



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC
BISHOPS CONFERENCE



Bishops Conference and CRA publish Royal Commission update

MEDIA RELEASE

August 31, 2023

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia have published a report updating the Church's progress in implementing the relevant recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

On the five-year anniversary of the initial response, the report is part of the Church's ongoing efforts to be publicly accountable for how it is working to create, maintain and enhance safe environments for children and all people who are at risk.

Following the format of the initial response, the new report lists each relevant Royal Commission recommendation, the response that was given in 2018 and a high-level summary of work undertaken in the five years since.

The presidents of CRA and the Bishops Conference, in the report's preamble, draw on the words of Pope Francis, who said each member of the Church "is called to assume responsibility for preventing cases of abuse and to work for justice and for healing".

"It is to this responsibility that we commit the ACBC and CRA anew, and to which we call all Catholics in Australia, as we give this account of actions taken to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse," write Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB and Fr Peter Jones OSA in the report.

"It remains our hope and prayer that all that we have done, are doing and will do, may help to bring healing to those so gravely harmed when in the Church's care."

In each of the past five years, the Bishops Conference and CRA have submitted annual reports on the Church's initiatives, prepared with guidance from the National Office for Child Safety.

Fr Jones and Archbishop Costelloe note that the past five years have been a period of ongoing listening and learning, and a time for the development of additional practices, policies and procedures.

"We understand more fully that our institutions become 'child-serving' when they live up to the values and beliefs that enshrine the inherent right of all children to safety, nurture and care," they write.

"We know too all aspects of our Catholic organisations need to be attuned and responsive to the vulnerability of children and adults at risk."

The five-year update outlines some key milestones since the 2018 report, including:

- implementation of the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards, now in a second edition;
- establishment of Australian Catholic Safeguarding Limited;
- development of the National Response Framework and related National Response Protocol;
- preparation of new programs for priestly and religious formation; and
- progress on a new national code of conduct.

The report can be downloaded at: <https://bit.ly/ACBCCRAFiveYears>