

Past apologies and statements

Archbishops' apologies

Archbishop Glenn Davies

"In the 1990s, Archbishop Harry Goodhew addressed the serious issue of sexual abuse in the Church and established the Professional Standards Unit in the Diocese. It had become well known in the society and in the Church, that clergy and lay workers in our Diocese had been at fault. Archbishop Goodhew gave an apology to survivors of abuse and his successor, Archbishop Peter Jensen, followed his lead and likewise gave an apology. And I, in like manner, give my unreserved apology to all those survivors who have suffered sexual abuse from clergy or lay workers in our Diocese. We have betrayed your trust. As I meet with these survivors, I am appalled as I listen to their stories of being abused as children but encouraged that they have come forward to bring such behaviour into the light. Abuse of any kind should never have happened, and I am deeply sorry. But we want to see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community and that is why we are addressing this issue as seriously as we can, with a heightened awareness of the problem and with professional development for our clergy and lay workers, so that this kind of behaviour will never be seen again in our churches."

"I totally support the stand that our Diocese and leaders have taken in stating our total abhorrence of sexual misconduct and any abuse of children. I am committed to strengthening our culture of 'safe ministry' through education and professional development of our clergy and lay people, as we seek to maintain the standards of Christian ministry which are grounded in the teaching of the Bible."

Archbishop Peter Jensen

"Our reputation cannot be restored by acting as though certain events never occurred. We are going to have to learn once more what it is to live by grace and thus to show repentance as a community. Indeed, there is a deep connection between the Mission and our response to this problem. The Diocese as a whole has a good reputation for care with integrity in churches, schools, welfare work, retirement villages. But shameful cases of abuse of trust do exist, and, as we look back at our history we see that we have not always handled matters well. I do not claim to have responded adequately in all cases either, but I am seeking to be fair, to redress wrongs and to prevent recurrences.

Ministry is a character business; lose your character and, effectively, you lose your ministry. Of course there is grace and forgiveness for those who have erred; but part of the very business of coming to grips with what we have done is the recognition by our erring pastors or lay leaders that various forms of ministry are no longer an option. Sometimes this involves the loss of a position or a licence; sometimes the surrender or deprivation of orders. On the broader front of our own church's life, there is also need for public contrition and apology as well as an active care for victims. If the public recognition of our weaknesses brings our church into disrepute, it is still necessary to live the truth. It may be that we will all the more effectively witness to the grace of God by living under it ourselves: but this involves painful repentance, not easy grace."

Archbishop Peter Jensen, Presidential Address at Synod, 2002

Archbishop Harry Goodhew

“What I can say, for the present and for the future, my commitment is that nothing will stand in the way of us dealing appropriately with people... The primary concern will be first for those who feel that they are victims so that they are heard and dealt with... I hope that the community and the Church will see the determined stand that I am taking to make sure that we have the best procedures in place as a way of saying: if we’ve failed in the past we are sorry, but we are seeking to make as sure as we possibly can that if it occurs again, and we are seeking to see that it doesn’t occur, but if it should it will be dealt with.”

Stateline interview with Archbishop Goodhew, 10 May 1996

Synod resolutions and other statements

Synod of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

Resolution 48/15 Repentance and redress for child abuse (20 October 2015)

“Synod acknowledges that the Anglican Diocese of Sydney –

- (a) continues to publicly repent of and apologise for child abuse suffered within the institutions of the Diocese, and
- (b) continues to engage with survivors as they come forward to offer redress that may include –
 - (i) an acknowledgment of the abuse,
 - (ii) financial assistance,
 - (iii) provision of specific services including counselling, and
 - (iv) a meaningful personal apology.”

Synod of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

Excerpt from Synod Resolution 26/09 Endorsement of Statement made on behalf of past Care Providers (26 October 2009)

“Synod ... adds its endorsement to the statement made publicly on behalf of past care providers by Bishop Forsyth [on 19 September 2009 at a Healing Service organised by the State Government in conjunction with Care providers and Care Leavers for those who grew up in institutional care] which read –

On behalf of the non-government service providers represented here today, I acknowledge that many children placed in our care until 1990 did not receive the consistent and loving care that they needed and deserved.

It is now recognised that caring for children and young people who cannot live with their family must include regular and meaningful family contact, placement with siblings, consistent care givers and support for them to understand their experience of being in care. We acknowledge that for many children and young people, this was not the case.

For the children and young people who did not receive the consistent love and care that they needed and deserved, we are sorry.

For the children and young people who were neglected, mistreated and abused, we are sorry.

For the families who entrusted their children to us and whose expectations were not met, we are sorry.

To the Forgotten Australians, we stand committed to responding promptly, compassionately and respectfully to those who wish to approach us about their care experiences.

I, on behalf of the non-government service providers represented here am privileged to be part of this Healing Service and commemoration for the Forgotten Australians.”

Synod of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

Synod Resolution 19/04 Inquiry into Children in Institutional Care (25 October 2004)

“Synod expresses its deep regret at the harm caused by the failure to provide appropriate care. In particular Synod apologises for the physical, psychological and social harm and suffering experienced by any care leavers as a result of their experiences in any institution run under the auspices of the Anglican Church, Diocese of Sydney. Synod encourages such persons to make themselves known so that support, personal apology and appropriate assistance can be offered.”

NSW Provincial Synod

Synod Resolution 6/02 Sexual Misconduct (30 August 2002)

By this resolution Provincial Synod expressed -

- (a) regret for all incidents of sexual abuse within the Church and its agencies and apologised unreservedly to all victims of such abuse,
- (b) support for the initiatives of the Bishops' Conference and General Synod Standing Committee in developing guidelines, protocols and procedures to prevent sexual abuse and to deal with claims of abuse,
- (c) requested that an attitude of zero tolerance to any sexual abuse be the guiding principle in developing these guidelines, protocols and procedures, and
- (d) encouraged the whole Church to take up this opportunity to review how the gospel of Christ is lived out in all relationships.

Standing Committee of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia (15 March 2002)

“The Anglican Church declares its abhorrence of any sexual abuse of children. Such behaviour is clearly contrary to both the gospel and the law...However, the church regrets that there have been instances of abuse involving some Anglican clergy, church officers and institutions and apologises to all victims of such misconduct for their ongoing hurt and the breakdown in pastoral relationships.

The Church is sorry that in some places it has failed in the past adequately to respond to claims of abuse. It has now initiated steps to ensure that appropriate protocols are in place across Australia and commits itself to be open and transparent in dealing with this matter.”