



MEDIA ALERT – Archdiocese of Brisbane

21 August 2017

New Director of Safeguarding and Professional Standards in Brisbane

Absorbing the failures unearthed at the Royal Commission, the Archdiocese of Brisbane has strengthened its efforts towards protecting children and vulnerable adults with a new role.

The Office of Safeguarding and Professional Standards Services was opened on August 17, with Mark Eustance appointed its first Director.

It is the latest step in what has been a significant investment of effort and resources towards ensuring local parishes and communities provide safe environments for the vulnerable.

In 2014 Archbishop Coleridge appointed former Brisbane Catholic Education principal Michele Vuleta as the first Safeguarding Officer.

Two years later an external audit by the firm Hanrick Curran concluded the Archdiocese had demonstrably complied with its updated 2014 policy and advanced well in addressing potential risks.

This included a revision of recruitment and induction procedures for staff and volunteers, as well as the consistent offering of detailed training courses across the Archdiocese, including for all Centacare Community services managers and coordinators.

Mr Eustance, a highly credentialed former police inspector and head of Professional Standards Office for Queensland, said he looked toward building upon the positive progress and pro-active stance being fostered by Archbishop Mark Coleridge.

“To date, the Archdiocese has taken significant steps in the implementation of its safeguarding children and vulnerable adults policy, but there is more work to be done,” Mr Eustance said.

“The Royal Commission will issue its final report in December this year and I believe we can expect a lot of very strong recommendations.

“The new Catholic Professional Standards Ltd will need to drive the change that is required and I would like to see the Archdiocese set leading practice across the Church in Australia.

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“A pre-requisite for safeguarding and the prevention of abuse and misconduct is accepting that, as a cleric, religious, employee or volunteer in the church, you have a fundamental duty to minimise the risk of harm to and protect others who engage with the church, particularly children and other vulnerable people.”

In announcing the appointment, Archbishop Coleridge said he felt confident the forward progress on safety outcomes would continue.

“Mark Eustance will be known and respected for the work he did in what was a provincial or state wide role for the Professional Standards Office,” he said.

“With this new position, focused squarely on Archdiocese, I look forward to the new energy Mark will bring to this very important service in the Archdiocese.”

Archbishop Coleridge, who had several turns on the stand at the Royal Commission’s final hearings in February, has been firm in his view the Church must do all in its power to learn from the past.

Speaking to The Catholic Leader in September 2016 he was acutely aware of the harm that has been caused by those in whose care children should have been safe.

“We continue to express our sorrow for the hurt that has occurred,” Archbishop Coleridge said.

“I am personally committed to ensuring that the Archdiocese does everything it can to learn from the lessons of the past.

“Not only do we need to learn more, but we need to teach more. We need to teach our communities the truth of abuse and the truth of what its prevention requires.

“The purpose of this teaching will be to create and sustain genuinely safe environments; and that will involve not just new processes, procedures and protocols. It will involve a change in the culture – a culture which has allowed abuse to happen and to be so badly mishandled when it came to light.”

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