



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Catholic Church has begun work on Royal Commission recommendations

Statement from Australian Catholic Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference welcomes the Turnbull Government's response today to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, including measures to standardise approaches to child safety and research to help prevent child sexual abuse in the future.

The Catholic Church has already begun its work to respond to the recommendations of the Royal Commission. Some of those responses began during the course of the Royal Commission.

Across the country, child safeguarding offices have been established or strengthened in dioceses, archdioceses and other Catholic organisations to streamline and centralise work on protecting children and young people in Church settings.

At the national level, Catholic Professional Standards Ltd has been working with Church agencies, other non-government organisations and a number of government agencies to produce consistent national safeguarding standards for the Church.

The Catholic Church was the first non-government institution to join the national redress scheme on the national level. The Church had called for such a scheme over recent years and is firmly committed to providing redress to survivors who were abused in Catholic settings.

The Church also has established the Implementation Advisory Group, made up mostly of lay people, which is helping the bishops decide how to respond to the Royal Commission.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference is considering advice from internal and external stakeholders, including the Implementation Advisory Group. The Federal Government's response will also inform the bishops' response in important ways.

Regarding the issue of the seal of confession, the Catholic Church does not view the sacramental seal as incompatible with maintaining child safety.

The Church wants measures that will genuinely make environments safer for children. There has been no compelling evidence to suggest that legal abolition of the seal of confession will help in that regard.

Protecting children and upholding the integrity of Catholic sacraments are not mutually exclusive and the Church wants to continue to work with government to ensure both can be achieved and maintained.

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