



## STATEMENT

### Pathways Victoria

#### ***A New Model for Responding to Survivors of Abuse in the Catholic Church in Victoria***

**21 December 2021**

As the bishops of the Catholic dioceses of Victoria, we acknowledge with great sorrow the immense harm and loss of trust that has been caused by sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church. We renew our apology for this and our commitment to providing a fair and compassionate response to survivors. We also restate our determination to ensuring that strong safeguarding practices are established and supported across each of our dioceses.

By setting up Pathways Response Victoria Ltd as a company with an independent Board of Directors, the Catholic Church in Victoria takes responsibility for responding to the trauma experienced by those who have been abused in the Church. This new model offers a compassionate, person-centred, and trauma-informed response for the independent investigation of allegations of abuse and entering a process of resolution, which may include an apology, support, and a monetary payment.

Pathways is the Victorian implementation of the Catholic Church's new *National Response Protocol* and will be established on 1 January 2022. From that date, new complaints of abuse received by the Dioceses of Victoria will be responded to through Pathways, rather than through the *Melbourne Response* or *Towards Healing*, with professional support available from the first contact with the process. In matters already being investigated, survivors will have the option of continuing in their current process or transferring to Pathways. Those who are receiving support through Carelink will continue to do so. Pathways will also be available to other Catholic entities and Church authorities operating in Victoria.

We express our gratitude to those who have provided feedback during the development of Pathways Victoria, including survivors and their supporters, the Attorney-General, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and Victoria Police. Investigations conducted by Pathways will respect the primacy of police processes and comply with any directions of the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

While we are deeply conscious that no effort will ever be sufficient to repair the lifelong harm suffered by those who have been abused, their families and loved ones, and the entire People of God, we are committed to restorative journeying with survivors of abuse that is compassionate, fair, respectful, and accountable.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A Comensoli".

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli  
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Bernard Bird".

Most Rev Paul Bernard Bird CSsR  
BISHOP OF BALLARAT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shane Mackinlay".

Most Rev Shane Mackinlay  
BISHOP OF SANDHURST

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Bennet".

Most Rev Greg Bennet  
BISHOP OF SALE