



Diocese of Broken Bay

Communications

Statement

17 May 2010

Statement from Bishop David L. Walker DD Bishop for Broken Bay

Articles today in the Sydney Morning Herald and The Age refer to allegations of professional misconduct made against Fr Finian Egan, a priest of the Diocese of Broken Bay.

The alleged misconduct occurred during the 1980s, in a parish that is now part of the Diocese.

Claims that the Church 'failed' to act on these matters, are grossly inaccurate.

As with all matters of this nature, notification of the allegations was sent to the NSW Government Ombudsman and to the Police.

The two claimants chose not to take their claims to the Police, despite being encouraged to do so on many occasions.

The claimants chose to participate in the Church's, *Towards Healing* process, which works towards seeking justice and pastoral healing for all concerned.

Fr Egan was asked to stand aside from ministry while the process took place. He currently remains suspended from public ministry.

When a serious complaint is made, I always ask the priest to stand down from ministry.

During the *Towards Healing* process, it has been my practice that, should the priest's family or close friend ask for his involvement in a particular event, e.g. a wedding, it can only be done with my explicit approval.

In August 2009, Fr Egan con-celebrated a Mass to commemorate his Jubilee of priesthood. This was undertaken without my approval.

The initial *Towards Healing* process of investigation has now been completed, and I acknowledge that this initial process has taken some time, which may have caused additional stress to those involved.

Throughout this process Fr Egan has denied the claims. As the Church's process does not determine guilt or innocence, but a finding based on a 'balance of probability' standard, Fr Egan's future must be very carefully discerned.

After the *Towards Healing* process, I have to further investigate the issue before making a final determination as to Fr Egan's future in ministry. My determination can be further appealed according to Canon Law, therefore must be well grounded as Canon Law requires a higher degree of certitude than 'balance of probability'.

When I do make my final decision, it must be submitted to the NSW Government Ombudsman, who has the power to request a review.

It is in the best interest of all concerned that a complainant goes to the Police. To do so means that matters can be investigated with the full resources of the State and ultimately decided in a way that is acceptable to the community – ‘beyond reasonable doubt.’

Towards Healing is neither a compensation process, nor an acceptance of liability if the outcome is upheld in favour of the complainant. Where appropriate, an offer of assistance may be made to complainants as part of the Church’s commitment to pastoral care and compassionate support.

I am committed to ensure that any complaint of misconduct by any representative of the Church is acted upon with diligence, with justice to all and with due process. I believe that the Diocese of Broken Bay has endeavoured to fulfil its obligations in this regard.

Abuse is a crime that cannot be tolerated.

I urge anyone who needs assistance with any matters related to abuse to contact either the Police, or the Professional Standards Office of the Catholic Church, *Towards Healing* on Tel: 1300 369 977.

For further information please contact

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