



St. Patrick's Cathedral  
Melbourne Vic 3002

26 August 1998

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Dear Ms Stewart,

You will be aware that in October 1996 I announced a range of initiatives to respond to allegations of sexual abuse concerning the Archdiocese of Melbourne. At that time, I apologised sincerely and unreservedly, on behalf of the Catholic Church, to both the victims and more generally to the people of the Melbourne Archdiocese, for the betrayal of trust perpetrated upon them. I also expressed my regret that it had taken the Church a long time to come to grips successfully with these issues.

I understand that, based on findings made by the Independent Commissioner, your claims have been considered by the Compensation Panel. The Panel has provided me with a recommendation, which I accept, and this letter is accompanied by a formal offer made on my behalf.

The Archdiocese seeks to address the issues of sexual abuse of minors and adults in a professional, caring and appropriate manner. In addition, the Church has implemented procedures aimed at preventing any recurrence of sexual abuse, and is confident that these initiatives will go a long way towards addressing this issue, which has shocked all in our community.

Unfortunately we cannot change what has happened in the past. You may never be rid of the memories or the hurt. Services such as those provided through Carelink can assist you in your recovery. The payment of compensation raises difficult and complex issues. It is my hope that my offer, based on the Panel's recommendation, will be accepted by you as a preferable alternative to legal proceedings and that it too will assist you with your future.

On behalf of the Catholic Church and personally, I apologise to you and to those around you for the wrongs and hurt you have suffered at the hands of Father Searson. Whether or not you choose to accept the enclosed offer, I offer you my prayers.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE