



**ADDRESS**

**by**

**The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall**

**Archbishop of Brisbane**

**to the**

**Second Session of the 79th Synod**

**of the**

**Diocese of Brisbane**

**Saturday 6th October 2018**

**Anglican**  
Church Southern Queensland



# **ADDRESS**

**by**

**The Most Reverend Dr Phillip Aspinall**

**Archbishop of Brisbane**

**to the**

**Second Session of the 79<sup>th</sup> Synod**

**of the**

**Diocese of Brisbane**

**Saturday 6th October 2018**

---

Welcome to this Second Session of the 79<sup>th</sup> Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane.

## **Royal Commission**

Since we last met the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has delivered its final report. Announced in late 2012, the Commission began its work in early 2013 and ran for 5 years until December 2017.

The Royal Commission exposed significant failures of institutions to protect children in their care, bringing great shame on those institutions, including the churches. The pain of facing those failures and that shame is great; so great that the temptation is great to regard them as a tragic chapter that's now behind us and to move on to other important matters. We must resist that temptation. It would be a further betrayal of the survivors who, at great cost

to themselves, courageously came forward and told their stories. On the basis of that courage and the comprehensive work of the Royal Commission Australia has crossed a threshold into a future in which our children will be much safer and institutions will be much more accountable for protecting them. But that future will eventuate only if we, now, have the courage to face squarely the truth the Royal Commission uncovered and implement its comprehensive recommendations. That will involve considerable further work and, I believe, is a sacred responsibility of our church and this Synod.

The Royal Commission worked in three main areas.

## Overview

- 2013 – 2017
  - 16,953 people made contact
  - 7,981 survivors
  - 1,344 written accounts
  - 2,562 matters referred to police
- Private sessions
  - Over 8,000 personal stories
- Public hearings
  - Carefully chosen case studies
  - 57 public hearings
- Policy and research
  - Roundtables, consultation papers, funded research
  - 59 research reports

First it held **private sessions** and listened to nearly 8,000 stories, spanning many decades. Those sessions helped Commissioners learn about how institutions had responded to survivors and to decide which case studies would be instructive.

**Public hearings** were the second main activity. 57 case studies examined how particular institutions responded to reports of abuse.

The third plank was its **policy and research** program. Research into child sexual abuse, its causes and impacts, involved experts, academics, governments, service providers and others. 59 research reports were published.

## What we've learned from survivors

- Each person's story is unique
- There are patterns
- Physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual abuse as well
- Difficult to tell others
  - On average it took 24 years to tell someone else
- Support
  - sometimes offered by parents, partners friends
  - Almost never from institutions
- Impacts
  - Sometimes immediate, sometimes years later
  - Mental and physical health
  - Personal relationships
  - Education, employment, financial security

Survivors' reports have taught us a great deal. Each person's story is unique but there are patterns we can learn from.

Many survivors experienced physical, emotional and psychological abuse as well as sexual abuse. In church institutions spiritual abuse also occurred.

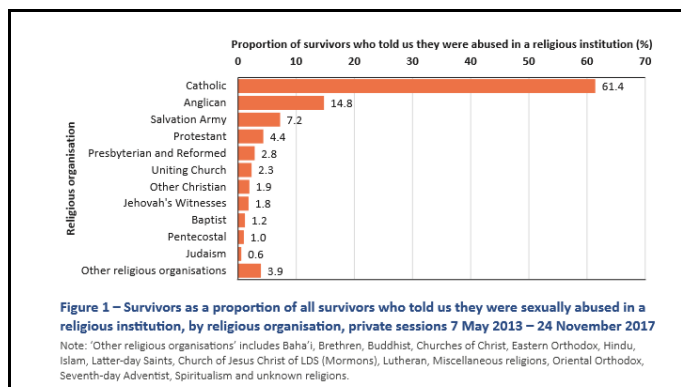
Survivors usually found it very difficult to tell parents, partners, families, friends and institutions about their abuse. Disclosure took place over time and at different stages in survivors' lives. On average it took survivors 24 years to tell someone.

Almost always representatives of institutions reacted negatively when they were told and didn't support survivors.

Some survivors experienced immediate impacts. For others it was triggered years later. Almost all survivors said they had poor mental health as a result of the abuse. Many

reported impacts on their physical health. Abuse also affected education results, employment prospects and economic security.

The impacts have rippled out to affect victims’ parents, siblings, partners, children and, in some cases, entire communities. Many survivors found it hard to maintain healthy personal relationships. Sometimes people are estranged from their own parents as a result of abuse; or from their own children. Marriages breakdown. Some grandparents never see their grandchildren. Some who were abused have taken their own lives.



Over 4,000 survivors told the Commission they were sexually abused as children in religious institutions. This table shows the proportion of survivors who reported abuse in religious institutions. 14.8% were abused in Anglican institutions.

Most were aged between 10 and 14 years when the abuse first started. The perpetrators were priests, religious brothers and sisters, ministers, church elders, teachers in religious schools, workers in residential settings, volunteers, youth group leaders and others.

More than 200 survivors had experienced child sexual abuse in a religious institution since 1990. So it is not all historical. Some is quite recent.

30 case studies focused on religious institutions. Seven of them concerned Anglican institutions.

Some aspects of abuse in churches and religious institutions are unique.

### Abuse in religious institutions

- Trust and respect used to gain access to children
- Grooming of child and child's family
- Manipulation of religious beliefs
- Spiritual abuse
  
- Unique impacts in religious institutions
  - Spiritual confusion & loss of faith
  - Children not believed because of status of perpetrator
  - Alienation from families and religious communities
  - Members of faith communities feel betrayed by perpetrators

People in religious ministry are often trusted. That trust allows perpetrators to gain access to children, to groom and abuse them. Seeing ministers as God's representatives, often parents couldn't believe they could be capable of sexually abusing a child. So ministers often had unfettered access to children. This trust also led adults not to listen to children who tried to disclose sexual abuse. It made religious leaders reluctant to take action and willing to believe perpetrators' denials.

Not believing that ministers could be capable of such abuse, also meant family members reacted negatively when told. That caused alienation between survivors and their families for years, in some cases for a lifetime.

Perpetrators often groomed the child's family, becoming closely involved in family life, regular visitors to the home, ingratiating themselves. Sometimes perpetrators targeted

vulnerable families, stepping into the role of an absent father or manipulating those experiencing marriage breakdown or mourning a death.

Some children were threatened or blamed for the sexual abuse, in ways that manipulated their religious beliefs: told they'd go to hell if they resisted or told anyone about it.

Threatening or blaming in the name of God powerfully affected children.

Some children were spiritually as well as sexually abused through religious rituals, symbols or language, producing spiritual confusion and loss of faith. Some children thought they'd been abused by God or that God must have wanted the abuse to happen.

Communities of faith also disbelieved disclosures of abuse and ostracised the reporters. A religious community itself can be shattered when child sexual abuse and inadequate responses come to light. When the abuse is revealed to be extensive or when leaders fail to take decisive action against perpetrators and to support survivors, or when they try to cover up abuse, church members can feel betrayed by leaders and institutions they had trusted.

## How religious institutions failed

- Leaders
  - Knew of abuse and didn't act
  - Treated perpetrators leniently
  - Concealed abuse and protected perpetrators
  - Protected church's reputation over children's wellbeing
  - Disbelieved and blamed the victim
  - Minimised the misconduct
  - Failed to report criminal conduct to police
  - Allowed alleged perpetrators to continue in ministry
  - Failed to honour commitments to victims
  - Allowed known offenders to continue in ministry
  - Failed to discipline known perpetrators
  - Allowed offenders to disappear 'quietly'
  - Failed to care for survivors
  - Responded defensively, legalistically, without understanding or compassion
- Governance structures failed to hold leaders accountable

The failures of religious institutions are particularly troubling because they have played, and continue to play, an integral and unique role in many children's lives. They have been key



providers of education, health and social welfare services to children. Among the most respected institutions in our society, their leaders were trusted the most and suspected the least by children and parents.

The case studies revealed that many religious leaders knew about allegations of child sexual abuse yet failed to take effective action.

Some ignored allegations and did not respond at all. Some treated alleged perpetrators leniently and failed to address the obvious risks they posed to children. Even when some perpetrators made admissions, some leaders inappropriately saw it as an 'aberration' or a 'one-off incident' and not as part of a pattern of behaviour. So perpetrators were forgiven and victims were encouraged to forgive those who abused them.

Some leaders concealed abuse and shielded perpetrators from accountability.

Institutional reputations and individual perpetrators were prioritised over victims and their families. Senior Anglican Church personnel at times asked complainants to remain silent 'to protect the good name of the church'. Trying to prevent or repair public scandal, leaders concealed information that could tarnish the institution's image or diminish its standing in the community.

Leaders often dismissed, did not believe, or minimised allegations. Sometimes they attempted to blame or discredit the victim. Some children who disclosed abuse were punished or suffered further abuse. Some leaders told victims that there was nothing they could do, suggested that victims had misinterpreted abusive behaviour, or told victims that they should be 'forgiving' or 'let sleeping dogs lie'. Survivors spoke of being devastated by such responses.

In some cases, leaders knew that allegations may have involved criminal actions, but treated them as a forgivable sin or a moral failing rather than a crime. Other leaders wrongly concluded that there was no criminality involved. Some religious leaders claimed to have

had a general lack of understanding about paedophilia and conduct amounting to child sexual abuse.

Before the early 2000s, Anglican Church personnel rarely reported complaints of child sexual abuse to police or other civil authorities. Alleged perpetrators were not reported to police despite them having made admissions of child sexual abuse to a bishop. In other cases, alleged perpetrators were not reported to police despite multiple allegations being made over years or decades. Where policies requiring reporting to police existed, they were sometimes not followed. One Anglican bishop acknowledged that had he gone to the police, much suffering would have been avoided.

Some who complained to the Anglican Church were actively discouraged from taking further action. Senior Anglican personnel threatened legal action against survivors and others who made complaints, dissuading them from reporting to police.

Church leaders allowed alleged perpetrators to continue to remain in ministry after suspicions or allegations were raised, with little or no risk management or monitoring of their interactions with children. Supervision was often either not arranged, not complied with or not effective, and further allegations followed. Some perpetrators allowed to continue in ministry or employment continued to abuse.

Even multiple complaints about the same individual at times did not lead to action. Some alleged perpetrators remained in the same positions with access to children for years, some for decades, after initial and successive allegations.

People who reported child sexual abuse were at times promised that action would be taken and none was.

Alleged perpetrators were given a 'second chance' with continued or successive appointments. This included moving alleged perpetrators to new positions in different locations where they were offered a 'fresh start', untarnished by their history of sexual

offending or previous allegations. In some instances, these new appointments were geographically removed from the locations where the original complaints arose with movements across Australia and between different religious institutions. The communities that alleged perpetrators were moved into were often not made aware of the risks these individuals posed.

At times, clergy and lay people were promoted and progressed through the ranks of Anglican institutions even after allegations of child sexual abuse had been made against them.

Disciplinary systems were poor and leaders were reluctant to use them. So some perpetrators were not disciplined at all; some were, but in a minimal way; and others were disciplined, but only many years after allegations were raised or they were convicted. This often meant that perpetrators retained their religious titles, and lay perpetrators remained attached to religious institutions posing further danger.

Instead of reporting allegations to police or disciplining perpetrators they were sometimes encouraged to retire or resign as a way of dealing with these matters 'quietly' and to avoid scandal for the Church. Sometimes the real reasons why people were removed were concealed. This included allowing perpetrators to retire or resign on false grounds, such as for health reasons.

Where disciplinary proceedings occurred, the processes often caused additional trauma to survivors. Some survivors said that church complaint and redress processes were difficult, frightening or confusing, often overly legalistic, lacked transparency, involved generic apologies or no apologies at all, and failed to recognise the long-term and devastating impacts of child sexual abuse on survivors and their families. Religious institutions frequently failed to care for and support survivors during redress processes, civil litigation and criminal proceedings. This exacerbated the trauma they experienced.

The structure and governance of religious institutions may have inhibited effective responses. Independent, autonomous or decentralised governance structures often served to protect leaders from being scrutinised or held accountable.

In two of the case studies, alleged perpetrators remained in positions where they had access to children after a bishop had received a complaint of child sexual abuse about them, and further allegations followed. There was a lack of oversight and accountability of bishops, and no uniform process for complaints about bishops' handling of allegations.

### How schools failed

- Failure to act on reports of abuse
- Protecting the school rather than children
- Not reporting to external authorities
- Record-keeping and sharing information
- Harmful culture
  - Physical and emotional abuse permitted
  - Encouraging male power
  - Homophobia
  - Blind obedience to authority
  - Lack of children's empowerment
  - 'Dobbing'
- Not holding leaders accountable

The Royal Commission identified numerous ways that schools failed. Certain features of schools magnify the risks and the impact of failures.

Failure to act on disclosures and complaints can lead to further abuse, place other children at risk of harm, and leave perpetrators not being held accountable for their criminal behaviour.

Poor leadership, governance and culture prioritised protecting the school over the safety of children.

School leaders and staff failed to report matters to external authorities, because of inadequate processes for complaint handling, investigation and disciplinary action.

Inadequate recordkeeping and sharing of information increased the risk to children.

School culture can be a strong factor in creating risk of child sexual abuse. Some cultures can allow opportunities for abuse and make it difficult to detect. In such cultures physical and emotional abuse often accompanied sexual abuse.

Some boys' schools have cultures in which males are encouraged to exert power over others and behave in a sexually aggressive ways. Wrongly seen as healthy expressions of masculinity, such hyper-masculine cultures lead to harmful sexual behaviours. Homophobia is characteristic of such cultures and could be a barrier to boys disclosing sexual abuse by a male.

Some schools have strong cultures of unquestioning obedience to authority. This can create conditions conducive to child sexual abuse.

A lack of children's participation and empowerment can discourage children from complaining and feeling unable to speak up. Fear of not being believed was common because of the perceived authority and high-standing of the perpetrator. In some cases, disclosing sexual abuse led to further abuse.

Survivors feared the impact of disclosure on their family and community. Both as children and as adults, survivors choose not to disclose, or to delay disclosure, out of concern for their relationships with others. A culture of retribution against 'dobbers' exists in some schools.

School council members and leaders need to understand their obligations to keep children safe, and to be held accountable if they do not. Schools failed by having complex and

opaque governance, leadership that didn't notify school boards of abuse, that didn't keep good records and didn't share information about perpetrators or complaints.

All these failings of churches, schools and other religious institutions are laid bare for all to see in the three substantial books that comprise Volume 16 of the Final Report, as well as in the detailed case studies, seven of which deal with Anglican organisations.

## Looking to the future

But the Commission was concerned not only to unveil the truth about the past and past failings. It was also fiercely resolved to make institutions safer for children in the future.

### Looking to the future

Shared responsibility

- Governments, communities, institutions, individuals

Recommendations focus on

- Prevention
- Investigating, prosecuting and sentencing offenders
- Justice and support for survivors

It said that keeping children safe was a shared responsibility of governments, institutions, the broader community and individuals.

The Royal Commission made hundreds of recommendations, but they focus on three main areas

- Preventing abuse or, at the very least identifying it as early as possible;

- Improving the way perpetrators are investigated, prosecuted and sentenced; and
- Improving survivors’ access to justice and ongoing support.

### Making institutions safer for children

- Community-wide understanding and prevention
- 10 Child-safe standards
- Online safety
- Better responses and reporting
- Better record-keeping and information sharing
- Screening, training and supervising workers and volunteers
  
- Regulation and oversight by governments

The Royal Commission recommended -

- Improving knowledge about child sexual abuse in the community at large and steps that assist prevention;
- 10 Child Safe Standards that all institutions should implement to make them safer and focused on children’s best interests;
- Strengthening children’s safety online and improving institutions’ responses to online abuse;
- Improving institutions’ responses to and reporting of abuse;
- Strengthening recordkeeping and information sharing; and
- Thorough screening, training and supervising workers and volunteers.

There are also recommendations about what governments should do to regulate and oversee institutions.

## Recommendations for Anglican Church

- Consistent approach to child safety across the national church and its institutions (16.32 and 16.33)
- Uniform episcopal standards framework (16.1)
- Managing conflicts of interest (16.2)
- Consistent national approach to selection, screening and training people for ordination (16.4)
- Mandatory national standards for professional/pastoral supervision and regular performance appraisals (16.5)

The Commission made a number of recommendations specifically for the Anglican Church.

Survivors have been treated inconsistently because the Anglican Church has no consistent national approach to responding to child sexual abuse. The Commission recognised the barriers to such an approach, such as dispersed and decentralised authority, diocesan autonomy, and theological and cultural differences between dioceses. But the Commission insisted that a way be found to develop a consistent approach to child safety and monitor it in the 23 dioceses and their organisations (Recommendations 16.32 and 16.33).

A start was made last year when the General Synod passed the Safe Ministry with Children Canon setting in place national standards for this Church. This Synod adopted that Canon in 2017 just weeks after the General Synod and an implementation group has been working carefully since then to implement them.

The Royal Commission also said there needs to be a uniform episcopal standards framework to ensure that bishops and former bishops are accountable to an appropriate authority for their responses to complaints of child sexual abuse (Recommendation 16.1).



Again a start has been made with the General Synod extending the jurisdiction of the national Special Tribunal to include former bishops as well as current bishops, but more work needs to be done to have a uniform episcopal standards framework for the whole Church.

Sometimes bishops and senior diocesan officials had conflicts of interest in their responses to people accused of child sexual abuse. Bishops' close relationships with clergy sometimes clearly affected their responses to allegations. The Commission recommended the Anglican Church adopt a clear policy to manage those conflicts (Recommendation 16.2).

The Commission recommended that the Anglican Church develop a national approach to the selection, screening and training of candidates for ordination (Recommendation 16.4).; and that we develop and implement mandatory national standards to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry undertake regular professional development, undertake professional/pastoral supervision and undergo regular performance appraisals (Recommendation 16.5). The Commission recommended that all this be mandatory.

Clearly there are further big and complex tasks. Work has begun on them but it will take some time. These are major cultural changes. Things are going to be different and we are all responsible to see that those changes are made as quickly and effectively as possible.

## Redress

- Three elements
  - Monetary payment (recognising seriousness of abuse)
  - Lifelong episodic counselling and psychological care
  - Direct personal response from institution
- Commonwealth has not accepted all RC recommendations
  - Reduced max monetary payment from \$200k to \$150k
  - Max \$5,000 for counselling
- Anglican Church working to participate in national scheme
  - May also be an adjunct (national or diocesan) scheme for those not eligible for national scheme

Some years ago the Commission released its final report on Redress and Civil Litigation. It identified three elements of redress:

- a monetary payment to acknowledge the seriousness of the sexual abuse and the harm caused;
- counselling and psychological care to assist recovery; and
- a personal response from the institution, including an apology, if wanted by the survivor.

All these things we have been doing for many years, but the way in which we do them is changing because of the Commission's work.

The Commission identified two basic principles of utmost importance to survivors in relation to redress. First that there be consistency of treatment. Second that decisions about monetary payments be made independently of the institution in which the abuse occurred. The federal government accepted the thrust of the Commission's recommendations (though not all the details) and has established a national redress scheme. That scheme commenced operation on 1 July this year and will run for 10 years in the first instance.

The Anglican Church nationally has established a company, through which Anglican dioceses, schools and other organisations can participate in the scheme. Diocesan Council has committed this diocese to join. Last month the Queensland Parliament passed the necessary legislation to allow institutions in Queensland to opt in. We are moving to do so as soon as possible.

We will still need to respond to some people outside the national scheme because not everyone is eligible to participate in it. We have put in place policies to ensure as far as possible that all survivors will be treated consistently.

You will have seen and heard media reports of some dioceses selling property to fund redress payments. Our finance people have advised Diocesan Council that we expect to meet our financial commitments to survivors in a timely and ordered way. Provisions for redress monetary payments have been and will continue to be made. Decisions about property assets unfold after thorough consultation and careful examination of what best serves the mission going forward. We don't anticipate needing to sell off property hurriedly to meet our redress commitments.

## The Final Report

	<b>Preface and executive summary</b> – includes a summary of each volume and a complete list of all recommendations.		
Volume 1	<b>Our Inquiry</b> – introduces the Final Report and describes the establishment, scope and operations of the Royal Commission.	Volume 10	<b>Children with harmful sexual behaviours</b> – examines what we learned about institutional responses to children with harmful sexual behaviours.
Volume 2	<b>Nature and cause</b> – describes what the Royal Commission learned about the nature and cause of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts.	Volume 11	<b>Historical residential institutions</b> – describes what we learned about survivors' experiences of, and institutional responses to child sexual abuse in residential institutions, pre-1990.
Volume 3	<b>Impacts</b> – explores the impacts of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts on survivors and often their family members, friends, and entire communities.	Volume 12	<b>Contemporary out-of-home care</b> – examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in contemporary out-of-home care.
Volume 4	<b>Identifying and disclosing child sexual abuse</b> – describes what we learned about survivors' experiences of disclosing child sexual abuse.	Volume 13	<b>Schools</b> – describes what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in schools.
Volume 5	<b>Private sessions</b> – describes survivors' experiences of child sexual abuse as told to Commissioners during private sessions.	Volume 14	<b>Sport, recreation, arts, culture, community and hobby groups</b> – looks at what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in sport and recreation contexts.
Volume 6	<b>Making institutions child safe</b> – outlines a national strategy for child sexual abuse prevention and proposes child safe standards including how institutions may implement them.	Volume 15	<b>Contemporary detention environments</b> – reveals what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in contemporary detention environments.
Volume 7	<b>Improving institutional responding and reporting</b> – looks at institutions' responses to complaints of child sexual abuse and how they report these matters to external government authorities.	Volume 16	<b>Religious institutions</b> – examines what we learned about institutional responses to child sexual abuse in religious institutions.
Volume 8	<b>Recording and information sharing</b> – examines the records, record-keeping and information sharing of institutions that care for or provide services to children.	Volume 17	<b>Beyond the Royal Commission</b> – describes the impact and legacy of the Royal Commission and discusses monitoring and reporting on the implementation of our recommendations.
Volume 9	<b>Advocacy, support and therapeutic treatment services</b> – looks at what we learned about survivors' needs in terms of advocacy, support and treatment and offers recommendations for improving service systems to better respond to survivors' needs.	Other reports	Working with Children Checks Redress and civil litigation Criminal justice

Clearly we still have considerable work to do to ensure children are protected. I also recognise that we have already come a long way and I pay tribute to all those who have contributed to the transformation of the church over nearly two decades. I acknowledge those who have served on our Professional Standards Committee and Board and their predecessors. I acknowledge our professional standards staff and those who manage abuse claims. The Anglican Schools Office has brought to bear enormous energy and expertise to ensure our schools are safe and up to speed. Anglicare provides counselling and support services to survivors of abuse and ensures its own services to children and families are at the highest standards. All these dedicated people do costly and difficult work on behalf of us all. I thank them for it. Those who have worked on groups developing policies and processes and reviewing them in the light of feedback from survivors and church members, also deserve our thanks as do members of the Diocesan Council who have been overseeing all this work for many years. Thank you all.

## **Pilgrimage of justice, peace and healing**

Nearly 20 years of dealing with the horror of child sexual abuse has had enormous impacts on the church and the wider community. The extent of abuse and response failures over many decades has shocked and appalled people both within and outside the church. That reality has also fundamentally shaken the wider community's trust in the church. It has accelerated the decline in church participation which was already under way and profoundly damaged our efforts in God's mission.

It has also damaged us spiritually. We've been slow to recognise and acknowledge the depth and long-lasting nature of the harm abuse has wreaked in the lives of survivors and their families. Facing the truth of what has happened and the reality of our failures has shaken us to the core. Many in our church have felt ashamed and betrayed and, yes, angry. Spiritually many have felt bereft, abandoned, numbed, immobilised, at a loss to understand how this could have happened? And so there have been defensive reactions, minimising, denial, avoidance.

It has been, and is, a very difficult and disturbing pilgrimage we have been on and are still travelling. But if the gospel is about justice, if the gospel is about healing, if the gospel is about reconciliation and restoring community, then this is a journey which is at the heart of the gospel, not a distraction from it.

The Lenten discussion groups this year helped many enter into this reality and move forward. In March this year we held a service in the Cathedral to reach out to the families and friends of those who had committed suicide because of sexual abuse. It was timed to follow the release of the Royal Commission's final report. On that occasion I again acknowledged the church's failures and the harm and suffering that had flowed from them.

A few weeks ago, during Child Protection Week, a further service was held in the Cathedral. 'Never Again' provided an opportunity for Anglicans to come together with survivors, their families and supporters during which church members expressed repentance for past failures and commitment to a new and radically different future.

We have come a long way on this journey we are on. And we have further to go. It is not a distraction from our core mission it is the essence of it. It is truly a pilgrimage of justice, peace and healing.

## **A wider context**

Let me briefly say a word about the wider context in which we will continue this pilgrimage. The abuse scandals are not the only reason Anglicans are on the back foot.

In her 2015 book, *A New Exile*, Muriel Porter said that the Anglican Church of Australia is barely recognisable anymore as the Church that adopted its national constitution in 1960. Reflecting on the 2014 General Synod she painted a gloomy picture of six dioceses teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, three more in serious trouble, of steep decline in rural areas and of falling attendances across the board.

Porter also lamented the decline of the moderate and Anglo-catholic parts of the church, which have historically characterised Brisbane diocese and Queensland generally. In Porter's assessment, moderate and Anglo-catholic Anglicanism, in Australia and in other parts of the world, have capitulated to conservative evangelicalism which is now clearly in the ascendancy.

In some places Common Prayer, a central element in classical Anglican DNA, has been radically eroded. Until the 1960s virtually all Anglicans would have used the same words in worship, the same rites, drawn from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer. Mostly the same words were used in worship across the nation and differences were about which vestments were worn, about ceremonial and symbols such as candles and so on.

In 1978 the General Synod adopted An Australian Prayer Book, remarkably with only a single dissenting voice in the final vote. AAPB became standard fare across the whole church, with continued use of 1662 for some so long accustomed to it. Porter describes that as the high water mark of Anglican unity in Australia. But it was not to last.

By 1995 things had changed radically. The debates in the General Synod over the current prayer book, APBA, were strident and divisive. Though it passed the General Synod it was never uniformly authorised throughout the church even with its status reduced from 'Prayer Book' to 'Liturgical Resources'.

In 1996, the then Archbishop of Sydney, Harry Goodhew, had become so concerned about the erosion of Common Prayer and departures from what we might call classical Prayer Book Anglicanism that he told the 1996 Sydney Diocesan Synod:

*The time has come when we must honestly face the question of the status of common prayer and liturgical worship in our diocese. We have always been a liturgical church ... For us, liturgy has meant a specific, authorised form that those set aside to minister in the church undertake to follow. As a result, Christ's people know what to expect when they gather for worship ... We are in danger of losing something*

*which has been a principle feature of our life ... our rules provide our shape and our character. ....*

*Our [liturgical] forms have put into people's minds words with which to confess sin, to praise God, and to pray for issues which we are exhorted to bring before God. They have taught people the moral and spiritual precepts revealed by God, the value of both Old and New Testaments, the active place of the Psalms in Christian spirituality, as well as giving a concise and catholic expression of the faith, and a balanced and biblical approach to the sacraments. To abandon all this for the creations and passing predilections of an individual clergy person, or the inclinations of those whose main interest is music, may, in the long run, prove to be a poor trade off.*

Yet Archbishop Goodhew's warning did not check the drift from classical Anglicanism which spread into other parts of Australia, not least because it's seen to be successful. Even some moderates and more catholic minded Anglicans may have turned to it out of fear and anxiety about church decline, says Porter.

Preferring one style of worship over another is not the whole story, though. Peter Corney, a noted Melbourne evangelical leader, wrote a perceptive article in 2009, 'The future of the Anglican Church in Australia in the light of the decline of the Anglo-Catholic Movement.'

Corney is very positive about the beginnings of the Anglo-Catholic movement. In his assessment, its strengths arose because the founders -

- 'made a careful study of the early Fathers';
- were 'concerned about personal holiness, committed discipleship and ... recovery of the spiritual disciplines';
- restored 'a sense of awe and beauty and holiness to worship [which] led them to recover a more elaborate and symbol-rich liturgy';
- 'wrote many beautiful hymns';
- 'had a very high view of Scripture and the creeds and were deeply orthodox and theologically conservative on creedal fundamentals';

- ‘emphasised a more central and Catholic notion of the role of the Bishop and the diocese’; and
- set forward a vision of Christian service and commitment that challenged a whole generation of young men and women to start new religious orders to serve others in evangelism, welfare and education.’

But by the 1960s the compelling, originating ‘vision was running out of energy. Today it is almost exhausted.’ Many of the organisations and movements have collapsed or been absorbed into secular institutions. Corney judges that–

- The movement ‘lost touch with its theological ... core – the very things that had produced its energy and passion’;
- ‘It drifted away from ... creedal and biblical orthodoxy ... and gradually embraced a reductionist liberal theology’; so that
- eventually it became ‘form without substance’ where you have ‘the appearance of Christianity ... but the essence ... lost’.
- The movement allowed ‘a recovered incarnational theology to become unbalanced ... the importance of presence ... eventually overpowered the importance of proclamation ... confidence in preaching was eroded and the link between word and deed fatally weakened ... preaching, evangelism and proclamation were devalued and diminished.’
- ‘Because Biblical teaching and preaching was [sic] diminished, this produced a poorly taught laity’ and led to ‘an incipient “Pelagianism” – salvation by good works. Being good and kind to others came to be seen as the essence of the Gospel.’
- It ‘focussed on a pastoral maintenance mode of ministry and so did not grow churches.’
- It became associated with high culture and rather snobbish, ‘out of step with ordinary Australians’.
- It tended to look backwards to its 19<sup>th</sup> century roots and failed to ground Anglicanism in Australian culture appearing as a kind of ‘vicar of Dibley’ church ‘eccentric, odd and quaint’ but not needing to be taken seriously.



- It was divided and weakened over the ordination of women and ‘The issues surrounding gender and sexual politics have been a major preoccupation’ leaving ‘little energy for other fundamental issues’.

The upshot of all this, in Corney’s judgement, is that moderate and Anglo-Catholic Anglicanism has been left hollowed out, lacking energy, motivation and passion and without a compelling vision or message for the wider community.

Meanwhile ascendant conservative evangelicalism continues to grow in influence domestically and internationally. Porter sees that reflected in Australia in Sydney’s vastly increased numbers in the General Synod, in unofficial church-planting strategies establishing ‘non-Anglican’ but Sydney-style churches in other dioceses, in exporting Sydney-trained clergy to alter the balance in other places and in other strategies. The Anglican Church of Australia is on its way to becoming a large Sydney diocese, says Porter.

Now, I think we should take care not to deride, still less to demonise, one or another emphasis within Anglicanism as if the various elements were in irreconcilable opposition: at war, as it were. Admittedly, over the years, as the church has faced various ‘hot-button’ issues it has sometimes felt like war: remarriage of divorced persons in church, the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops, lay people and deacons presiding at the eucharist as well as current differences over issues of human sexuality all readily spring to mind.

Can we take seriously the biblical affirmation that we are members of each other with differing gifts and functions intended to build up the whole body (Rom 12.3-7)?

Conservative evangelical Anglicans enrich the whole body through the clarity and confidence with which they articulate the gospel; by their engagement with and knowledge of the scriptures; by their carefully planned approaches to pastoral care and following up of new people; and by their resolute teaching of the faith. The whole church in this diocese and beyond can learn from these strengths and be enriched by them.

At the same time, if Peter Corney's analysis is largely correct, as I think it is, this diocese and the wider church faces significant losses should the perspective of moderate and Anglo-catholic Anglicanism further weaken.

Some of the potential losses were identified by Archbishop Harry Goodhew. The loss of the ministry of women as priests and bishops would be keenly felt by many, as would a reduced emphasis on the sacraments.

But perhaps the most profound loss would be what has traditionally been known as Anglicanism's comprehensiveness. Today it would probably be called inclusiveness. I mean 'the generous inclusivity that has been the hallmark of the best historic Anglicanism' (Porter, 2015, 68).

William Temple, is widely regarded as a quintessential Anglican. He became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942 at the height of the Second World War. He summed up Anglicanism by saying -

Our special character and ... our peculiar contribution to the Universal Church, arises from the fact that ... we have been enabled to combine in our one fellowship the traditional Faith and Order of the Catholic Church with that immediacy of approach to God through Christ to which the Evangelical Churches bear witness, and freedom of intellectual inquiry, whereby correlation of the Christian revelation and advancing knowledge is constantly effected (Temple, nd, 113-14).

This generous Anglican comprehensiveness is one of our greatest treasures and one of our most prized gifts to the church universal. We should cherish and guard it.

But for this precious gift to be retained, the moderate and Anglo-catholic expressions of Anglicanism need to be vital, imaginative, energetic contributors to the overall life of the church. This may well be a most significant responsibility that falls to a diocese like Brisbane

in the current times and seasons and a critically important contribution we can make to the life of the national church.

I repeat, this is not to diminish either the evangelical or what is sometimes called liberal expressions of Anglicanism. They too have a vital and valuable role to play in this diocese as elsewhere. It is to recognise, however, that the diminished vitality of moderate and Anglo-catholic expressions actually threatens this church's historic, generous comprehensiveness. Brisbane, in my view, has an important contribution to make to ensure that loss does not eventuate.

What is most needed is for moderates and Anglo-Catholics once again to grasp and articulate a compelling vision and message. That means not so much borrowing methods and techniques from the apparently successful, though of course we can learn from others. Nor does it mean abandoning our heritage in panicked attempts to become superficially relevant. No, the heart of a compelling vision and message will come from theological renewal.

The roots of that renewal are in our fundamental convictions that God, in Christ, effected reconciliation between human beings and God. That reconciliation flows from the cross and resurrection and also from Christ's saving life. Christ makes available an eternal quality of life here and now, nothing less than a share in the divine life in the gift of the Holy Spirit, available to us through the scriptures and the sacraments in the life of the church.

This eternal quality of life is a first taste of what God will eventually complete in remaking all things and bringing heaven and earth together.

We are called to work with God in anticipation of that re-creation, to make real here and now the life of grace Christ reveals, and to invite all to the banquet.

In this work, the scriptures and sacraments attended to through sacred space, symbols, meditation, prayerfulness, stillness – are not old fashioned irrelevancies but the very means by which we encounter and worship the incarnate God with us (Porter, 2015, 42).

This diversity of ways in which we encounter God reflects the conviction that God cannot be contained or exhausted in texts, doctrines or dogma. As Martin Percy (2017, 21) has written:

*Anglicans are broad because, simply, they think God is much broader than the measure of our minds. ... Anglicans ... often revert to broad and deep words like ‘Communion’, ‘catholic’ and “comprehensive” because, deep in the ecclesial DNA of Anglicanism, is a breadth and inclusiveness that is fundamentally resistant to tribalism and sharp, high borders that only serve exclusivists.*

Our task is to live in communion with God. When we do, God then brings together in the community of the church those who so live. People will come to faith in Christ ‘when they discover inclusive churches committed to working for peace with justice; showing mercy, and engaging in the community with grace and integrity’ (McIntyre, 2014 cited in Porter (2015, 43)) This is what makes the pilgrimage of justice, peace and healing in relation to sexual abuse central to mission. It’s one expression of acting in the community with grace and integrity, showing mercy and working for justice and peace.

That’s our share in God’s mission. It’s very different from a shallow ‘supporting good causes approach’ that Peter Corney criticises as hollowed out. Its foundation is following God in every aspect of life with a ‘singular allegiance to Jesus’ (ibid).

May this deep communion with God and a singular allegiance to Jesus mark our deliberations in this Synod. May we live out that comprehensive, inclusive character of classical Anglicanism with humility and integrity. And may the good news of God’s love in Christ be evident in all we are and all we do in the life of the church and in the communities we serve. Then we will be true partners with God in God’s mission to the world God loves and partners in God’s new creation begun in Christ.

## References

Corney, Peter

2009 'The Future of the Anglican Church in Australia in the light of the decline of the Anglo-Catholic movement'. <http://petercorney.com/2009/09/01/the-future-of-the-anglican-church-in-australia-in-the-light-of-the-decline-of-the-anglo-catholic-movement/>

McIntyre, John

2014 Address to Gippsland Synod, 17 May 2014, <http://gippsanglican.org.au/presidents-address/>

Percy, Martyn

2017 The Future Shapes of Anglicanism. Currents, contours, charts. New York. Routledge.

Porter, Muriel

2015 A New Exile? The future of Anglicanism. Morning Star Publishing.

Temple, William

nd The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with Resolutions and Reports. London: SPCK.





