



Catholic Communications
Archdiocese of Melbourne. Australia.

16 February 1996

A Pastoral Response to Professional Misconduct/Clergy Sexual Abuse

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The Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, Monsignor Gerald Cudmore, has established a Pastoral Response office to assist survivors of sexual assault, harassment or misconduct by church personnel. Ms Helen Last is the co-ordinator of this office.

A pastoral response seeks to promote the victim's well-being after survival of violations of trust and power. It provides key areas of ministry and support to the individual, their family and wider community.

Services include:

- * therapeutic counselling
- * pastoral counselling
- * information/resourcing
- * chaplaincy
- * survivors network/support group referral
- * parish support/intervention
- * parish education
- * religious and faith counsel

The Church acknowledges that access to justice is a fundamental right. Avenues for assistance include mediation where appropriate, and support throughout church complaint processes and/or criminal or civil proceedings.

A Pastoral Response Team has also been appointed to assist clergy, parishes and parish schools of the Archdiocese. Under the direction of the Vicar General, it combines the professional resources of the Pastoral Response Office, Ms Maria Kirkwood from the Catholic Education Office, Fr Ross McKenney from the Office for the Reconciliation of Disputes and Fr Paul Castley MSC who provides Chaplaincy support.

The Team can assist with consultation, resourcing and education programs.

For Further Information Contact:

Vicar General's Office
Archdiocese of Melbourne
Ph: (03) 9667 0377

Pastoral Response Office
404 Albert Street, East
Melbourne 3002
Ph: (03) 9639 3350

KEY POINTS OF CONTACT

To discuss these and other specific areas including professional education, training and resourcing, please contact:

- *Monsignor Gerry Cudmore*, Vicar General, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. Ph: 9667 0377
- *Ms Helen Last*, Pastoral Support & Advocacy Co-ordinator. Ph: 9639 3350.
- *Fr. Ross McKenney*, Director of the Office for the Reconciliation of Disputes. Ph: 9563 2713

“The Church will humbly admit that some of its priests, religious and church workers act in flagrant contradiction to the message they have been commissioned to spread. In the spirit of humility, more energy will be put into correcting wrongs, than safeguarding appearances; into humble care of the wounded, than into attempts to justify; into effective forms of education and careful research into ways of improving services for children, for women, for the poor and most vulnerable in our society” (Catholic Bishops of Australia, Principles in Relation to Sexual Abuse and Professional Misconduct: 1993).

“I hope you continue to hear our voices, for silence destroys the soul”
(Female Survivor).

OFFICE OF THE VICAR GENERAL
CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

**KEY AVENUES OF ASSISTANCE
IN RESPONSE TO
SEXUAL ASSAULT,
HARASSMENT OR MISCONDUCT
BY CHURCH PERSONNEL**

A PASTORAL RESPONSE

The Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese acknowledges that only through a commitment to truth, compassion and justice will sexual violence be addressed. Under the direction of the Vicar General, the Archdiocese has developed a ministry in response to the needs and rights of victims of sexual violence.

This ministry has been commissioned to develop specialised pastoral care. A "pastoral response" seeks to promote the victim's well-being after survival of violations of trust and power. It assists the victim with pastoral support and advocacy. A Pastoral Support & Advocacy Co-ordinator has been appointed to facilitate an information link for victims, Church and wider community professionals.

"The service has been vital for me by offering someone who can listen and understand by helping me unravel my feelings and find a healing path for the future" (Survivor).

Pastoral Support

At its most vital core, pastoral care listens to the voices of the survivors with sensitivity and respect. "What victims seek most of all is a Church which cares and which acknowledges their pain" (Rosetti:1995). Key avenues of pastoral support to the individual, their family and faith community may include:

- ◆ pastoral counsel
- ◆ information/resourcing
- ◆ therapeutic counselling
- ◆ survivors network/support group
- ◆ chaplaincy
- ◆ religious and faith counsel
- ◆ parish support/intervention
- ◆ parish education.

"You have given, through your actions, your support and the extended helping network, some other dimension to my pain; a dimension of hope" (Female survivor).

Pastoral Advocacy

Pastoral advocacy is the bridge linking the individual victim's voice to be heard in the structural arena. This dialogue promotes awareness and change. The pastoral advocate lends "supportive weight" to the victims throughout procedures within the framework of the Church and religious congregations.

Access to justice is a central theme of human rights. Avenues for complaints may include criminal, civil and/or church proceedings. Mediation and conciliation processes also endeavour to achieve a resolution through accountability, responsibility and restitution.

"This is testimony to the fact that it is possible to take just action against church personnel whilst receiving significant on-going support from their help services" (Male survivor).



Statement from Monsignor Gerald Cudmore, Vicar General, Archdiocese of Melbourne

Revelations of sexual abuse, particularly of the young, by Catholic clergy and other Catholics in a position of trust, have shaken us all. The hurt, dismay and damage that has been done calls for a practical and effective response both in charity and justice.

The exceptional trust given to Catholic clergy confers exceptional power. We are bewildered that this power has become so destructive in the lives of some, and we are determined to ensure that the same does not happen to others.

Earlier when the problem in both Church and society was poorly understood such abusive behaviour was treated as a moral problem. Ignorance can no longer be an excuse. We know a great deal more now than we did, of the complex nature of sexual abuse, and the assistance that all survivors need in the healing process.

We must live with the pain and the shame of what has happened. We deeply regret the fact that priests have been involved in sexual abuse and on behalf of the whole church we offer the victims of such abuse a sincere apology.

The Church in Melbourne has developed a ministry in response to the needs and rights of victims of sexual assault, harassment or misconduct by Church personnel. This pastoral ministry has been offering support to the individual, their family and the wider community.

I encourage any person to seek assistance from myself and our Pastoral Service in relation to these matters.

For Further Information Contact:

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Monsignor Gerald Cudmore Ph (03) 9667 0377**

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