



## AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Media Release

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### **ARCHBISHOP HART RESPONDS TO THE ROYAL COMMISSION'S REPORT INTO CASE STUDY 35**

The Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne Denis Hart has today received the report by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse into the Archdiocese of Melbourne in Case Study 35 covering the period up to the introduction of the Melbourne Response in 1996.

The Archbishop accepts the report's conclusion that the Case Study showed that there was a prevailing culture of secrecy within the Archdiocese in relation to complaints which were dealt with in a way that sought to protect the Archdiocese from scandal and liability and prioritised the interests of the Church over those of victims.

He said that mishandling of complaints against priests and church personnel and the resulting lack of response to such complaints led to unnecessary suffering for many victims and their families.

He said that "the Church should be a safe place for children but the events point to it having been unsafe for all those who are victims. Where this abuse occurred resulting from the passivity or inactivity of predecessors of mine, I sincerely apologise and accept responsibility".

Archbishop Hart also made the point that he was now confident that the Archdiocese and its parishes and schools have the policies, codes and processes required to ensure child safe environments and to deal with complaints.

He added that there was a firm commitment from all those in parishes, schools and across the Archdiocese "to the ongoing safety and well-being of children in our care".

The Archbishop said "as a Church we will learn from this Case Study and the upcoming Royal Commission's report and I make a commitment to greater transparency in our processes, in order to assist victims and their families".

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