassionate treatment for victims of such sexual offenders in the Church.

Bishop Robinson said today, "I apologise unreservedly to all those who have been affected by such offenders. I have a firm resolve that our procedures should provide justice and care for victims and the Diocese is working with energy and commitment to do as much as we can to rectify our past mistakes."

He said that the Diocese has established protocols to ensure it does all it can to provide within the Church a safe environment for all people. Consequently, the Diocese takes complaints made against Church workers with utmost gravity and applauds the courage of those who have come forward to report the harm perpetrated against them.

Often it is only because those harmed have taken such a courageous step, that the criminal justice system is able to prosecute those who have offended against the vulnerable. The Diocese recognizes that the pain, hurt and distress caused by the abuse is deep and often lifelong.

As a result of a victim willing to tell their story, a formal complaint against the person in question was received enabling a thorough investigation to be instigated in 2007. Subsequent to the investigation, disciplinary action led to him being deposed from holy orders, which means he is no longer a priest, which is the most serious action the church can take.

The Diocese has implemented major changes in the care of those who have been harmed by the church. These new processes and procedures continue to be regularly evaluated.

These processes enable the Church to deal with complaints made against Church workers in a rigorous, transparent and more timely way and to provide responses and results designed to assist those who have been harmed to move towards recovery and healing.

The Diocese encourages anyone who has endured abuse or been mistreated by individuals or groups connected with our Diocese to contact either the Police or our Professional Standards Director on 1800 070 511.

This story was updated on 12 October following sentencing. The man has not been named for legal reasons.