



Adelaide appoints Survivor Advocate – a first for the Anglican Church of Australia

Providing a first point of contact for survivors of abuse is the central focus of a newly created role for the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide.

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Sharon Lockwood

Sharon Lockwood has been appointed to the position of Survivor Advocate, understood to be the first role of its kind created within the Anglican Church of Australia.

In this role she will work with the Diocese of Adelaide to develop a range of support and advocacy services for people who have been subjected to abuse within the auspices of the churches and other institutions of the Diocese.

Sharon brings to this role 30 years of experience in social work practice with survivors and she has worked in a variety of settings including Respond SA, Victim Support Service, the University of Adelaide and Yarrow Place Rape and Sexual Assault Service, where she worked for over 21 years.

The Survivor Advocate role is part time, and she continues to work part time for the University of South Australia as Counsellor and Training Coordinator (Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment), on initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual harm.

Sharon understands the challenges and barriers faced by survivors in seeking to have their support and justice needs met.

Being believed, having information about the options available and helping to separate from any sense of self blame or shame are among the most important therapeutic justice needs shared by survivors. Self-blame and shame are common effects of sexual harm for survivors created by the victim blaming myths, stereotypes, and misconceptions that have historically prevailed.

Survivors of abuse come from a diverse range of backgrounds and different gender roles and social norms can impact the effects of the abuse for survivors and create additional barriers to help seeking. For example, men can face additional challenges in disclosing their experiences of sexual abuse.

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“All communities have been socialised to view sexual offences through this lens of victim blame and in doing so we have unfairly attached scepticism, stigma and shame to survivors, which has a silencing effect”, she said.

By learning more about the realities of sexual harm everyone can play a role in helping to support survivors, creating a flow on effect of destigmatising sexual harm more broadly across society.

“As a community we are increasingly recognising the importance of engaging in cultural change to enable the safety of women and children in terms of preventing and addressing gender-based violence, which makes this such an exciting time to be in this unique role”, Sharon said.

She also observes that “Historically institutions have not always understood or responded well to the needs of survivors, and this too is changing. Acknowledging this and seeking to learn more about survivor centric and trauma informed approaches is an important demonstration of institutional courage,” she said.

Sharon will provide co-ordination and support for survivors in Healing Steps, provide executive officer support to the Survivor Advocacy Group, assistance with the direct personal response process for survivors involved with the National Redress Scheme and offer survivor centric and trauma informed insights and improvements to policies, processes and practices for the Diocese.

Sharon works Wednesdays, Thursdays & alternate Fridays and works independently of the Diocesan Offices in an off-site location. She can be contacted on 0420 519 113 or at survivoradvocate@adelaideanglicans.com

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