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## **Archdiocese of Brisbane welcomes Child Death Review Board report and backs urgent safeguarding reform**

The Archdiocese of Brisbane has welcomed the release of the Child Death Review Board's report, *In Plain Sight: Review into System Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*, and has called for swift, coordinated action by governments and institutions to implement its key reforms.

Archbishop Shane Mackinlay said the report laid bare hard truths about how systems failed to protect children and that those failures must now drive real and lasting change.

"The courage of victim survivors and their families have made this report possible. We owe it to them to move beyond words to real reform. The findings make it clear that existing systems have not been enough to keep children safe. That must change, and it must change quickly," Archbishop Mackinlay said.

The Archdiocese operates across parishes, schools, Catholic Early EdCare and Centacare services, supporting large numbers of children and vulnerable people daily.

Archbishop Mackinlay commented, "This reach gives the Archdiocese a clear view of system strengths and weaknesses. The Royal Commission compelled the Church to reckon with profound institutional failures, and we have learned from that reckoning. Those lessons now drive the archdioceses' approach to safeguarding, and the church is committed to sharing them with the wider community so that no organisation repeats the mistakes of the past."

In its submission to the Review, the Archdiocese of Brisbane argued for real-time compliance monitoring of Blue Card holders, a nationally recognised Working with Vulnerable People Licence, and a stronger focus on safeguarding culture across all services, not just minimum legal compliance.

The Child Death Review Board's report strongly reinforces these priorities. It calls for continuous monitoring of working-with-children clearances, integrated safeguarding intelligence so that concerns do not sit in silos, and legal reform so that organisations can act on credible safeguarding concerns that fall short of a criminal conviction.

Archdiocese of Brisbane Safeguarding Director, Mark Eustance, said the alignment between the Board's recommendations and the Archdiocese's submission was encouraging but also raised the stakes.

"The report confirms what our own experience has been telling us for some time. Static checks and fragmented information are not enough. We need real-time safeguarding intelligence, shared lawfully across systems, so that patterns of concerning conduct are picked up early and acted on. That includes giving employers the legal tools to act when there is serious concern, even when a criminal charge is not possible," he said.

The Board's report directly cites the Archdiocese's submission on the importance of culture, endorsing the view that genuine safeguarding depends on cultural change, vigilance and systemic



reform rather than simplistic responses such as excluding men from child-facing roles or relying solely on surveillance technologies like blanket CCTV.

Mr Eustance said this recognition reflected the work that Catholic Early EdCare, Brisbane Catholic Education, Centacare and parishes have undertaken in recent years to embed safeguarding into recruitment, training, supervision and governance.

"Safeguarding should not be approached as a standalone policy or just a camera in the corner of a room. It should be woven into the culture of organisations that work with and care for children. It is first and foremost about preventing misconduct towards children by embedding policies, procedures and practices that promote their safety and best interests as the primary consideration. This includes safe recruitment practices, regular training, clear and explicit conduct standards, active supervision, creating environments where people feel able to speak up about concerns, and acting promptly and decisively when incidents occur." Mr Eustance said.

"Having robust regulatory systems to support this work is crucial. The fact that the Board has quoted our submission on this point tells us we are on the right track, but it also tells us we must keep going"

Archbishop Mackinlay said the report should be treated as a roadmap for governments and providers alike.

"In our submission we highlighted the 'black holes' that persist in the system: gaps around Blue Card renewals, delays in information sharing, and the legal constraints that leave organisations having to resolve employment matters within the limits of the Fair Work Act when serious safeguarding concerns arise but do not meet the criminal standard of proof. The Board has now confirmed that these are systemic problems, not isolated experiences. It has set out a path to fix them. The priority now is to make sure that this does not become another report that gathers dust," he said.

The Archdiocese has committed to engaging constructively with both the Queensland and Australian Governments as they consider their response to *In Plain Sight* and any legislative or policy changes that follow.

"We will support reforms that deliver continuous monitoring, stronger safeguarding intelligence, a coherent regulatory architecture and a fair legal framework that assists organisations to act more effectively and promptly to protect children," Archbishop Shane Mackinlay said. "We will also continue our own work to strengthen safeguarding in every ministry of the Archdiocese. Our history has taught us that we cannot be complacent. The only acceptable standard is that every child is as safe as we can possibly make them."

The Archdiocese encourages anyone who has experienced abuse, in Church environments or elsewhere, to report the matter to police and to seek assistance from specialist support services. The Archdiocese remains committed to listening to victim-survivors with respect, responding appropriately, and supporting pathways to safety and healing.

**ENDS**

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