

[Home](#) | [Archbishop](#) | [Bishops](#) | [Melbourne Response](#) | [About Us](#) | [Catholic Faith](#) | [Vocations](#) | [St Patrick's Cathedral](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Links](#)

[News and Events](#) | [What's on](#) | [Podcasts](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Features](#) | [Reflections](#) | [Reviews](#)

Home : News and Events : Media Room : 2012 Media Releases

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2012 MEDIA RELEASES

Statement by Archbishop Denis Hart after announcement of Parliamentary Inquiry

Tuesday 17 April 2012

Most Reverend Denis Hart, Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, made the following statement today following the Victorian Government's announcement of a Parliamentary Inquiry into how religious and other organisations handle allegations of criminal abuse of children within their organisations.

"I welcome today's announcement by the Premier, Mr Baillieu and the Attorney General, Mr Clark that the Government has decided to proceed with a Parliamentary Inquiry into how religious and other organisations handle allegations of criminal abuse of children within their organisations."

"I am convinced that such an inquiry will clear the air around this painful and distressing issue of sexual abuse in Victoria.

"As I have indicated frequently in the past, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne will cooperate fully with the Parliamentary Inquiry during the course of its investigations.

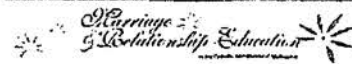
"I reaffirm the Archdiocese's position that we have nothing to hide from such an independent inquiry, and I am confident that any inquiry into the Archdiocese's Melbourne Response process will confirm this.

"The Melbourne Response has functioned effectively and fairly since 1996.

"My clear, and often stated, preference is for allegations of criminal conduct to be investigated by Victoria Police and dealt with in the criminal courts.

"The State, and not the Church, is best placed to deal with these matters.

"However, for those victims who cannot or do not wish to go through a public process and the publicity which would inevitably accompany it, the Melbourne Response has provided an alternative way of having their complaints addressed and validated and accessing compensation and free counselling."



Archbishop	Catholic Faith	Parish	Links
Biography Coat of Arms Homilies Addresses Pastoral Letters and Messages Hartbeat Charitable Fund	Sacraments Church Teaching Church Documents Faith Education Catholic Heritage Prayers Reflections	Contacts & Mass Times St Patrick's Cathedral St Francis' Church St Augustine's Church St Mary Star of the Sea	Catholic Church in Australia Organisations and Movements Health Care Education News Services and Publications Welfare Services Television & Radio Links of Interest Vatican
Church In Melbourne About Us Vicar General Bishops Facts Coat of Arms Contact Us	News & Events News & Events Melbourne News Parish and School News News What's on Kairos Digital Edition Media Room Where's Kairos?	Online Services Outlook Webmail Office 2010 Online CAM Online Parish Online Secure Share Service Desk Secure Support	

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