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## Response by a spokesman for the Melbourne Archdiocese

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**1) Why didn't the Melbourne archdiocese in 1994 inform parishioners at the Boronia parish that their priest Father Victor Rubeo had been accused (and not denied) of child sex abuse? Why was he still allowed to lead that parish?**

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A. Mr Hersbach first made a complaint to the late Monsignor Cudmore, the then Vicar General of the Melbourne Archdiocese, in 1994. At the time, Mr Hersbach was, according to Monsignor Cudmore, adamant that he did not want any steps taken in relation to Rubeo except that he receive counselling. This was arranged.

At a subsequent meeting between Monsignor Cudmore and Rubeo, Rubeo was informed of the allegation and did not deny it. The then Archbishop, Vicar General and Rubeo are now all deceased.

Viewed however by today's standards, the response was inadequate. Since the introduction of the Melbourne Response in 1996, a priest in Rubeo's situation would have his faculties to operate as a priest suspended pending investigation. If the allegations were substantiated, he would be permanently removed from ministry.

**2) Why did the late Vicar General Gerald Cudmore appoint Father Francis Klep as spiritual director to Father Rubeo in 1994 and 1995, even though Klep had been charged and later convicted of child sex offences?**

A. The records of the Archdiocese record Rubeo informing Monsignor Cudmore that he was seeing Father Klep as a spiritual director. The choice of a spiritual director is made by the person seeking spiritual direction.

**3) When Rubeo pleaded guilty in 1996 to a few counts of indecent assault of two children back in the 1960s, he moved to Portarlington with the status and entitlements of a retired priest. Were the Catholic church communities in Boronia told of why their priest had left and were those in Portarlington informed of Rubeo's past?**

A. Rubeo's faculties were withdrawn on 26 August 1996 i.e. his capacity to operate publicly as a priest were removed and never restored. He then resigned from his canonical office on 2 April 1997 at which time he ceased to hold the status of a retired priest.

The school community of Boronia were informed in a letter dated 24 March 1997 from the then Parish Priest of the outcome of the hearing before the Ringwood Magistrates Court.

Rubeo moved to Portarlington in or about December 2002 by which time details of his convictions had received media coverage.

**4) The victim in the case of Rubeo, Tony Hersbach, feels despite going through the Melbourne response that the archdiocese has failed to provide him and his family with appropriate pastoral care. After a 2010 meeting with Archbishop Hart, a counsellor appointed by the archdiocese saw Mr Hersbach once but did not make contact again? Does the archdiocese believe it can do any more for Mr Hersbach?**

A. Mr Hersbach and his family have been offered and received support through Carelink. We cannot comment on the extent as the support provided is confidential to Carelink and the client. If Mr Hersbach feels he has not

received enough support we encourage him to contact Carelink. Carelink can also make arrangements through the Vicar General for Mr Hersbach to obtain pastoral care. Any support for counselling funded by the Archdiocese is arranged through Carelink. Counselling through Carelink is available free of charge for as long as may be required by a victim of abuse.

**5) What is the archdiocese view on mandatory reporting?**

**A.** On 27 April, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne issued the following statement on mandatory reporting:

“Archbishop Hart would support mandatory reporting applying to priests outside of the confessional, in the same way as the law currently applies to other reporting professionals. It is up to the Victorian Government to initiate such a move and to provide the resources required to support any extension to the mandatory reporting system applying in Victoria.”

**6) How many other complaints has the church received regarding Rubeo? I am aware of at least 2 other victims.**

**A.** We are aware of three complaints involving children and two further complaints which did not involve children.

**7) Is the archdiocese concerned that when police visited Rubeo at his Portarlington home in 2010 to discuss fresh charges against him they found him along with a 10 year old boy? Was the local community, including families in regular contact with Rubeo, informed of his history?**

**A.** The Archdiocese has no knowledge of this incident.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/response-by-a-spokesman-for-the-melbourne-archdiocese-20120605-1ztxn.html>*