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**Dr Wendy Lambourne**  
Senior Lecturer, Deputy Director & Postgraduate Research Coordinator

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

9 March 2015

Re: PUBLIC CONSULTATION: REDRESS AND CIVIL LITIGATION

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to endorse the submission from Rob Mackay in response to the Royal Commission Consultation Paper on Redress Schemes, and to reinforce the arguments for a facilitated restorative process for healing and redress.

It is encouraging to note the Commission's understanding of the lasting individual, interpersonal and societal impacts of past child sexual abuse resulting from a range of psychological, physical and material harms. The Commission's conclusion that '*Survivors' needs for counselling and psychological care should be singled out from the broader range of needs and addressed through redress as a necessary part of ensuring justice for victims.*' is therefore welcome.

However, the Commission's conclusion that it will support only '*conventional counselling and psychological care*' associated with the redress scheme is disappointing. To reject mounting evidence of the value of community-based approaches to healing is both short-sighted and potentially counterproductive, especially when taking into account the evidence in the report of survivors finding individual counselling to be of limited benefit and, at worst, retraumatising. It is counter to the report's recommended principle of flexibility to limit the choice of individual survivors to obtain the type of psychosocial support they would find most valuable.

Furthermore, by ignoring the potential for restorative processes, the Commission is limiting the potential impact of any redress scheme and psychological counselling to address all of the harms experienced by the survivors of institutional child sexual abuse. This is especially so given the religious nature of the institutions involved in the abuse, the broken relationships between the survivors and these institutions, and the accompanying *spiritual harm* caused by the loss of faith and trust – both for the survivors and other members of the religious institutions in question.

As argued by Judith Herman in her landmark book *Trauma and Recovery* (1997), recovery from trauma requires a feeling of safety and security foremost, followed by acknowledgement and reconnection. Any redress scheme that seeks to assist the healing and recovery of survivors of institutional child sexual abuse must therefore consider these three elements. A restorative justice process can assist by providing an opportunity for survivors to receive personal acknowledgement from a representative of the religious institution that what they experienced was wrong, and that the institution was responsible. It can further give survivors and their

families a chance to rebuild trust and thereby reconnect with their faith and the religious institution that betrayed them in the past, should they wish to do so.

As argued by Rob Mackay in his submission, this process should be an option for survivors to pursue, accompanied by psychological support services, and not in any way should they be pressured to participate. Similarly, while I agree that religious institutions should be required to participate at the survivor's request, it is critical that whoever represents the institution in the process is willing to acknowledge responsibility for the harms caused, to listen and engage in an open, honest and respectful dialogue with the survivor.

The provision of a national restorative process endorsed by the religious institutions involved would go a long way in rebuilding public faith and trust in these institutions moving forward, and in supporting healing for the survivors.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding my submission and my research findings in relation to restorative justice and trauma healing following mass human rights violations.

Sincerely,

Dr Wendy Lambourne  
Senior Lecturer and Deputy Director