

February 25 2021

**Statement from Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg
and the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea**

In 2020, following the tremendous courage of some of our former students, we were made aware of distressing allegations regarding inappropriate behaviour and criminal offences towards former students by former teachers who worked at Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg (OLMC) during the 1990s.

As part of our response, we appointed Safeguarding Services to undertake an independent investigation into any alleged historic professional misconduct by former OLMC staff.

We encouraged former students and staff to contact Safeguarding Services and are grateful that 14 former students, a current staff member, two former staff members and a former Principal came forward as part of the independent investigation.

Today we have released the independent report which documents numerous instances of highly inappropriate physical contact and improper verbal statements made by former teachers towards our former students.

Safeguarding Services has concluded that there is no reason to doubt the validity of the evidence provided by those people who participated in the investigation. Today we affirm the independent investigator's conclusion and offer our unreserved apologies for the suffering and harm that was caused to these former students. We are deeply sorry that their harm was compounded by former senior members of the OLMC staff who may have failed to deal with the complaints appropriately.

Throughout the independent investigation, Safeguarding Services has maintained contact with Victoria Police, with several reports of alleged criminal offending being made. The independent report has been provided to Victoria Police.

We are committed to our former students, particularly those who were harmed in these circumstances. As an immediate action, we will be inviting them to participate in listening groups at which they will be given the opportunity to share in a supportive environment. Former students are asked to contact Judith Weir, Principal, for further information about these groups.

The Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, Mercy Education Limited and OLMC now have strict policies and procedures in place to ensure the care of our students, as well as appropriate complaints handling procedures. All Mercy schools are child-safe environments that comply with relevant state and national regulations.

In closing, we again express our sincere apologies for the harm that has been experienced by these former students. We also acknowledge the collective hurt that may be being felt at this time by current and former students of OLMC, their parents and staff.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Weir".

Judith Weir
Principal
Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Crotty".

Sister Eveline Crotty RSM
Institute Leader
ISMAPNG

For further information please contact OLMC – 03 9459 2511

To read the executive summary of the Safeguarding Services report – Click the below link

[http://www.olmc.vic.edu.au/literature_219400/The Executive Summary of the Safeguarding Services Report](http://www.olmc.vic.edu.au/literature_219400/The_Executive_Summary_of_the_Safeguarding_Services_Report)