



Anglican Church of Australia

Primate: The Most Reverend Dr Philip L Freier

March 17, 2017

STATEMENT BY ARCHBISHOP PHILIP FREIER

PRIMATE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA AND ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

Anglicans have been truly shocked and dismayed at the unfolding in the Royal Commission of the scope of our failure to tackle child sexual abuse within the Church and the depth of survivors' pain and suffering. We are deeply ashamed of the many ways in which we have let down survivors, both in the way we have acted and the way we have failed to act.

I endorse what the general secretary of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, Anne Hywood, said in her opening statement to the Royal Commission this morning. I wish to express my personal sense of shame and sorrow at the way survivors' voices were often silenced and the apparent interests of the Church put first.

We are grateful to the Royal Commission for bringing survivors' voices to the forefront, for helping drive us to refine our policies and procedures, and for guiding us towards national solutions. The facts contained in the Royal Commission's analysis of the data today are shocking.

We are grateful too to the survivors and their families who have told their stories with courage and dignity.

The Anglican Church of Australia apologised for its failures in 2004. Since then, the Church has invested a great deal of energy in seeking to understand the nature and cause of our failings. We have improved in many areas, but we are striving still, and welcome guidance and assistance. We are not trying to make any excuses for failures past or present.

We eagerly await the Royal Commission's recommendations. We believe that the rigorous and independent scrutiny the commission has provided is greatly to our benefit. There is a pronounced appetite for change inside the Anglican Church. We are determined to apply best practice so that the Church is a truly safe place for children.