



**JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

**December 16, 2021**

## **Church leaders: Child safety is central to mission**

The fourth report from the Catholic Church to the National Office for Child Safety outlines initiatives across dozens of Catholic entities as they continue to strengthen their efforts to keep all people safe in Church settings.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia accepted the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that organisations provide annual progress reports on their work to protect children.

The Bishops Conference and CRA have today published their fourth such report, which draws from reports from Catholic dioceses, religious institutes and other organisations. More than 50 Catholic entities provided reports that are summarised across the whole-of-Church report.

In the report's foreword, Bishops Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge and CRA president Br Peter Carroll FMS acknowledge the "shameful past" that reveals "we let down too many children and many thousands were abused in our settings".

"We are resolved to strengthen our commitment to children by placing their safety front and centre in our mission," they wrote.

"Indeed, the mission of the Church can only be carried out if we show, in concrete ways, that we have evolved, that we are deeply sorry for the abuse that has occurred and that we want to bring some healing, where that is possible."

The annual report speaks of national initiatives, including the establishment of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited and projects of the Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia, as well as approaches adopted at the local level.

Archbishop Coleridge and Br Peter say the report shows there is growing consistency in the way Church entities are responding to child safety and, increasingly, the safety of adults at risk. But the report also highlights some innovative responses, including in the publication of books and resources, the establishment of new structures and collaboration across organisations.

The report can be found at: <https://bit.ly/CatholicNOCS2021>