



# Diocese of Armidale

Ph: (02) 6772 4971  
Fax: (02) 5701 5140  
Email: [chancery@armidale.catholic.org.au](mailto:chancery@armidale.catholic.org.au)

Catholic Chancery Office  
3/131 Barney Street  
PO Box 93  
Armidale NSW 2350

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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse final report was released today.

I welcome the report and I will now spend time reviewing the findings and recommendations.

The Diocese of Armidale cooperated fully with the Royal Commission both in responding to general inquiries and in relation to a specific Case Study. The Diocese will respond to the findings after there has been time to properly analyze the report.

At this time the victims, and families of those who have been abused, are in my thoughts and prayers. I hope that the release of this report will be another step in their ongoing journey of healing.

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy  
**Bishop of Armidale**  
**15<sup>th</sup> December, 2017**



## **STATEMENT OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON RELEASE OF FINAL REPORT OF ROYAL COMMISSION**

**December 15 2017**

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has today released its final report, which includes a large number of recommendations, many of which will have a significant impact on the way the Catholic Church operates in Australia.

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.

“Once again I reiterate my unconditional apology for this suffering and a commitment to ensuring justice for those affected.”

Sister Ruth Durick OSU, president of Catholic Religious Australia, said religious orders across Australia are committed to continuing the work of recent years to ensure a future in which the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.

“We acknowledge with gratitude the courage of all those survivors who have come forward to the Royal Commission,” Sr Ruth said.

“We will be taking very seriously the Royal Commission's report and have commissioned an initial assessment of its findings by the Truth, Justice and Healing Council. We expect the TJHC assessment to be completed early in 2018.”

Both leaders said the Church will continue to push for the introduction of a national redress scheme for the survivors of child sexual abuse in which the Church will participate.

“The success of this scheme lies with the cooperation of the state governments. Without their involvement, national coverage will be impossible,” they said.

“It is now time for state governments to act.”

**Media Enquiries: Contact Shane Healy on 0417 928 588 (for Archbishop Hart)**

## THE AUSTRALIAN

# Sydney Archbishop responds to abuse report

PERRY DUFFIN AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATED PRESS 2:27PM December 15, 2017

The nation's top Catholics have assured child abuse survivors the church has begun working toward meeting the recommendations made by the royal commission's final report.

Sydney Archbishop Anthony Fisher promised the multi-volume final report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which was released on Friday, would not "sit on a shelf".

He will closely examine the findings and come up with a way to meet expectations, he told reporters in Sydney on Friday.

Among the recommendations made in the entire volume directed to the Catholic Church was that voluntary celibacy should be considered and much of the church management structure should be reviewed and made transparent.

He said the report, which asserted elements of the church's structure and theology may have contributed to abuse, ushered in a period of "very serious self-examination".

"We have to look very carefully and take very seriously what the commission has found in terms of more systemic issues in our culture, hierarchy, practices and beliefs as Catholics," he said.

While the comments seem to leave open the door to fundamental changes to the church, Archbishop Fisher said changing mandatory reporting of abuse that comes to light through confession was "a distraction".

"While we are yet to study what the commission has had to say about that, I think everyone understands that this Catholic and orthodox practice of confession is always confidential," he said.

"Any proposal to stop the practice of confession in Australia would be a real hurt to all Catholics and Orthodox Christians."

He added that confession rarely unearthed abuse and, on the rare occasion it did, may present an opportunity to move the offender to self-report.

He struck a similar tone around the report's recommendation that celibacy should be voluntary for clergy.

"We know very well that institutions who have celibate clergy and institutions that don't have celibate clergy both face these problems," he said.

"We know very well that this happens in families that are certainly not observing celibacy.

"It's an issue for everybody, celibate or not, how we make sure children are treated appropriately and kept safe."

Archbishop Fisher backed a full redress through compensation for victims which would be overseen by an independent body outside the church.

"The time when we judge these things for ourselves is over," he said.

"What they say we should be paying we will back - whether it's through insurance or our own assets - we will make sure people get what is judged to be just compensation."

"Whatever the cost, we have to address this fully."

Perth Archbishop Timothy Costelloe echoed Archbishop Fisher's sentiments, committing to a compassionate and quick response to the abuse.

"There will be no easy dismissal of people's stories, no sweeping of things under the carpet, no cover-ups," he said in a statement.

"We will listen and we will act."

## FROM THE HOMEPAGE >

### 'Killing off confession no help' ♦



NICOLA BERKOVIC

Catholic Archbishop of Sydney Anthony Fisher has ruled out considering changes to confession as recommended by the royal commission.