



ANGLICAN DIOCESE
OF TASMANIA

THE RIGHT REVEREND
DR RICHARD CONDIE
BISHOP OF TASMANIA

19 April 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing to you about some very serious matters in the life of the Diocese of Tasmania to do with our responses to child sexual abuse. As you know we have been deeply committed to a right and just response to child sexual abuse that has occurred in the past in our Diocese. We have made a formal apology to the survivors, called for and participated in the Royal Commission, established our own support scheme for survivors, and have invested heavily in our safe church communities program.

The first matter is that early in 2017 I informed you that I had commenced initial proceedings against The Rt Revd Philip Newell, former Bishop of Tasmania, in light of allegations about his conduct in the Royal Commission report on the CEBS matter. Under our Ministry and Tribunal Ordinance I had the matter assessed, and recently received the report from the Assessors. I have now established a Diocesan Tribunal so that the matter can be heard. I will report to you further in due course.

The second matter has to do with redress. You may be aware that earlier in the week, I issued a media statement about the importance of providing redress for survivors of child sexual abuse and gave my support to the National Redress Scheme (NRS). The NRS provides redress for survivors of abuse up to an amount of \$150,000 per claim, counselling costs and the possibility of an apology from the institution.

Redress is so important. It's a vital step in providing restorative justice, recognition and support to survivors of sexual abuse. The Prophet Isaiah teaches that God loves justice and calls us to make recompense for those who have been wronged. As people committed to God's restoration of the world, we have an obligation to provide this.

The Diocesan Council received a report this week, that estimates our future liability for redress payments under the NRS. The estimated liability stands at around \$8 million in new and additional payments to survivors of child sexual abuse in the Diocese. As you can imagine this amount of money is not readily available. It will require decisive action on the part of the Synod and will involve sacrifice for everyone across our Diocese.

The only way we can raise this amount of capital is from funds held by the Trustees on behalf of the Diocese and Parishes, through selling Parish properties, and by direct Parish contributions. The Diocesan Council believes that this is the wisest approach, and should be shared among the whole Diocesan family, rather than falling in one or two areas, and is the best way to secure the ongoing viability of the Diocese. It is also better for us to make a clear proactive decision, rather than waiting for others to seize our assets over which we would then have little control.

The Diocesan Council is still finalising the details, but will recommend to the June Synod that the \$8 million will be raised by:

- A proportion of Parish funds held by the Trustees;
- A proportion of the Montgomery Park fund (currently supporting youth ministry in the Diocese);
- A proportion of the New Ministry Development Fund; and
- A proportion of the proceeds of sale of over 120 properties held by the Trustees on behalf of Parishes.

This will be an extraordinarily painful exercise for us. Many of the funds mentioned support local and diocesan ministries, and the buildings which will be proposed for sale are churches, halls, rectories and other properties that are important to us. It will mean that a number of our Parishes will be significantly altered, and many ministries will be disrupted. We imagine that the full process of sale of church properties will occur over the next 3-4 years. Sadly, we are bearing the cost of the sins of those who have gone before us, and we do not believe there is any other viable solution.

You can expect us to do the following:

- We will clearly communicate with you at every step of the process.
- We will provide as much support and pastoral care of Parishes as possible.
- In early May the Registrar will write to each Parish outlining the effect on their Parish and what will be proposed to the Synod.
- In June the Synod will consider the matters very carefully and prayerfully and make a decision about the recommendations.
- There will be a process for Parishes to provide input into the final list of assets affected.

My request to each of you is to do the following:

- To commit to pray for the Synod as they make these difficult decisions, and especially for the survivors of child sexual abuse who may access Redress, that they will find healing and hope through our sacrifice.
- To consider the needs of survivors of child sexual abuse as the number one consideration as you discuss the proposal.
- To commit to speaking well of those who are trying to act in the best interests of survivors, without gossip or criticism. Their decisive action is necessary to ensure the long-term viability of our Diocese and to meet our obligations for redress.
- To direct any concerns to your Archdeacon, the Registrar and the Bishop.

Please be assured of my deep prayerful support as we grapple with these difficult matters in the life of our Diocese.

With warm wishes in Christ.



The Right Reverend Dr Richard Condie (Bishop of Tasmania)