

MEDIA RELEASE

ANGLICAN CHURCH BOARD DETERMINES THAT ROGER HERFT BE DEPOSED FROM HOLY ORDERS

A RESPONSE FROM THE DIOCESE OF NEWCASTLE

Dr Peter Stuart, the Anglican Bishop of Newcastle said, "The people, clergy, and bishops of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle profoundly regret the harm caused by people within the church and the failure of those with responsibility within the church to prevent that harm."

"The Royal Commission Case Study into the Diocese rightly exposed the failure by the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle to prevent childhood sexual abuse."

"The Anglican Church of Australia expects high standards of professional conduct by its bishops. Following the Royal Commission, the Diocese of Newcastle asked the Episcopal Standards Board to review Bishop Herft's conduct in reporting allegations of childhood sexual abuse to the police and other authorities, when he was the Bishop of Newcastle."

The Episcopal Standards Board heard that the Royal Commission made serious findings against Bishop Herft, some of which he conceded during the Commission hearings. The Board found that Bishop Herft mishandled allegations of childhood sexual abuse and frequently failed to make the reports required of him, including to the police. The Board could not find any acceptable reason for the approach taken by Bishop Herft.

The Board also considered the way Bishop Herft gave evidence before the Royal Commission and considered his recall of events to be unsatisfactory observing, at times, his evidence seemed to be unresponsive or evasive.

The Board determined that the failures by Roger Herft were so serious that to allow him to continue to be regarded as Bishop would go against the functions, standards and beliefs of the Church, and be unreasonable to other clergy, especially bishops. It determined that **he be deposed from Holy Orders**. The Board's decision has been sent to the Metropolitan of the Anglican Province of Victoria, Dr Philip Freier, as Roger Herft now lives in Victoria.

Bishop Stuart said, "The survivors of abuse within the Diocese before the Royal Commission and in their engagement with the Diocese confirm the Board's observation that the consequences of the allegations of childhood sexual abuse going unchecked over a period of years is profound. I again offer them our sincere apologies."

"Since the Royal Commission, the Diocese of Newcastle has strengthened the role of the Director of Professional Standards to ensure that criminal conduct is reported to the NSW Police in a timely manner by all clergy and church officials. The Diocese, and its schools and agencies, are focussed on ensuring it provides excellent service to the people it supports, especially children and vulnerable people. It is committed to assuring the people we support of their physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and moral safety. The Diocese is committed to providing redress to people who were harmed."

Survivors of childhood abuse by clergy and church workers in the Diocese of Newcastle are encouraged to contact the Director of Professional Standards by telephone on 1800 774 945 or by email to dps@newcastleanglican.org.au