

# **Te Rōpū Tautoko**

## *Catholic Support Group for the Royal Commission into Abuse in Care*

### **The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders of Aotearoa New Zealand's Letter of Support for the Goals of the Royal Commission**

1. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders are committed to active participation in the Royal Commission.
2. When Bishop Patrick Dunn of Auckland, President of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Council, and Sr Katrina Fabish, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Mercy, asked the Prime Minister to include the Catholic Church in the Royal Commission, it was out of concern that individuals should not be excluded from this process due to the path of referral into care.
3. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders welcome the inclusion of faith-based organisations in the Royal Commission.
4. To the deep shame and regret of the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders, some clergy, members of religious congregations, and other members of the Church have taken advantage of the trust, responsibility, and authority placed in them and have abused those in their care. Vulnerable people, entrusted to the Catholic Church's care, have been subject to abuse of the kind this Royal Commission is intended to examine.
5. The Catholic Church acknowledges abuse occurred and it should not have. Abuse in the Church must be examined, understood, acknowledged and addressed so that the voice of victims, who were often silenced, may be heard.
6. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders deeply regret every instance of abuse and welcomes this Royal Commission as an opportunity for survivors to be heard and for all parties involved to continue the healing and transformation process.
7. Sadly, as will be well known to the Royal Commission, abuse by clergy is a matter of global concern to the Catholic Church. Pope Francis acknowledges that sexual abuse is utterly incompatible with the Church's moral authority and ethical credibility. He has directed that every case of abuse must be faced with the upmost seriousness.



8. In May this year, Pope Francis issued a papal *Motu Proprio, Vos Estis Lux Mundi* setting his edicts in relation to sexual abuse. These comments and edicts, from the highest level of the Catholic Church, underscores the seriousness with which the Catholic Church seeks to understand, review, acknowledge, learn from, and address its mistakes of the past. Participation in this Royal Commission is an important part of that journey for the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.
9. Over the past decades the Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders have established structures and processes to address and respond to abuse by members of the Church. The Bishops and Congregational Leaders seek to learn lessons for today and the future, as it continues to work for justice and healing for those abused and ensure a safe Church into the future.
10. The Catholic Bishops and Congregational Leaders will cooperate fully with the Royal Commission's work.

Date: 25 July 2019

Yours faithfully



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Cardinal John Dew  
Archbishop of Wellington



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Sr Katrina Fabish  
Congregational Leader, Sisters of Mercy