



Summary statement – Christian Brothers

3 May 2013

Br Julian McDonald

Deputy Province Leader, Oceania Province of the Christian Brothers

The Christian Brothers acknowledge that in the past a number of our Brothers sexually abused children. This is a matter of great shame, and has caused untold damage to innocent children and their families.

I renew our apology to all those survivors of abuse whose lives have been profoundly scarred by what they experienced as children in our schools and institutions. We are determined to ensure that abuses of the past are not repeated.

While most of the abuse took place in the 1960s and 1970s, allegations only began to come to our attention in the 1990s.

We established a toll-free Helpline in 1993, with assistance to victims provided by a qualified psychologist. The volume of calls revealed that a number of Christian Brothers and lay staff had caused enormous damage. A number have been convicted of their crimes, with some being imprisoned.

The Christian Brothers embraced *Towards Healing* when it was introduced in 1997, and it has been the basis of our response to victims since then.

Whenever victims approach us with allegations of criminal abuse, we encourage them to go to the police.

For many years now it has been standard practice that, if a Christian Brother poses a risk to children, he is immediately withdrawn from contact with children, even if allegations are not proven.

We have implemented supervision, monitoring and risk containment systems for any Brother considered to be a risk to children.

Counselling is now offered to victims from the outset, whether reparation is sought through *Towards Healing*, or through civil litigation.

We have been on a steep learning curve over the past three decades about the nature of sexual abusers and the devastating effect of abuse on victims.

Christian Brothers

Oceania Province



In 1998 the Christian Brothers conducted one of the first studies by a Religious Congregation in Australia to better understand the issue of child abuse and to identify ways to minimise the possibility of its recurrence. The study involved a review of research and literature on child abuse and interviews with child protection experts, helpline coordinators, therapists and Brothers. The study found that Christian Brothers' culture fell short of what it should have been. It found that there were church and congregational structures which either did little to minimise the possibility of abuse or which failed to promote a healthy approach to some basic human values. One of the key learnings was that ownership of the issue of child abuse by the whole Congregation was a necessary step towards healing and reconciliation. That has been acknowledged and integrated into our lives and ministries since then.

The measures we have put in place have meant that there have been no allegations of abuse relating to conduct by Christian Brothers since 1987.

We acknowledge that the hurt to victims is considerably more intense and enduring than those who have not suffered abuse can imagine. We remain committed to reaching out to victims and to responding to them with justice and compassion.