



# DIOCESE of PARRAMATTA

28 July 2017

## RESPONSE TO THE ABC

In recent days there has been much discussion around an [ABC report](#) into Christianity and domestic violence.

This report has been heavily criticised by some of the very people the journalists relied upon for the research which was cited in the report, who have stated the ABC "[story fails the basic journalistic test of fairness](#)" and is "[illogical, unfair and quite possibly inaccurate.](#)"

Prior to publication, the Diocese of Parramatta was contacted by the ABC and asked to answer several questions around this serious issue of domestic violence.

The Diocese of Parramatta responded promptly and also gave the journalist other avenues to pursue their research by providing contacts to other prominent Catholic organisations who are well-versed on the issue of domestic violence.

Since the publication of this ABC report, it has become clear that our response was ignored.

To use the words of the journalist we dealt with at the time, it is "disappointing - and a little strange" that our response was not included for publication.

For the record, the Diocese of Parramatta informed the journalist that:

- Bishop Vincent has said a correct reading of Scripture leads people to understand the equal dignity of men and women, and relationships based on mutuality and love.
- This is further enforced by other teachings in the Catholic Church:
  - o Pope Francis: "we must always say 'no' to violence in the home"
  - o Pope St John Paul II: "Transcending the established norms of this own culture, Jesus treated women with openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness."
  - o Catholic Bishops of Victoria: "We, the Catholic Bishops of Victoria, condemn domestic violence in the strongest possible terms, and call on parishes, church organisations and people of faith to play a part in its elimination."
  - o The Australian Catholic Bishops stress that violence against women has no place in our society. - <https://www.catholic.org.au/acbc-media/downloads/all-downloads/bishops-1/media-releases-1/1584-elimination-of-violence-against-women-statement/file>

Further, what is also "disappointing – and a little strange" is that we now learn this was a year-long investigation, yet the Diocese of Parramatta was given less than two weeks to respond to the questions which were presented.

Surely, for such an important topic, we would have been contacted much sooner than the tight deadline which was given.

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Domestic violence is a serious, and at-times deadly issue that must not be ignored. Confronting domestic violence is not helped by reports which do not convey the whole message, on this issue or by the selective reporting of the facts.

If you or someone you know needs assistance to escape domestic violence I would strongly urge you to contact NSW Police. The Diocese of Parramatta primarily through CatholicCare Social Services also assists those in need and can be contacted on (02) 8822 2222.

Yours in Christ,

**Very Rev Peter G. Williams**

Episcopal Vicar for Social Welfare

Vicar General & Moderator of the Curia