

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I, BISHOP WILLIAM JOSEPH WRIGHT of 841 Hunter Street, Newcastle West in the State of New South Wales, Bishop, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I am the Bishop of Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, having commenced in that role on 15 June 2011. I was ordained as a priest in 1977.
2. By letter dated 17 June 2013 the solicitors for the Special Commission of Inquiry concerning the investigation of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the Hunter Region (Commission) requested I provide a sworn statement regarding certain matters.

Background, qualification and appointments

3. I was born in Washington DC on: **Redacted** returning to Australia in 1953. I attended Sacred Heart Primary School in Pymble followed by St Aloysius College at Milsons Point.
4. From 1971 to 1973 I studied for the priesthood at St Columba's College, Springwood and from 1974 to 1977 at St Patrick's College Manly. I was ordained a priest in Sydney on 20 August 1977 for the Archdiocese of Sydney.
5. I was awarded a Bachelor of Theology in 1977 being a Pontifical Degree granted by the Catholic Theological Faculty of Sydney and in 1984 I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) by the University of Sydney.
6. From 1977 to 1984 I was the Assistant Priest at St Michaels Stanmore. From 1985 to 1991 I was the Vice-Rector at St Patrick's College Manly. From 1992 to 1994 I was at Holy Family Mt Druitt parish on loan from the Archdiocese of Sydney.
7. In 1995 I was appointed the Assistant Secretary of the Australian Bishops Conference in Canberra. In 1996 I held brief appointments in the Fairfield and Enmore parishes and then was appointed as the Parish Priest at St Paul of the Cross Dulwich Hill until 1998. From late 1998 to 2005 I was the Parish Priest at St John the Baptist Bonnyrigg and in 2005 and 2006 I was the Assistant Priest at St Francis Xavier's Moree (on exchange from the Archdiocese of Sydney).
8. In 2008 I returned to Sydney and was the Parish Priest at St Patrick's Sutherland from 2008 to 2009 and was Parish Priest at All Saints Liverpool from October 2009 to April 2011. I was also a member of the Archdiocesan Council of Priests and School Board.
9. On 15 June 2011 I was installed as the Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle.

Maitland-Newcastle Diocese

10. The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle represents the Catholic Church in a region extending from Lake Macquarie to Taree and as far inland as Merriwa and Murrurundi and encompasses more than 150,000 Catholics.
11. I am assisted by 30 priests who minister in 42 parishes within the Diocese as well as eight permanent deacons.

Signed

1

Signed

861630_1:RSA:RSA

History of the Diocese

12. Six Catholic parishes were established being East Maitland in 1835, Newcastle in 1838, West Maitland in 1841, Singleton in 1845, Taree in 1846 and Raymond Terrace in 1852. These were then in the Diocese (Archdiocese post 1842) of Sydney.
13. During 1840 and 1845 Archbishop Bede Polding visited the Hunter Valley and laid foundation stones for churches at Wollombi and St John's at Campbell's Hill. The foundation stone was moved to West Maitland where St John the Baptist Church opened in 1846.
14. By Papal Brief dated 27 May 1847, the Titular See of East Maitland was created with Most Reverend Charles Henry Davis nominated as Bishop. Bishop Davis was also the Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Sydney and lived in Sydney. The Titular See of East Maitland remained under the administration of the Archdiocese of Sydney until Most Reverend James Murray was nominated Bishop of Maitland in 1865, taking possession of St John the Baptist Church West Maitland as his Cathedral on 1st November 1866.
15. From 1866 the Diocese extended to include Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Walgett and Coonamble. In 1887 the Diocese of Maitland reduced in size by exclusion of the Coonamble, Gunnedah and Tamworth districts.
16. In July 1933, Bishop Edmund Gleeson CSsR, officially announced that the Catholic Hall in Maitland would be converted to a Pro-Cathedral suitable as a place of worship. On November 26, 1933 the Catholic Hall was opened as the Pro-Cathedral and St John's officially closed.
17. In 1966 boundaries were again altered to exclude Kendall parish to Lismore but include the parishes of Belmont, Swansea, Toronto, Booragul and Teralba, which is the present extent of the Diocese.
18. In 1989 the Pro-Cathedral suffered damage as a result of an earthquake and was closed. The Pro-Cathedral was converted to its former use as a hall and St John's was re-opened as a Chapel for the Central Maitland area. On June 24, 1994 Bishop Leo Clarke conducted the ceremony of the Dedication of a Church and thus St John's became a Chapel for the area. The 1989 earthquake was also a catalyst to consolidate the diocesan administration offices on one site. This was achieved in 1995 by purchasing the Sisters of Mercy Convent at Hamilton and the former Sacred Heart Parish Primary School, Hamilton.
19. By Papal Brief dated 14th June 1995, the Diocese of "Maitland-Newcastle" was created and on 16th July 1995, the Sacred Heart Church in Hamilton became the Sacred Heart Cathedral for the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle.
20. The previous bishops of the Diocese of Maitland include: Charles Henry Davis OSB (1848 - 1854); James Murray (1865 - 1909); Patrick Vincent Dwyer (1909 - 1931); Edmund Gleeson CSsR (1931 - 1956); John Toohey (1956 - 1975); Leo Morris Clarke (1976 - 1995) and Michael Malone (1995 - 2011).

Structure

21. The Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle divides its many parishes into deaneries and pastoral regions.

Signed

Signed

2

22. The Diocese is divided into four deaneries: Newcastle, Hunter, Watagan and Myall. Each is headed by a priest, known as a dean, who has been appointed by the Bishop. A dean has a number of roles within their assigned region, including fostering support between parishes, sharing resources within the deanery and coordinating pastoral activity. He has, however, no jurisdiction over other parish priests in the conduct of their parishes.
23. There are 10 pastoral regions which encompass the wide geography of the Diocese.
24. The Blackbutt Pastoral Region consists of two parishes: All Saints Blackbutt South which has three mass centres and Blackbutt North which also has three mass centres. The area incorporates six primary schools and one high school.
25. The Chisholm Pastoral Region consists of eight parishes: Beresfield which has 1 mass centre; Dungog which has two mass centres; East Maitland which has one mass centre; Gresford which has two mass centres; Lochinvar which has one mass centre; Maitland which has four mass centres; Morpeth which has one mass centre and Rutherford which has one mass centre. The area incorporates seven primary schools and two high school campuses.
26. The City Pastoral Region consists of seven parishes: Broadmeadow which has one mass centre; Hamilton which has one mass centre; Mayfield which has one mass centre; Mayfield West which has one mass centre; Newcastle which has two mass centres; Stockton which has one mass centre and Tighes Hill which has one mass centre. The area incorporates four primary schools, two high schools and a centre for hearing impaired.
27. The Eastlakes Pastoral Region consists of two parishes: East Lake Macquarie which has three mass centres and MacKillop which also has three mass centres. The area incorporates five primary schools and one high school.
28. The Macquarie Pastoral Region consists of four parishes: Boolaroo-Warners Bay which has two mass centres; Booragul which has one mass centre; Morisset which has two mass centres and Toronto which has one mass centre. The area incorporates three primary schools and one high school.
29. The Northern Pastoral Region consists of five parishes: Forster Tuncurry which has two mass centres; Gloucester which has two mass centres; Krumbach which has one mass centre; Taree which has five mass centres and Wingham which has one mass centre. The area incorporates three primary schools and one high school.
30. The Port Stephens Pastoral Region consists of three parishes: Myall Coast which has three mass centres; Nelson Bay which has one mass centre and Raymond Terrace which has three mass centres. The area incorporates three primary schools.
31. The Upper Hunter Pastoral Region consists of five parishes: Denman which has one mass centre; Merriwa which has two mass centres; Murrurundi which has one mass centre; Muswellbrook which has two mass centres and Scone which has two mass centre. The area incorporates four primary schools and one high school.
32. The Vineyards Pastoral Region consists of four parishes: Branxton which has two mass centres; Cessnock which has two mass centres; Kurri Kurri which has two mass centres and

Signed

Signed - 3

61630_1:RSA:RSA

Singleton which has three mass centres. The area incorporates one infants school, three primary schools and one high school.

33. The Western Pastoral Region consists of two parishes: Sugarloaf which has two mass centres and Wallsend-Shortland which has two mass centres. The area incorporates four primary schools.

The Bishop's view as to the adequacy of the procedures and protocols in place within Diocese (during the time of the Bishop's tenure as Bishop) to deal with the reporting of child sexual abuse allegations to the NSW Police Force

34. In my opinion, the procedures and protocols are adequate. It is my understanding that, in my time as Bishop, there has been an obligation on the part of persons working in the Diocese to report allegations of child sexual abuse. My understanding is that the policy of the Diocese has been that such allegations were to be reported to the Diocesan Child Protection Unit (DCPU) who would in turn report to the Police. On 24 July 2013 I approved a modification to this policy whereby all such allegations are to be reported directly by individuals to the NSW Police and to either the DCPU or their supervisor. Where alleged crimes were committed against children and the alleged offender is deceased, the matter will still be reported to the Police for intelligence purposes under this policy.

Bishop Wright's views regarding an individual's obligation or responsibility to report allegations of sexual abuse of children to Police

35. My understanding is that individuals working within the Diocese are responsible under diocesan policy for seeing that allegations of sexual abuse of children are reported to the Police. See also my response in paragraph 34 above.

Receiving, recording and storing complaints or reports

36. Complaints or reports of sexual abuse by priests (committed, alleged or suspected) that come to the Diocese or the Bishop's Office are transmitted to the DCPU. Written complaints or notes of verbal complaints are copied to the DCPU. The documents containing or arising from such complaints are also filed in the Bishop's confidential files.
37. To the best of my knowledge, there have been no changes to the practice and procedure in my time. At some earlier time, a set of files specifically containing child protection/professional standards matters relating to a number of priests was created. I imagine this was in order to have such material readily accessible rather than mixed in with unrelated routine personnel file holdings.
38. The Zimmerman Services files are held in a secure room at the Zimmerman Services office. I do not know the details of access to these. The Bishop's files on priests generally and the 'confidential' files are stored in secure combination-locked cabinets in the Bishop's own office. The combination, to the best of my knowledge, is known only to myself, my Personal Assistant and the Vicar General of the Diocese.

The Diocese co-operation with Strike Force Lantle

Signed

Signed

4

39. To the best of my knowledge, the Diocese has co-operated fully with Strike Force Lantle. I understand that all serving personnel of the Diocese whom Strike Force Lantle wanted to interview made themselves available. Diocesan records were provided to Strike Force Lantle on request, and diocesan staff were assigned to search for all documents that Strike Force Lantle sought. I allowed access to all areas of Bishop's House, Maitland, and I understand that various parish priests did the same with parish facilities, in keeping with Strike Force Lantle's requests.

REDACTED

Bishop Wright's views regarding the responsibility of the Diocesan clerical and other staff to provide pastoral care to persons who have made disclosures to the Diocese and/or Police regarding sexual abuse committed by Diocesan priests (including in circumstances of extant criminal proceedings against such priest)

41. In my opinion, the Diocese has such a responsibility. The Victims Support Unit within the DCPU was established for just that purpose. I am also generally available to persons who have made disclosures, though my preference is not to first meet with them in the context of negotiations over settlements of 'civil action' claims against the Diocese. I would expect clergy to offer pastoral care to parishioners in those circumstances, to the extent that the persons involved wished to be in contact with them.

The manner and means by which Bishop Wright has sought to ensure that the Diocese provided assistance to the Inquiry

42. The Diocese has provided assistance to the Commission largely through Zimmerman Services acquiring and providing information to the Commission. I directed that the Commission be given unfettered access to all diocesan holdings of documents. I made contact, at the Commission's request, with two other bishops outside NSW in relation to the supply of relevant documents by them. On 1 March 2013 I issued a letter enjoining all members of the clergy, religious orders and the laity who may have relevant information to contact the Commission. Furthermore, briefings for diocesan staff, clergy and parishioners have repeatedly stated my intention that the Diocese would co-operate fully with the Commission.
43. I have also provided my public support for the Commission and its work.

Signed

Signed

5

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1900.

Declared at NEWCASTLE NSW [place] on 29th JULY 2013 [date]

Signed

[signature of declarant]

in the presence of an authorised witness, who states:

I, Alexander Koffin [name of authorised witness],

a SOLICITOR [qualification of authorised witness],

certify the following matters concerning the making of this statutory declaration by the person who made it: [* please cross out any text that does not apply]

1. *I saw the face of the person ~~OR *I did not see the face of the person because the person was wearing a face covering, but I am satisfied that the person has a special justification for not removing the covering.~~

2. *I have known the person for at least 12 months ~~OR *I have confirmed the person's identity using the following identification document:~~

..... [describe identification document relied on]

Signed

29.7.2013 [date]

[signature of authorised witness]

ALEXANDER KOFFIN

SOLICITOR

SYDNEY