



Australian Province of the Society of Jesus

MEDIA RELEASE

17 December 2018

Australian Jesuits join National Redress Scheme and appoint independent expert to review movement of Victor Higgs

The Australian Province of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) has joined the [National Redress Scheme](#) for those who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse. This was confirmed by [Ministerial Declaration](#) on 12 December 2018 making the Jesuits among the first Catholic Institutions to join the Scheme.

The National Redress Scheme provides acknowledgement and support to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse and was created in response to the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Redress is an alternative to seeking compensation through the courts.

The National Redress Scheme can provide three things:

- access to counselling;
- a payment; and
- a direct personal response from the institution (e.g. an apology) for people who want it.

Commenting on joining the National Redress Scheme the Provincial of the Australian Jesuits, Father Brian McCoy SJ said, "It is with a heavy heart and deep sorrow that we face the abuse that has occurred within our ministries in the past.

"We bear witness to those who have experienced abuse in our institutions and are acutely aware of the need for redress - not only financial compensation, but also a personal apology and pastoral and psychological care as appropriate."

In the spirit of openness and transparency, the Australian Jesuits have also today announced the appointment of The Honourable Marilyn Warren AC QC, a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria and Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria to review the movement of former Jesuit brother, Victor Higgs, from Adelaide to Sydney.

The Jesuits have committed to publishing Chief Justice Warren's findings.

Victor Higgs, who left the Society in 2001, was recently convicted of historical cases of abuse at a Jesuit School in New South Wales and prior to that at another Jesuit School in South Australia.

Commenting on the review, Director of Professional Standards for the Australian Jesuits, Simon Davies said, "We understand and acknowledge the concern people have about how the Jesuits may have handled complaints about Higgs in the past, and the need to understand the circumstances of Higgs' move from Adelaide to Sydney at the end of 1970.

"We have therefore, in consultation with those who have experienced abuse, appointed an independent expert to review the Higgs files and witnesses" Mr Davies said.

"We have shared all our documents and witnesses regarding Higgs with the police in both South Australia and New South Wales to assist with their investigations and will continue to do so if new information comes to hand.

“We are committed to safeguarding, openness and transparency.”

The Society has today released its second [Safeguarding Children Annual Report](#), reporting its responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, as well as reporting complaints of abuse received in the 12 months to 30 June 2018.

The Society continues to work towards accreditation with the [Australian Childhood Foundation](#) across all its operations including schools and ministries.

“We hope that these steps might bring healing not only to those who may themselves have been abused, but also those others whose trust was betrayed.

“We will continue to listen, consult, be open to criticism from people, including lay people, who are strong enough to give us honest, robust, reasonable, evidence-based feedback. We will also continue to act on that feedback and be relentless in our efforts to ensure that our schools and ministries are safe places, particularly for children and young people” Father McCoy said.

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About the Redress Scheme

The National Redress Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and will run for 10 years. The Australian Province of the Society of Jesus has formally joined the Scheme. People who were sexually abused in the care of the Society can now apply to the Scheme for redress.

People can apply using an online or paper form. Free and confidential Redress Support Services are available throughout the process. They can help explain the Scheme and who can apply.

For more information, including subscription to notifications of when an institution joins the Scheme, visit www.nationalredress.gov.au or call the National Redress Scheme line on 1800 737 377.