CONCERNED CATHOLICS CANBERRA GOULBURN

MEDIA RELEASE

A Catholic future - Out of hope not fear

Opponents of reform of the Catholic Church in Australia risk doing enormous further damage to the church and its own community, a former member of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Robert Fitzgerald AM, says.

Mr Fitzgerald is to address a forum of the Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn group next Tuesday, 16 April, on the theme Governance for our Church – Out of hope, not fear.

He says that while many in the church are grieving and struggling, now is the time to listen, reflect and act.

"The Royal Commission has exposed not only the truth of abuse and wrongdoing in religious and other institutions, but has revealed deep flaws in the governance, leadership and culture of the Catholic and other churches," Mr Fitzgerald says.

The very integrity and legitimacy of the church leadership had been challenged. "Acknowledging the truth that has been revealed, the Church must be open to better governance, improved leadership and a culture that places the interest of the most vulnerable at its heart.

"The current models of governing are losing legitimacy within the church communities and society.

"Those in church who continue to deny the extent and impact of abuse and persistently hinder reform do enormous damage to the interests of the church and its community of believers. Their approaches failed us in the past and they will fail us into the future.

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Email: concerned.catholics.cangbn@gmail.com Web: www.concernedcatholicscanberra.org
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"Critical to restoring legitimacy are models of governance that are based on the voice and participation of women and men, whether lay, religious or ordained. They must be based out of hope not fear. They must be designed to serve the people not institutional reputations and privilege.

"Those who have been abused demand no less that we now act, so that the wrongs of the past are never repeated.

"Every church should be a place that is safe, honest, nurturing and inspiring for all, especially the young and vulnerable," Mr Fitzgerald said.

Robert Fitzgerald will be speaking at the Concerned Catholics of Canberra Goulburn event at the Chapel, the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, 15 Blackall Street, Barton, at 7.30 pm Tuesday 16 April.

Contact Mark Metherell 0417 603 697