

MEDIA RELEASE
21 December 2021

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

Today, the Catholic Bishops of Victoria announce the establishment of Pathways Victoria, a new model for responding consistently across the Victorian dioceses to allegations of abuse in the Catholic Church, to begin in the New Year.

While ‘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’, with the establishment of Pathways Victoria, the Catholic Bishops of Victoria recommit to ensuring that those who have suffered the trauma of abuse in the Catholic Church are responded to in a compassionate, fair, respectful and accountable way, and that strong safeguarding practices are in place in each of their dioceses.

The new model will begin on 1 January 2022 and is the Victorian implementation of the Catholic Church’s new *National Response Protocol*. It offers a compassionate, person-centred, and trauma-informed response for the independent investigation of allegations of abuse, delivered through a company that has been established for this purpose, governed by a Board of independent Directors.

From 2022, new complaints of abuse received by the Catholic 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. Pathways will also be available to other Catholic entities and Church authorities operating in Victoria.

Pathways Victoria will offer an alternative to existing mechanisms such as the National Redress Scheme and civil litigation for those who may wish to engage in a pastoral response or for those who may not be eligible for the National Redress Scheme.

The establishment of Pathways Victoria follows a period of consultation with survivors of abuse, those who have lived with the effects of abuse and those who have professional expertise in this area. The newly appointed Chair of Pathways Response Victoria Ltd, Professor Rosemary Sheehan AM thanked ‘those who spoke to us about what efforts we need to make if we are to begin to repair lifelong harm individuals abused have suffered’.

The Catholic Bishops of Victoria expressed their gratitude to those who 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.

Further information about the Pathways company and the new model is available on the Pathways website: www.pathwaysvictoria.com

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ATTRIBUTABLE QUOTES:

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.

Catholic Bishops of Victoria

We thank those who spoke to us about what efforts we need to make if we are to begin to repair lifelong harm individuals abused have suffered.

Professor Rosemary Sheehan AM, Chair, Pathways Response Victoria Ltd

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Accompanying documentation:

- Statement from the Bishops of Victoria
- Pathways Victoria model
- Pathways Victoria constitution
- Profile of directors and officers