



# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Today the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand has published its abuse statistics as part of its participation in the Royal Commission into Abuse in State and Faith-Based organisations. One of the reasons the Church asked to be part of the Royal Commission was our recognition that we have to be transparent about our tragic history and acknowledge that priests and religious and lay people employed by the Church have abused, and their abuse has inflicted immense damage on vulnerable people entrusted to the Church's care and that this abuse scars many of them with ongoing trauma.

For this the Church is deeply apologetic and deeply ashamed. As the current Bishop of Auckland and Apostolic Administrator of Hamilton, I personally want to apologise for the harm caused by those who have abused in the two Dioceses and to express my commitment to working to create a safe Church and to working with survivors.

The statistics make very sad and distressing reading. As part of our response to the Royal Commission we have provided details of every complaint that we have received. The statistics include all complaints made, even those not necessarily upheld. Complaints are upheld on balance of probability. The statistics include complaints of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. The number of complaints are far too many, particularly up to the 1970s. The fact that complaints continue to be received is a reminder that we are dealing with the flawed dimension of human nature. This is not just a Church problem, this is also a problem in our society.

For too long abuse has been a taboo topic that was never talked about. Now survivors are finding their voice. It is their courage and their call for the Church to change that has prompted the safeguarding workshops that have been offered in your community. As a society we are more aware of abuse and something that the safeguarding training underlines is that if you see something that doesn't look right, talk to someone else about it. Abuse thrives in a culture of secrecy. This is why it is important that we bring it into the light.

For those entering the seminary or religious life today, there is a robust screening on their suitability for ministry. Their formation has a strong human and psychological dimension that was not available in earlier years and that again assesses their suitability for ministry. The Church is committed to learning from the mistakes of our past and as we form men and women for ministry in the Church of today.

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At the same time the Church is committed to respond to those who have been abused. If any person has been abused by a priest or religious, we invite you to take your complaint to the Police or the Church's National Office for Professional Standards (phone number 0800-114 622, or via email: [prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz)). We are committed to responding to your complaint and journeying with you to the extent that you wish to engage with the Church. I have learnt much from the survivors I have met. One of things that I have learnt is that media exposure of abuse can be retraumatising. Please make sure you have someone to talk to or feel free to contact me to arrange any help we might be able to offer.

My hope for the Royal Commission remains that it will help not only the Church but also our wider society confront the issues of sexual abuse in our country. Let us as Church remain committed to break the cycle of abuse that is sadly so prevalent in our communities so that our tamariki of today and tomorrow may grow up in a society and Church that is safe and that nourishes them to grow to the fullness of their potential.

Yours sincerely in Christ the Good Shepherd

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Steve Lowe". The signature is written in a cursive style.

✠ Steve Lowe  
Bishop of Auckland