



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

15 September 2015

ARCHBISHOP HART WELCOMES RELEASE OF ROYAL COMMISSION REPORTS

I welcome the release of yesterday's two reports by The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse. The first of these is the final report on Redress and Civil Litigation and the second is the Royal Commission's report of Case Study No. 16 into the Melbourne Response conducted in August 2014.

The purpose of the public hearing into the Melbourne Response was to inquire into its effectiveness in responding to victims of child sexual abuse and allegations of child sexual abuse against personnel of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

The public hearing heard from and considered the experiences of the Foster family, Paul Hersbach and a victim known as AFA who engaged in the Melbourne Response and in the case of the Fosters, also sought redress through civil proceedings.

As noted in the Report on Case Study 16, the Melbourne Response from its beginning in October 1996 up until 31 March 2014 has investigated 351 complaints of child sexual abuse and has upheld and compensated 97% of those complaints.

The simultaneous release of both Reports will be important in assisting the Church, non-Government and Government institutions better address and respond to the scourge of child sexual abuse which has occurred.

A concern raised in the Report on the Melbourne Response relates to discouraging the reporting of allegations of sexual abuse involving children to the Police. The Archdiocese will review the terms of appointment of the Independent Commissioners concerning the rights of victims and the reporting of abuse to the police.

I have also noted the comment made by the Royal Commission that the Melbourne Response is not sufficiently independent of the Archdiocese in its operation and of the potential for conflicts of interest and will carefully examine how its independence can be enhanced and potential conflicts of interest be avoided.

I urge the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to accept the recommendation made by the Royal Commission for the establishment of a single national redress scheme to cover government and non-government institutions and join with the Royal Commission in asking the Australian Government to determine and announce its position by the end of 2015.

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