



Your Questions Answered

What do you say to the survivors of abuse?

We deeply regret the pain and suffering that has been caused by a number of our community. Words will never heal the suffering, but we unreservedly apologise for the trauma caused by any member of our Society who betrayed others in this way. We are committed to doing all we can to prevent any further incidents and will continue to offer support for survivors and their families.

What do you expect the final report by the Royal Commission to recommend?

We are assuming the final report from the Royal Commission will recommend a number of practices that we have already been working towards, some of which include:

- Embedding an organisational culture of child safety, including through effective leadership arrangements;
- A child safety policy;
- An organisation-wide code of conduct that establishes clear boundaries for appropriate behaviour with children and young people;
- Screening, supervision, training and other human resources practices that reduce the risk of child abuse by new and existing personnel;
- Clear processes for responding to and reporting suspected child abuse;
- Strategies to identify and reduce or remove risks of child abuse;
- Strategies to promote the participation and empowerment of children; and
- Further developing support to assist survivors of abuse.

Why have you acted before the Royal Commission has made its final recommendations?

We will certainly make any further changes to our processes as a result of the Royal Commission's recommendations. However, the Royal Commission is not due to deliver its final report until December 2017, which is still 16 months away. Beyond that, the Government will need to review the recommendations and decide on a program of implementation, which will be

even further in the future. We believe we cannot wait that long but need to do what we can as soon as possible, in line with the direction the Royal Commission is likely to move in, so that children in our institutions are as safe as possible.

Will you accept the Royal Commission's recommendations?

We are likely to accept all the Royal Commission's recommendations unless any of them conflict with Canon or Jesuit Law (which is unlikely) and we urge all Australian Governments to accept and implement all of the recommendations also.

What is the definition of child sexual abuse?

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has been using the following definition:

Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object, fondling of breasts, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography. It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with the child.¹

Have there been any accusations of abuse since the Royal Commission began?

We have received a number of reports of abuse since the start of the Royal Commission. All except one of these pertained to historic instances of abuse. The one exception involved a lay staff member whose employment was immediately ceased and who was reported to the appropriate regulatory authority to whom the Society gave all assistance possible.

What actions have been taken against proven offenders?

The Royal Commission has learnt that survivors take, on average, 22 years to disclose abuse after it has begun². Therefore, in many cases, offenders have died by the time the report is made. Where alleged offenders are still living, survivors are encouraged to report them to the Police. Further, four Jesuits whose abuse has been substantiated have been laicised from the priesthood and dismissed from the Jesuits.

¹ Royal Commission Interim Report, Volume 1, page 95.

² Royal Commission Interim Report, Volume 1, page 158.

Why don't all complaints get reported to the Police?

The Society has adopted a "survivor led" approach to how complaints are managed. This means we are guided by the survivor on how they wish to have their complaint handled, while always acting in accordance with mandatory requirements.

We always strongly encourage all survivors to report their complaint to the Police. However, in the event that a survivor does not want the matter reported to the Police, unless there is a mandatory requirement to do so (such as in New South Wales), we respect their wishes. The Society seeks to cooperate with the Police at all times.

We also investigate each complaint as thoroughly as possible. Whilst doing so, the accused is removed from all engagement with children and young people. If we believe the complaint is substantiated, the matter is addressed directly with the offender and action is taken. If the offender is a lay person, employment will be terminated and if they are a Jesuit, laicisation and removal from the Society will be sought.

Are school fees used to fund settlements paid to survivors of abuse?

No settlements are paid to survivors from our schools. All settlements are made directly between the Australian Jesuit Province and survivors.

How can you say with any confidence that you will be able to eradicate abusers from your organisation?

We cannot say this with absolute confidence, no more than any organisation can. However, we are confident that we are building on our existing initiatives to put in place a comprehensive strategy to protect children and young people into the future, in accordance with best practice.

In 2015 we introduced a new policy for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. It includes rigorous measures in everything from selection of Jesuit candidates to the disclosure of and response to sexual abuse. The new professional standards consultative panel will continue to advise us on best practice moving forward. We are also aiming to accredit up to 10,000 students, volunteers, Jesuits and staff through the Safeguarding Children Program. These measures, and our ongoing commitment to improvement and transparency, will help to build a culture that safeguards children and young people.

Why have you failed to deal with child abusers in the past?

Clearly mistakes have been made in the past which have caused great suffering. For that, we give our unreserved apology to the survivors and their families. We don't believe there was an intentional systemic failure but we clearly failed to protect children and young people. We can't

change the past, but we can do everything possible to maintain a safe environment now and into the future. The measures we have announced today are important steps in this ongoing journey.