

PASTORAL LETTER BY BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY

I have recently returned from the public hearing of the Royal Commission into the response of Catholic Church authorities to allegations of child sexual abuse by John Joseph Farrell.

The hearing has not formally concluded but has been adjourned. In due course the Royal Commission will publish a report on its findings and recommendations. This statement is my personal reflection following my attendance at the Royal Commission hearing.

It is my hope that by reading this you may come to an understanding of my own depth of sorrow and shame for the failings of our Church and Diocese and that you might be informed of the changes that have been taking place in the Diocese to ensure that our parishes are safe places for all the children and vulnerable in our care.

Listening to the victims and survivors along with others from the Diocese, I sat in the Royal Commission hearing room and listened to the statements and evidence given by the survivors.

I was deeply moved by their testimony. It is crucial that the Church truly hear their cry. I listened to two survivors. I heard of their horror, pain, fear, and hurt. I heard of their betrayal, of their inhuman treatment, and of the torment they continue to suffer as a result of the abuse they endured.

I heard of the long lasting effects this abuse has had on their lives. Their courage and integrity shone through in their testimony. They are brave and dignified men whom I hold in high esteem. I thank them for their testimony and assure them that I will never forget.

I listened to a victim's mother. She spoke powerfully of her family's struggle to be heard by Church authorities when their son had so bravely spoken up to reveal the abuse.

The treatment they received from the Church was appalling. They, and others who brought the matter into the open, should have been encouraged to do so and should have been listened to.

I and the Church owe them a debt of gratitude for bringing this matter to everybody's attention for the sake and safety of children. I thank all who came forward and spoke up in 1984. The thanks you now receive comes far too late; you should have been thanked then.

Not every victim of child abuse is a survivor. A particularly tragic result of child abuse occurs when a person loses his or her life as a result of the abuse. Some victims have committed suicide and the lives of some victims have spiralled so much out of control that it has resulted in premature death. How can we not hear and respond to this desperate cry?

FULL TEXT

[Hearing their cry](#)