



**Media Statement on the Release of the
Final Report of the
Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

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

Friday 15 December, 2017

The publication of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse brings to a conclusion the work of a body which has undertaken one of the most important, and distressing, investigations in the history of our nation. The Australian community, including the Catholic Church, is deeply indebted to the Royal Commission for its diligence and courage throughout this demanding but vitally necessary process. The extent of the sexual abuse of children and young people in so many institutions, the deplorable failure on the part of authorities to act quickly, decisively and justly, and most of all the unspeakable suffering which so many people have endured, which for many if not most continues even to this day, have been laid bare for all to see.

As a Catholic bishop I am horrified by the extent of this abuse in Catholic institutions, shamed by the failure of so many of our leaders to respond with compassion and integrity, and profoundly disturbed and moved by the stories of anguish and despair which have been heard over and over again in Commission hearings and in other forums. I want to repeat again, on behalf of the Church I lead in the Archdiocese of Perth, my sincere apology to those who have been so badly wronged by members of the Catholic Church. When you were young you and your families presumed and expected that Catholic clergy, religious and other Church workers could be trusted. To your great cost you discovered that this was not always so. And when you found the courage to tell your stories as young people, or as adults, you were not believed. For all of this I am profoundly sorry.

I know that words alone are not enough. I want to assure you, and indeed the whole community, that I remain fully committed to responding as quickly and compassionately as I can to all those who come forward with stories of abuse by Church personnel under my jurisdiction. We will do our best to help people take their complaints to the police and support them through this process. There will be no easy dismissal of people's stories, no sweeping of things under the carpet, no cover-ups. We will listen and we will act. And perhaps most importantly, there will be, and already is, a change in the way the Church operates. The safety and well-being of children and young people in Catholic settings is now a fundamental priority for us all. Through our Safeguarding programme here in the Archdiocese of Perth, and through the establishment of Catholic Professional Standards Ltd at the national level, stringent protocols are or soon will be put in place. Our compliance with these protocols will be regularly audited and the results made public. As a result, Church authorities will now operate with full accountability to the Catholic Community and indeed, the community as a whole.



Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth

The Final Report of the Royal Commission contains a large number of formal findings and recommendations. The leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia have commissioned the Truth Justice and Healing Council, which has coordinated the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission, to prepare an initial assessment of the Report and provide this to the leadership of the Church as soon as possible. Underpinning our response will be our determination to consider carefully, with humility and openness, all the findings of the Royal Commission, and to determine how we as a Church can best implement the reforms and initiatives coming from the Commission's exhaustive work.

The Catholic Church in Australia will always carry the shame of our dreadful failure to care for, protect, and honour the children and young people entrusted to our care. We will always owe an enormous debt of gratitude to those who have found the courage to step forward and shine a light on the dark corners of our story. We have been forced, and helped, to recognise that things must change. Many steps have already been taken in the Archdiocese of Perth to ensure that the present and the future are very different from the past. We must now consolidate what has already been done and, in the light of the Report of the Royal Commission, take any and all further steps open to us to make sure that the Catholic Church in Australia, and the Archdiocese of Perth as a part of that Church, is a place of uncompromising safety and security for children, young people, and indeed everyone who engages with us.

This is my commitment and the commitment of the Church I lead.

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