
Friday, 18 September 2026

Dear Sisters and Brothers

Deposition from the Exercise of Holy Orders of former Registrar & General Manager, Patrick Comben

The Honourable Patrick Comben AO, former Registrar and General Manager of the Diocese will be deposed from Holy Orders. The decision follows an investigation, a hearing before the Diocese's Professional Standards Board and an independent review of the Board's determination.

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

The Board found that Pat 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 is on the Diocesan Website here: [Notice-of-Decision](#)

I am especially mindful of the survivors of historical abuse, especially Mr Richard "Tommy" Campion, who brought these matters to us, and who have waited too long for this to be resolved.

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. 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.

The Board's recommendation and my decision have sought to balance the interests of all parties, including our responsibility to the many clergy, deacons and church workers — past and present — who serve faithfully.

The Church's disciplinary and fitness for office processes draw wide public interest, and it was important, therefore, that the decision be made public so people can see the care taken in such matters, and so everyone in the Church 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. Along with others in the Diocese, I am committed to ensuring we continue to listen to survivors, support their healing, and strengthen the safeguards that protect children and vulnerable people today.”

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read '+ Murray'.

Dr Murray Harvey
Bishop of Grafton

