

ORDINARY MEETING OF COUNCIL 18 JULY 2018



February 2018

Recently (January 2018), the Archdiocese of Melbourne made Sacred Heart Mission aware that complaints had been made against Fr Ernie Smith under the Melbourne Response, and that these complaints had been upheld.

The Mission was further advised that as a result, Fr Smith, who had a major role in establishing the Mission 35 years ago while he was the Parish Priest at St Kilda West Parish, no longer enjoyed good standing as a priest of the Archdiocese.

We were informed that the complaints relate to inappropriate behaviour with two adults and one person under 18. Fr Smith has accepted responsibility for the complaints. No client, employee or volunteer at Sacred Heart Mission was involved. To the best of our knowledge, Sacred Heart Mission has not received any complaints about the conduct of Fr Smith.

Our first priority in these circumstances is the victims. Sacred Heart Mission is comforted to know that full and ongoing support for the victims is being provided by the Archdiocese.

In light of this issue, Sacred Heart Mission is taking action to ensure public recognition of Fr Smith as it relates to the Mission no longer continues.

We were shocked and deeply saddened about the complaints upheld against Fr Smith, a man who personified so much of the compassion that Sacred Heart Mission strives to bring to people who are most marginalised in our community. We know others will feel the same.

He has been held in high esteem by many, and this news will understandably have an impact on the Mission's clients, staff, volunteers and parishioners. We stand ready to support those who need assistance.

Should Sacred Heart Mission staff or volunteers require support please speak with your line manager, who can make contact with our Employee Assistance Program.

Parishioners who need support are encouraged to speak with Fr John Petrusis or Christine Mitchell.

We encourage anyone who has experienced abuse to report their complaint to Victoria Police.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Dohrmann'.

Mark Dohrmann AM
Chair Sacred Heart Mission Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathy Humphrey'.

Cathy Humphrey
CEO Sacred Heart Mission