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**The Courier** <sup>(1)</sup>

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# New hope for clergy abuse survivors

By Matthew Dixon

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SUPPORT: Ballarat residents tied ribbons to show support for clergy sexual abuse survivors. Picture: Kate Healy

Survivors of clergy sex abuse who have already received payments from the Catholic Church may be entitled to a further settlement, according to a leading lawyer.

Shine Lawyers partner Roger Singh has represented a number of people with claims and believes the evidence presented at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse may allow survivors who have already received payments to be open to further settlements.

“So when I look at what is coming out of the Royal Commission what concerns me, especially with what we are hearing about from the Catholic Church, is that there is a time when they knew (what was happening), that is what is being suggested,” he said.

Mr Singh said if abuse survivors had approached the church to seek answers and redress, and the church provided it to them, and it was then proven the church had some knowledge of what had occurred, it would be considered that agreement was struck without all of the information provided.

“If the evidence does come to the fore that the church suppressed and concealed evidence and material facts and the victim had no way of being privy and having access to that information I feel that there is scope for it to be reopened and revisited with all the cards on the table.

“The view I hold is there has to be a moral duty for the church to come forward and say ‘when we settled your claim we didn't come clean’.”

Mr Singh said if the church was proven to have known information about the abuse prior to any agreement being made it would also be grounds for further compensation as the deal was made without all of the information available to the survivor.

The Royal Commission sat in Ballarat for two weeks during May.

During the hearings pedophile priest Gerald Ridsdale admitted former Bishop Ronald Mulkearns knew of his offending and that it was criminal.

Christian Brothers Oceania Province leader Brother Peter Clinch said that nearly 42 Ballarat survivors had been paid nearly \$3 million with each payment averaging \$70,000.