



Comprehensive strategy to safeguard children and young people

7 September 2016

A comprehensive strategy to enhance professional standards for the safeguarding of children and young people was announced today by Father Brian McCoy SJ, Provincial of the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

The strategy encompasses a new professional standards consultative panel which will advise Father McCoy and the Australian Province on best practice approaches to child safety, redress and ongoing support for survivors of abuse and, where needed, the removal of Jesuits from ministry.

The panel comprises the former Victorian Child Safety Commissioner, Mr Bernie Geary OAM, Professor Stephen Smallbone, Dr June Kane AM, Ms Simone Shaw and Mr David White.

“We are grateful that these well qualified members of the community have agreed to join us in this important work. They will provide expert advice to ensure we are continuing to put in place best practices for safeguarding children and young people and to look after those who have been hurt,” Father McCoy said.

“We have also established a partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation, an independent organisation, which includes our participation in their Safeguarding Children Program. This Program helps organisations protect children and young people through training, accreditation and cultural change. We anticipate that there will be up to 10,000 students, staff, Jesuits and volunteers within our organisation who will be trained under this Program,” he added.

In announcing the strategy, Father McCoy also confirmed that the Province has provided information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In July 2015, the Royal Commission was provided with details of 46 complaints of alleged child sexual abuse occurring between 1951 and 2013 involving Jesuit and lay members of the Province. Some of these involved multiple complaints against the same person.

“I understand that the Royal Commission has announced that survivors seeking to have a private session with a Commissioner need to register before 30 September 2016. I encourage all survivors who wish to do so to register and have their story heard and so assist the Royal Commission in its important work.”

“The Australian Jesuit Province condemns the abuse of children or young people, and offers an unreserved apology for the trauma caused by any Jesuit or any person in our employ who betrayed others in this way.

“I confirm that in the past 12 months we have had 10 reports of alleged abuse, all which relate to the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. These reports are currently being investigated.

“For anyone needing immediate support, please call Lifeline on 131114.

“I encourage anyone wishing to report the abuse of children or young people in our care to contact the Police on 000 or the Province Professional Standards Office on 03 9810 7312 or at professionalstandards@sjasl.org.au,” Father McCoy concluded.

Biographies of the panel members can be found here <http://jesuit.org.au/professional-standards>

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