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Australia

11 April 2013

The Honourable Georgie Crozier MLC
Chair
Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
Email: fcd@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Crozier

I write concerning the testimony given by Christian Brother Barry Coldrey cfc to the Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other non-government organisations on Friday, 1 March 2013.

I am replying to the specific adverse reflections raised in Br Coldrey's oral testimony as I note that the submission to the Inquiry to which he made reference has not been published on the website.

At the public hearing, Br Coldrey made a number of allegations concerning Mannix College, the Catholic residential college at Monash University, which is a work of the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Br Coldrey was a part-time volunteer at Mannix College for a number of years. His role ceased at the end of 2010. He alleges that he 'drew the attention of leaders ... at Mannix College (that), there appeared to be a known paedophile on the staff, a certain Robert Nelson, a former De La Salle brother I think, who was convicted in New South Wales of serious crimes.'

The allegation was investigated at the time and shown to have no substance. No person of that name or matching that description has been employed at the College and this was verified at the time Br Coldrey made this original accusation.

All staff at Mannix College hold a current Working with Children Check.

Br Coldrey's allegation that I and others have put the welfare of children at serious risk and have been involved in a cover-up is untrue and unfairly maligns all involved in the governance and administration of the College.



Furthermore, I reject the accusation that I set an expectation of silence on Br Coldrey and the implication that he was expected to be complicit in a cover-up. He is completely free to discuss these and other matters in whatever forum he chooses, and has always been free to do so.

I look forward to my opportunity to appear before the Inquiry, which will be the appropriate time to address Br Coldrey's generalised adverse commentary about the Archdiocese's handling of child abuse.

In view of the reporting of Br Coldrey's unfounded allegations, I respectfully request the Committee accept this letter as a Right of Reply for publication on your web site at an early date.

Yours sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading '+ Denis J. Hart'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE