



James Goold House
PO Box 146
East Melbourne Vic 8002
Australia

29 March 2012

Dear Father

I am writing in relation to articles which have appeared in The Age on Tuesday, 27 March and Thursday, 29 March 2012 linked to demands for a public inquiry into the Church's handling of sex abuse by clergy and criticism of our victim support service, Carelink.

Whether or not an inquiry is called is a matter for the State not for the Church, but my position is as stated in The Age on 15 March, that the Archdiocese has nothing to hide from an independent inquiry. I am confident that any inquiry into the Melbourne Response process would confirm this. The Melbourne Response has functioned effectively since 1996. Over 16 years its procedures and outcomes have been highly positive.

The 29 March Age article attributed various comments to Fr Tony Kerin. Fr Kerin has spoken to me to express his concerns about the article. As Episcopal Vicar for Justice and Peace, he is not my "advisor on sexual abuse issues". Contrary to what was reported, he has told me that he has not "called for an inquiry". He has said that what he told The Age is that an inquiry would clear the air.

My pastoral concern in relation to the holding of a public inquiry is the impact which it could have on the many victims who have proceeded through the Melbourne Response, had their claims upheld and achieved some closure and reconciliation in their lives. I accept that some victims and advocates would welcome the opportunity to speak out, but this is not reflective of the views of the great majority of victims.

It is therefore appropriate to wait and see the government's position on an inquiry and what terms of reference are proposed. The Government has stated that it will be consulting with religious organisations on the recommendation for an inquiry. I reiterate my willingness to engage and co-operate with government on these issues.



The evidence will also show that the Melbourne Response over 16 years has responded with empathy, compassion and understanding to the victims who have come to it. In particular, I note:-

- For many victims the availability of the Melbourne Response provides them with a choice of forum between taking their claim to the civil courts or to the Melbourne Response, whilst for a considerable number it provides the only forum as the civil law would not recognise their claim;
- That of approximately 330 complaints of abuse which have been received, 320 have been upheld and validated;
- All victims who have had their complaints upheld have received a personal apology from me and previously from Cardinal Pell;
- The access which victims have to free unlimited counselling through Carelink for as long as required;
- The provision of compensation through the Compensation Panel with the cap exceeding that which applies under the Victims of Crime Act.

In relation to priests of the Archdiocese against whom a complaint has been upheld, the record will also show that of those priests who were alive at the time the complaint was addressed, that 16 have been convicted in the criminal courts. Further the record will show the efforts which I have made to have convicted clergy laicised and that I have accepted every recommendation made to me to remove priests from active ministry who have had a complaint upheld against them.

My clear preference is for allegations of criminal conduct to be investigated by the police and dealt with in the criminal courts. The State and not the Church are best placed to deal with these matters. However for those victims who cannot or do not wish to go through a public process, the Melbourne Response provides an alternative of which I am very proud.

I am particularly troubled by articles including the article which appeared on 27 March attacking Ms Sue Sharkey. These articles contain numerous errors. They represent an attempt by some to have their complaints of unprofessional conduct which have been dismissed by the regulatory body re-tried through the media. Let me be clear, that while a number of complaints have been made to professional bodies against persons involved in the Melbourne Response, none have been upheld.



These allegations were published by The Age without giving the Archdiocese, Carelink or Ms Sharkey any opportunity to respond.

In my Pastoral Letter issued on 1 July 2010, I expressed my deep sorrow and offered a sincere and unreserved apology to all those victims who suffered the pain and humiliation of sexual abuse and to their families and highlighted the distress caused by the scourge of sexual abuse. I will continue to do all in my power to eradicate this scourge and to limit the distress.

I remain committed to the care of all our people at this challenging time.

Yours sincerely in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Charles McMorrough'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE