



MEDIA RELEASE

This morning Fr Kelvin Sharkey, a retired priest of the Diocese, pleaded guilty in the Wollongong District Court, to three offences relating to the sexual abuse of a minor. The incidents occurred between 1969 and the mid-1970's.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Wollongong, I am deeply saddened by the abuse by Fr Sharkey and I offer my sincere apology for the pain that has resulted to the person and the family.

I wish to assure the community that the Diocese is committed to the protection of children and young people. The Diocese has in place comprehensive child protection policies and procedures and seeks to ensure that the highest standards are maintained.

Since 1996, the Catholic Church in Australia has operated under *Towards Healing*, a set of principles and procedures for responding to complaints of abuse against personnel of the Catholic Church. Where criminal behaviour is involved, complainants are advised to notify the police.

Any person who has particular concerns arising from this matter and wishes to make a complaint or avail themselves of specialised assistance is invited to telephone the Catholic Church's *Towards Healing* Helpline on 1300 369 977.

I urge any person with a complaint of mistreatment or abuse to come forward to the appropriate authority.

Acknowledging that due respect must be accorded to the criminal justice system and the matter properly dealt with before the court, it is inappropriate to make any further comment.

I pray that the matter may be brought to resolution with healing for those concerned.

Wollongong
16 November 2009