



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
MESSAGE FROM ARCHBISHOP MARK COLERIDGE



**RE: THE FINAL HEARINGS INTO THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH AT THE ROYAL COMMISSION**

By now the Royal Commission into the institutional abuse of the young is into its fourth year. It's been a long and agonising but very important journey for the Church and for many others as well.

On Monday the 6th of February, the final hearing into the Catholic Church will begin and it will go for about three weeks. It seems I will appear a number of times through that final hearing.

In those weeks, the Royal Commission will try to do two things:

- It will ask the question, first of all, what has the Church learnt from the experience of the Royal Commission? What have we done on the basis of what we've learnt and what will we do in the future? That's a very important question.
- Secondly, the Royal Commission will ask what were the cultural factors that led to the abuse in the Church and to the mishandling of the abuse by Church leaders? That, too, is a very important question because it's not enough to change procedures and protocols. That has to happen.

But we have to shift the culture. And that's a much more difficult thing to do.

So, that's why that second question – what were the cultural factors – is again a very important one.

Through these three weeks there will be some grim moments and there will be some shocks, inevitably. But there will also be a chance to tell a better story of what has been done and what is being done now and what will be done in the future to ensure that the future is very much better than the past.

We say this is the final hearing into the Catholic Church but, in fact, there will be a story to be told beyond the final hearing. The Commission will present its report at the end of the year and that will be important. But it will also have a long tail. The journey will continue long after the final report has been published.

So, I invite all of you to join me on the journey through the three weeks of this final hearing and the journey that stretches before us beyond that, so that together we can do everything possible to ensure a better future for the Church; a better future particularly for young people; and even more particularly for those who have survived abuse. That justice and healing may be done to them.

So, a better future for them and for the whole of society as well.