



MEDIA RELEASE

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Catholic Church responds to the release of the Royal Commission Report

Townsville Catholic Bishop, Most Reverend Tim Harris has joined with all Bishops and religious leaders in welcoming the final report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that was handed down today. The final report includes a large number of recommendations, many of which have significant impact of the way the Catholic Church operates in Australia.

“The report marks the end of the Royal Commission and the start of yet more work to make our Church as safe as possible for children and to deliver justice for survivors” Bishop Tim said.

“All of us across the Church must now examine the Royal Commission’s recommendations, take on board how best they can be incorporated into Church life and then to get on with the job of making the appropriate changes.”

“The Royal Commission has revealed very clearly that over many decades the institutional responses to child sexual abuse, have for the most part, been a major failure.”

President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Archbishop Denis Hart, said the release of the final report is the culmination of almost five years of intense examination of the way in which many different institutions, including the Catholic Church, have historically failed children.

“This is a shameful past, in which a prevailing culture of secrecy and self-protection led to unnecessary suffering for many victims and their families,” Archbishop Hart said.

Throughout the Royal Commission process the Catholic Church has provided all the assistance possible. More than any other institution the Catholic Church has contributed to all the different activities of the Royal Commission from engagement in the issues paper and round table process to being one of the strongest voices in support of the Commission’s proposed redress scheme.

Bishop Tim said “We, like governments and the rest of the community, need to sit down, go through the report and then come back to the community with a comprehensive, considered response – this is what we will do.”

“The Royal Commission process has been extremely painful for all, including the Church, but it has also been liberating for victims who have had their say and have had their opportunity to hold the Church leadership to account.”

Throughout the duration of the Royal Commission the Catholic Church has renewed its focus on child and vulnerable adult protections. There have been considerable reforms over past years and it is now the job of leaders in the Church to continue this work. “The standing of the Church can only be restored by action – words are no longer enough” Bishop Tim said. “Catholics and the community more broadly want to see change and as leaders of the Church it is our job to make the decisions and then implement the reforms.”

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