



8 November 2019

Statement of Te Rōpū Tautoko to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State Care and the Care of Faith-based Organisations

Made by Sally McKechnie (counsel) on 8 November 2019 at the Contextual Hearing

1. Thank you Chair and Commissioners for granting leave to the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church of Aotearoa New Zealand to make this statement. These remarks are made on behalf of Te Rōpū Tautoko which has been set up by both the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand
2. At this Contextual hearing, there has been evidence which sets the scene for the work that the Royal Commission will do in the coming months, and today especially there has been extensive evidence about Catholic matters.
3. Representatives of Te Rōpū Tautoko and the Auckland Diocese have attended each day of the Contextual Hearing. They have listened to the evidence about abuse in both State and faith-based care. They have learned a great deal from the witnesses who have spoken in this hearing. These representatives are here as part of the commitment by the Bishops and Congregational Leaders of the Catholic Church to listen, to learn from, and to support the survivors of abuse in care.
4. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders are conscious that there may well be survivors listening to this hearing who have not approached either a Catholic entity or civil authorities about an experience of abuse that they have had. They encourage these survivors to come forward. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders encourage survivors to approach the National Office of Professional Standards, which hears complaints regarding the Catholic entities, or to approach the Police.
5. To those who have not yet come forward, the Bishops and Congregational Leaders encourage you to share their experiences with the Royal Commission.
6. We now turn to the evidence that this Royal Commission will hear in the future about the Catholic Church and the entities of the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders are very aware that dark chapters of their history will be examined. Some of that evidence has been heard in this hearing already.
7. Sadly, it is clear that many things have happened within the Catholic Dioceses and Congregations in New Zealand, which should not have happened. All forms of abuse are



unacceptable and indefensible, and all people should have been safe in the care of Catholic entities in New Zealand.

8. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders are committed to working with the Royal Commission in this inquiry and publicly reiterate their commitment to both the Commissioners and those who are listening to this Contextual Hearing. They are committed to their errors and omissions being examined transparently and openly.
9. There have been a significant number of inquiries and investigations into Catholic entities around the world, including a recent Royal Commission in Australia. Many of these inquiries have revealed events which should never have happened and for which the Pope and the Catholic leaders in those areas have expressed great regret.
10. The evidence of Professor Cahill and Dr has discussed some of that context in other countries and it has sought to draw parallels in New Zealand. Their evidence makes a number of global generalisations about what may or may not be found regarding the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders do not agree with all of the evidence given by Professor Cahill and Dr Wilkinson, however they accept and acknowledge that there are serious issues to consider. They are aware that Catholics and different Catholic entities around the world hold a range of perspectives, and that these will likely be examined as the Royal Commission continues its work.
11. There will be parallels which can be drawn from the global experience, and from the conclusions of these inquiries from around the world. However, because of the size, structure, and nature of the Catholic community and leadership here in Aotearoa, there are also significant differences. These differences will require the Royal Commission's exploration.
12. As the Royal Commission embarks on this journey, the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders ask that the Commissioners consider the entities within the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, in their full context and in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand – its work, its errors, the lessons they have learned, and the lessons that they are still to learn. The history of care provided by Catholic entities in New Zealand is complex. It is a history of both significant societal good, and times of intense shame.
13. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders anticipate that investigations into faith based organisations will begin shortly. They welcome this opportunity. They are committed to upholding their responsibilities to act to stop future abuse in the Catholic Church and to learn the lessons of how to respond to what has already happened in the care of the Catholic entities in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders are committed to implementing the lessons of this Royal Commission.