

MEDIA RELEASE

Patrick Comben AO will be deposed from Holy Orders following a review of a recommendation to permanently end his ordained ministry in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Comben was ordained a deacon in the Diocese of Brisbane in November 2000 and served as Registrar and General Manager of the Diocese of Grafton from 2004 to 2010.

The decision follows an investigation, a hearing before the Diocese's Professional Standards Board, and the recent review of the Board's recommendation.

The Board found that, in relation to five separate matters involving allegations of abuse by members of the clergy, Comben failed to fulfil his duties as Registrar and General Manager, and in carrying out some of the functions of the Director of Professional Standards.

The Board found that Comben:

1. did nothing to hold accountable those — including members of the clergy — facing serious allegations of sexual and other abuse of children;
2. failed to ensure complaints were properly investigated, undermining protections for vulnerable people, including children, and damaging the Church's own standing; and
3. showed no regard for the harm done to claimants, their ongoing welfare, or the further damage his inaction caused to the reputation of the Diocese and the wider Church.

The Notice of Decision by the Bishop of Grafton is on the Diocesan Website here:

[Notice-of-Decision.](#)

Bishop of Grafton Dr Murray Harvey said: "The Diocese of Grafton is especially mindful of the survivors of historical abuse who brought these matters to us, and who have waited a long time for this to be resolved."

He said the decision balanced the interests of all parties with a responsibility to the many clergy, deacons and church workers — past and present — who serve faithfully.

"Any failure by a deacon or priest to report abuse when they become aware of it, breaches the standards of the Church and must call into question their fitness for office," Dr Harvey said. "A failure by one church worker reflects on all of us. Our decisions must be ones that clergy, parishioners and the wider community can have confidence in."

Dr Harvey said the Church's disciplinary and fitness for office processes draw wide public interest, and it was important the decision be made public so people can see the care taken in such matters, and so clergy can reflect on what is expected of them.

"I continue to pray for those who have been harmed by sexual abuse perpetrated by people in the Church who hold positions of power and trust. I am committed to ensuring the Diocese continues to listen to survivors, supports their healing, and strengthens the safeguards that protect children and vulnerable people today."

-ENDS-

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