**STATEMENT BY LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AUSTRALIA**

**ON THE ROYAL COMMISSION INTO CHILD SEX ABUSE**

On Monday, 12 November 2012, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that she will be ‘recommending to the Governor-General that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into institutional responses to instances and allegations of child abuse in Australia’.

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) welcomes and fully supports all initiatives that will protect children, bring healing to those abused, achieve reconciliation where that is possible and bring to justice those who have perpetrated evil acts against vulnerable individuals.

The Royal Commission is an opportunity for the LCA to reaffirm that sexual or any other form of abuse against children is totally unacceptable.

In observing Christ’s command to love one another, we are to treat each other with respect and dignity.

The safety, protection and wellbeing of children and young people are key priorities across the LCA and in all its educational institutions.

We are called to share the love of Jesus by providing a safe, welcoming and nurturing environment for children. It is in this spirit that those who hold positions in the church exercise with great care the trust placed in them.

The LCA has children’s ministry ranging from church-wide faith-nurturing programs involving families in the congregation and home to long-established camp ministries around the country.  It is essential that these ministries are safe places for children.

The LCA has a Child Safe Management System that has been designed to promote the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of young people, their families and caregivers.

ChildSafe is a safety and risk management system for people working with children and young people, incorporating a safety manual, policies and an online procedure system. It is relevant to anyone within the LCA who engages in work with children, young people and families.

It is LCA policy that everyone involved in ministry to children and young people must complete the ChildSafe training requirements (refer [www.lca.org.au](http://www.lca.org.au) for more information about ChildSafe and Safe Place).

Similarly, Lutheran schools have been implementing a program called ‘Valuing Safe Communities’ that has as its objective a safe environment for all students.

It is our hope and prayer that the Royal Commission will thoroughly consider the issues related to child abuse and identify measures to better prevent and respond to child abuse in all those institutions that work with children.

The LCA is committed to implementing processes to ensure that our church is a safe place for all, including children. God entrusts children to our care and holds us responsible for their nurture and upbringing. It will be a positive outcome if we improve how we care for children, both as a church and in the wider community, following the example of Jesus who accorded children love and respect (Matthew 19: 13-15).

Once the terms of reference for the Royal Commission are released a meeting of senior leaders within the LCA will be convened to determine how best the LCA can participate in and offer its full cooperation throughout the process.

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President

Lutheran Church of Australia

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