



**Archbishop reiterates support for the work of the Royal Commission  
Statement**

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

22 February 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The pain and anguish suffered by those who have been sexually abused, is clearly seen in the rightful anger so many of them feel towards the perpetrators of this horrific assault on their human dignity and, in particular, on their childhood innocence. In the case of the Catholic Church, that anger is also directed, quite properly, towards those church leaders who have failed to respond adequately, especially in the past, to the seriousness of this abuse and who failed to recognise the suffering of the survivors.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continues its onerous, painful but vital work of uncovering the extent of this horror in our Australian institutions including, to our shame, in our own Church. From the outset, the Church has pledged to co-operate fully with the Royal Commission. In our own archdiocese we have honoured this pledge to the full and will continue to do so.

It is vital that the truth comes out. The survivors of this horror both deserve, and have a right, to this. It is also essential for the Church. It is only by understanding the extent of this terrible problem, and seeking to appreciate its causes, that we will be able to put in place those measures which will ensure that children today, tomorrow and into the future are absolutely safe in our Church communities. We remain hopeful that the Royal Commission will help us to do exactly that.

The pursuit of truth will not be furthered by obfuscation, by half-truths, by avoidance of hard questions, nor of course by downright lies. This is why the Royal Commission is the proper place for these matters to be investigated. Nor will the pursuit of truth be furthered by personal attacks, misrepresentation of the facts in the media, or the abandonment of the principle of the presumption of innocence. If our Church and our society are ever to find a way forward that truly respects the dignity of the survivors and achieves a safer environment for our children and young people, then the Royal Commission must be allowed to continue its work in a calm, objective and impartial way free from overt or covert pressure.



At the moment there is intense interest focused on Cardinal George Pell and on the evidence he will give shortly to the Royal Commission. He has already given evidence twice to the Royal Commission as well as to the Victorian Parliamentary Enquiry. He has pledged his full co-operation to the Royal Commission, he has honoured that pledge in the past, and we can expect that he will continue to do so. He should be accorded the dignity which is due to everyone appearing before the Commission. He should also be accorded the presumption of innocence in terms of any allegations made against him. To do any less would be to interfere with the independence and objectivity of the Royal Commission.

It is vital that the truth comes out. It is therefore vital that everyone conducts him or herself in such a way as to ensure that outcome. The Royal Commission offers our country the best chance we are ever likely to have to begin to shape a better future for our children and young people.

It must be left free to do its work in as calm and reasoned an environment as we can create.

*+ Timothy Costelloe S.O.B.*

Archbishop of Perth