

MEDIA RELEASE

Archdiocese of Brisbane responds to Royal Commission findings in *Towards Healing* Case



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A suite of new initiatives and stronger child protection policies are part of the response by Brisbane Archbishop, Mark Coleridge, to the release of the Royal Commission's findings into the way the Archdiocese dealt with a survivor of child sexual abuse in 1999.

In a public statement released yesterday Archbishop Coleridge has once again apologised to survivors of child sexual abuse and outlined how the Archdiocese has responded since appearing before the Royal Commission in December 2013, as part of the its examination of the Church's *Towards Healing* process.

As part of the response to the Commission's hearing and its findings the Archdiocese has:

- Employed a full time Child Protection Officer to work with parishes and agencies since January 2014. In her first twelve months, she has
 - prepared a Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
 - conducted workshops and training throughout the Archdiocese for priests and parish staff
- From early 2014, upgraded the position of Queensland Director of Professional Standards from a part-time to full-time position with the addition of further resources;
- Offered all survivors of child sexual abuse now coming forward unconditional, ongoing counselling with outside therapists;
- Arranged for USA Dr Monica Applewhite, a world expert on child protection, to conduct workshops and seminars with priests and others in the Archdiocese in July;
- Ensured the Archbishop is now personally involved with all complaints coming forward and the progress of their complaint.

The Royal Commission examined the treatment of a number of survivors of child sexual abuse within four Catholic Church institutions including the examination of a 1999 complaint under *Towards Healing* concerning the sexual abuse of a minor by a then priest of the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Archbishop Coleridge said that since appearing before the Commission in 2013 he had met with the complainant and apologised for the way she was treated by the Church.

"The Archdiocese has seriously failed this complainant and others. Again on behalf of the Church I apologise to all who have been betrayed by abuse and to those who were let down by the Church when it did not follow its own *Towards Healing* policies," he said.

CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council said the response of the Archdiocese of Brisbane shows a commitment to working with survivors and building stronger child protection policies and services in the Archdiocese.

“Working as hard as possible to ensure the historical abuse of children never happens again and that survivors are treated with justice and compassion is at the heart of what we are doing,” Mr Sullivan said.

“The response by the Archdiocese of Brisbane is a good start in working towards these goals,” Mr Sullivan said.

Read Archbishop Coleridge’s letter here

<http://brisbanecatholic.org.au/articles/statement-by-archbishop-mark-coleridge-on-the-royal-commission/>

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church’s engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For more information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>