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## MEDIA STATEMENT

Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB, Archbishop of Perth

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Dated: 21 January 2021

“Recent reports in the media concerning the final outcome in a court case involving a now-deceased Catholic priest, Fr Bertram Adderley, highlight the horror of sexual abuse and the dreadful effects such abuse has on the innocent person who has endured this terrible experience. As the Archbishop of Perth, I am glad that the survivor of this shocking abuse has had the opportunity to have his story told and believed and has been financially compensated.

The Catholic Church has a deplorable history in relation to the sexual abuse of the young and vulnerable. The Royal Commission shone a much-needed light on this dark chapter in the Church’s history here in Australia. Nothing can justify or cancel out the dreadful mistakes of the past. What the Church can do today and into the future is to commit itself to treating those who have been abused with dignity, respect and integrity. The Church can and must also take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that, as far as humanly possible, such abuse never again occurs within Catholic settings.

As the current Archbishop of Perth, I want to first of all renew my sincere, heart-felt and unreserved apology to all those who have suffered the horror of sexual abuse by clergy, religious and lay church workers. You were subjected to something which robbed you of your dignity, poisoned your childhood, and in many cases left you a legacy of suffering which still endures today. I am deeply sorry, and ashamed, that this has happened to you.

Many survivors of sexual abuse have asked me for an assurance that the Church has changed. I am able to give that assurance. The Church in the Archdiocese of Perth is a full participant in the Commonwealth Redress Scheme. We have a highly qualified and competent staff in our Professional Standards Office and in our Safeguarding Office. The responsibility of the Professional Standards Office is to ensure that those who come forward with complaints of abuse are welcomed, listened to, and accompanied as their complaints are dealt with. The responsibility of the Safeguarding Office is to establish the protocols for ensuring the safety and well-being of children, young people and vulnerable adults in Catholic institutions, monitor compliance with those protocols, provide professional training for Church personnel, and assist the Professional Standards Office in responding to complaints of abuse. Both bodies, though established by the Archdiocese of Perth, are functionally independent. They are not directed by the Archbishop, but on the contrary, provide professional and objective advice to the Archbishop.

The most recent media reports suggest that the Church has failed to honour its commitment to treat survivors with respect, compassion and sensitivity. To the extent that this is the case I sincerely apologise. It is my intention that the Archdiocese should be faithful to this commitment. That people do not experience the response of the Church in this way is a matter of deep concern for me. I will continue to work with those who assist me in this area to ensure that we are faithful to the commitments I have made”.

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB**  
**Catholic Archbishop of Perth**

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