



14 February 2018
Ash Wednesday

Dear brothers and sisters in ministry,

Earlier this week, Fairfax Media ran a series of articles on the alleged wealth of the Catholic Church in Australia and the way it deals with survivors of abuse. These articles appear to be part of a relentless campaign with similar articles likely to be published in the future.

Though these articles are mostly concerned with the financial position of the Archdioceses of Sydney and Melbourne, it is a timely reminder for us to look at what the Diocese of Parramatta is doing in the area of providing justice to survivors of abuse.

As the articles highlight, in the light of the extent of the abuse in the Church and its handling by some Church leaders, it is reasonable for people to have lost trust in the Church. As the Diocese of Parramatta, we need to rebuild this trust. It is incumbent upon us to rebuild a broken Church.

In the Diocese of Parramatta, we are constantly looking at ways to enact and demonstrate accountability and transparency in the responsible administration of the resources of the Church, despite the media reports.

In the Diocese of Parramatta, our commitment to survivors of abuse comes first. We take this commitment very seriously. We have honoured most claims of abuse brought forward from survivors and we are in the process of finalising other claims. We also have arrangements in place to meet the financial obligations to survivors of abuse.

Any suggestion that we would not honour financial commitments to a survivor of abuse to “protect” our financial assets is wrong and misleading.

It is important to note that the Catholic Church in Australia was the first organisation to commit to a National Redress Scheme. We remain fully supportive of this endeavour.

What needs to be clear is that “Church property”, usually acquired through the generous donations and volunteer work of generations of Catholics, cannot simply be compared to a normal commercial building. Church property usually belongs to an individual parish or is held in trust. Comparing a commercial building to a Church property is not the same thing and would be like comparing apples to oranges.

As Bishop of Parramatta, I reiterate my pledge to work towards having the best systems in place to protect children from harm in the future when they engage in ministry of the Diocese of Parramatta.

My offer to meet with every survivor of abuse in this Diocese is ongoing and I will continue my work in this area.

The Diocese of Parramatta remains committed to responding to survivors of abuse with justice, compassion, integrity, care and professionalism.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD STL

Bishop of Parramatta