



2 August 2023

Catholic bishops say abhorrent abuse at Marylands and Hebron Trust should never have happened

The nature and scale of abuse set out in today’s report from the Royal Commission on Abuse in Care is abhorrent and should never have happened, says Archbishop Paul Martin SM, General Secretary of the NZ Catholic Bishops Conference.

“We recognise the way those working in the name of the Catholic Church caused harm, and the enormous impact this has had on the lives of victims and their families,” says Archbishop Martin, on behalf of the bishops.

Archbishop Martin, the Archbishop of Wellington and former Bishop of Christchurch, was commenting on the royal commission’s case study into abuse in the care of the Brothers of St John of God based at Marylands School in Halswell, Christchurch from the 1950s to the 1980s and at the Hebron Trust in Christchurch from 1986 to 1992.

Archbishop Martin gave evidence on behalf of the Diocese of Christchurch at the royal commission’s Marylands-Hebron hearings in February last year.

“Today’s case-study report highlights the horrific abuse and suffering that took place, and the failure of individuals to ensure safety and manage redress adequately,” he says. “Confronting these realities is a significant and necessary step as we all continue to transform the way we manage redress and ensure the safety of everyone in a Church environment.

“The abuse described should never have happened. Nor should any abuse happen. I want to restate categorically that the bishops of the Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand have zero tolerance for abuse. No form of abuse, misconduct or inappropriate behaviour is acceptable in the Church community.

“The Church must continue to confront the difficult truths of the past, including the inexcusable abuse and suffering described in the case study report.”

Archbishop Martin says the Catholic Church began putting formal procedures in place to respond to abuse in the 1990s. They have been subject to continual improvement since: “Everyone working in the Church is required to adhere to them,” he says.

“We must continue to monitor and improve the practices put in place throughout the Church to prevent harm, as well as supporting survivors of abuse. We know there is more we need to do and we are committed to doing it.”

ENDS