



# Media release

Date: 7 February 2017  
For immediate release

## Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

P: (03) 5441 2544

F: (03) 5441 8278

[www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au](http://www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au)

## Statement from Bishop Leslie Tomlinson – Royal Commission

The figures released yesterday about the Diocese of Sandhurst by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse between 1950 and 2010 require a response.

The evidence of the Royal Commission, along with all we have heard over the past four years, can only be interpreted for what it is - a massive failure on the part of the Catholic Church as an institution in Australia to protect our children from abusers and predators.

I acknowledge that the Diocese of Sandhurst, like every other Diocese in Australia, had its share of perpetrators of sexual abuse. To have a single priest abuser was one too many and to have a single claim against a Diocese was also one too many.

It has been reported that the Diocese of Sandhurst was the second worst in Australia for rates of alleged child sexual abuse. This statement needs to be read in the correct context.

Over a 60-year period, the Sandhurst Diocese had a total of 27 claims of abuse, of which 14 were substantiated.

The report identified 1880 alleged perpetrators across Australia, of which 384 were Diocesan priests. The total number of priests from the Sandhurst Diocese alleged to have been perpetrators, using the 14.7 percent figure stated in the report released yesterday by the Royal Commission, is 16. This is consistent with data held by the Diocese.

On these figures, the 16 Sandhurst priests represent 4.1 percent of the total alleged perpetrators Australia-wide.

The last report of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest in this Diocese was 26 years ago in 1991.

As the Bishop of the Diocese of Sandhurst, I have apologised to victims and survivors of sexual abuse on several occasions in the past. I wish to take this opportunity to do so again. I remain committed to working with victims, survivors and their families into the future. As a Diocese and community we will work together to ensure that this betrayal can never occur again.

We have recently recruited a Child Safety Officer to work across the Diocese to ensure that all proper processes for protection of children are in place and maintained. This important position will assist in meeting the requirements of the Victorian Government's Child Safety regulations in our schools, parishes and charitable organisations.

We commit to working with the findings of the Royal Commission to ensure a positive future for our young people and those entrusted to our care.

I believe that the Diocese is very well served by a dedicated clergy, in whom I have the utmost confidence.

I encourage anyone who has suffered sexual abuse to report it to the police.

Bishop of Sandhurst, Leslie Tomlinson

---

For further information contact: Damian Griffin – Media and Communications Manager P: 03 5445 3610 M: 0418 162 536