



Diocese of Parramatta
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17 June 2020

Response to the ABC – 17 June 2020

There is a report about the Diocese of Parramatta on the ABC today.

The headlines read “Church in Parramatta asks priests to donate JobKeeper money to the Diocese”.

This statement is untrue to the extent that no JobKeeper money was diverted to the Diocesan funds.

To clarify the position of the Diocese of Parramatta on this issue and to provide context, it is well-known that religious organisations are entitled to make use of the JobKeeper program.

This is public information and is not something new.

As parishes were forced to shut down for months due to COVID-19, collection plate donations which go towards the clergy stipend came to an abrupt halt. In some instances, this meant a 100% drop in donations to some parishes.

Some members of the clergy were eligible for JobKeeper. They may or may not choose to avail themselves of the program. The money they received was used to help offset the loss of those donations.

Given the extremely rapid nature and changing legislation around COVID-19, the Diocese of Parramatta sought independent advice on this issue to ensure we were adhering to the requirements.

Based on this independent advice, and to ensure we kept within the spirit and intention of JobKeeper, it was decided the best use of the funds was to direct clergy to keep the payment.

Clergy were free to make a voluntary contribution to the clergy support fund, if they chose to do so.

The Diocese of Parramatta is grateful to the Federal Government for this assistance.

We are mindful of the many in the community who are doing it tough during this crisis.

We are confident that our clergy-recipients of JobKeeper will put the taxpayer-funded money to good use.

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