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## **Statement from Bishop Paul Bird at the Conclusion of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**

Bishop Paul Bird has welcomed the release of the Commission's final report and acknowledged the years of hard work undertaken by the Commissioners and their staff. He joins the Commissioners in thanking each of the survivors who told the Commission their story. In doing so, with great courage, the survivors have helped us all to identify what should be done to make institutions safer for children in the future.

In his final address, the Chair of the Royal Commission said that "the conjunction of events which the Royal Commission has examined can only be described as a national tragedy." With deep sadness we recognise that people in positions of trust in our Catholic diocese of Ballarat contributed to this national tragedy, both by the abuse of children and by the failure to protect children from abuse.

The challenge before us now is to be part of a national commitment to care for children in our time. As the Chair of the Commission has said, "the sexual abuse of any child is intolerable in a civilised society" and "we must each resolve that we should do what we can to protect them."

Over the past five years our diocese has sought to cooperate with the Commission's inquiries. We have also sought to implement recommendations from the various reports the Commission has issued along the way. Now we must consider carefully the conclusions in the Commission's final report, to see what further lessons we should learn in regard to our response to those who have suffered abuse and the steps we should take to keep children safe today and in the years ahead.