



**The Royal Commission continues its work
Statement
By the Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

4 March 2016

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Just two weeks ago I wrote to you all reaffirming my own determination, and that of our Archdiocese, to cooperate fully with *the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. Now that the most recent hearings of the Royal Commission, some of which were conducted via video-conference from Rome, have concluded I wish to do so again. We will continue to provide unqualified cooperation to the Royal Commission. As I wrote in my earlier letter our reason for doing so is, above all else, the conviction that the Royal Commission offers our Church and our country the best opportunity we are ever likely to have to really come to grips with the terrible history of child sexual abuse in our Church and in our society. We cannot hope to build a better or safer future for our children if we fail to acknowledge and seek to remedy the horrors of the past.

In the light of what transpired at the recent Royal Commission hearings in relation to Cardinal Pell and historic cases of sexual abuse in Ballarat and Melbourne I want to assure you that in our Archdiocese we have procedures and protocols in place which mean that all allegations of child sexual abuse are treated with the utmost seriousness. There are no "cover-ups", there is no withholding of information from the appropriate church or civil authorities, no deliberate transferring of offending clergy or other Church workers from one place to another, no off-handed dismissal of complaints or allegations without proper and objective investigation, and no returning to ministry of offending priests, religious or other Church workers after allegations have been substantiated. That such things happened in the past in some parts of Australia is a scandal, an unmitigated tragedy for victims, in our Church language a sin, and in some cases a serious crime. I, and all those in the Archdiocese who support me, are working hard to ensure that they never happen here, now or into the future.

As the Archbishop of Perth I can assure you that we as a local Church are deeply and shamefully aware of the terrible mistakes of the past. We are learning from them. We are responding as best we can as the Royal Commission continues its painful but necessary journey. We are working hard, especially through our Safeguarding Project, to ensure the safety of all your children. We wait hopefully for the final recommendations of the Royal Commission and look to the Commission for help in making the present and future much better than the past.

I have on previous occasions expressed my own deeply felt apology, on behalf of the Church which I presently lead, to all the victims and survivors of child sexual abuse by clergy, religious or other Church personnel. I want to do so again. I love the Church and it both horrifies and shames me that people who were meant to represent the Church have betrayed it by their dreadful abuse of children and young people in their care. So many of you who have been betrayed in this way have expressed to me your desperate hope that no child in the future should have to suffer what you went through. I and the many people working alongside me are doing our best to see this hope fulfilled.

The past week has been profoundly disturbing and distressing for many people both inside and outside the Church. It has undoubtedly been even more so for the survivors of sexual abuse and their families and friends. As we all in our different ways travel this agonising path we pray for the gift of healing and renewal that only God can give.

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