



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

New laws further sign that abuse prevention is Church priority

Media Release

May 10, 2019

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has welcomed Pope Francis' new document on the investigation and reporting of abuse within Church settings, which enshrines some measures long in place in Australia but also makes new provisions that will give greater impetus to the Church's safeguarding efforts in this country.

Conference president Archbishop Mark Coleridge, who represented the Australian bishops at the meeting of leaders of episcopal conferences at the Vatican in February, said the publication of *Vos Estis Lux Mundi* (*You are the Light of the World*) is the latest concrete outcome following that unprecedented gathering.

"The release of this document less than three months after the meeting shows that, for Pope Francis, the updating of universal Church law on the investigation and reporting of abuse against children and other vulnerable people is a real priority," Archbishop Coleridge said.

"It's a priority the Australian bishops share. Now all bishops conferences and religious congregations around the world will have to meet more rigorous standards. That's a good thing."

During the Conference's biannual meeting this week, the bishops discussed the Church's ongoing response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, including reforms related to those Pope Francis has introduced regarding accountability for Church leaders.

"While Catholic leaders in Australia have been responding to the sexual abuse for three decades, we're continually reviewing our policies and procedures to make Catholic settings the safest possible place for children and other vulnerable people. This new document from the Pope will be a great help in that," Archbishop Coleridge said.

Archbishop Coleridge said the Church in Australia will continue to implement protocols that go beyond the requirements of the *motu proprio*.

"For example, reporting allegations to the police and other government authorities has been part of our Church practice for more than two decades. We remain committed to having the most effective practices possible," he said.