

Catholic education supports the announcement of the Royal Commission into institutional responses to child sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse is a source of distress and outrage for us all, but the impact on us is as nothing when compared with its impact on the children and their families. We must support the survivors in their healing, with a listening heart and deep compassion.

The Royal Commission will be an opportunity for this healing, particularly the healing of the survivors, but also of their families, their communities, the nation and, not least, our Church and the other institutions which have fallen short in their responsibility to the children in their care. Survivors will have the chance to be heard, and have their stories taken seriously and their pain both acknowledged and understood.

The Royal Commission is also an opportunity for reform, establishing better systems to protect children in the future. We will work with the Royal Commission to help ensure the wrongs of the past are acknowledged and can never happen again.

These are painful times. Those of us who are Catholic, and those in our communities who work in Catholic institutions, are probably all affected to some degree by the community's anger, doubt and suspicion. Through these challenging times it will be important for us as leaders to remind our school communities of the importance and value of their commitment to Catholic education.

It is important that we support each other at this time. I know that many parish communities have offered strong support to their priests. We give thanks for the overwhelming majority of priests and religious who have always served our community with integrity, care and compassion.

My hope is that the Royal Commission will provide both survivors and the Catholic community with a lasting opportunity to heal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Elder', written in a cursive style.

Stephen Elder Executive Director of Catholic Education

