

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC welcomes release of Royal Commission findings into St Ann's Special School in Adelaide



5 June, 2015

The Truth Justice and Healing Council welcomes the release of the Royal Commission's final report into the responses of the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the South Australian Police to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Ann's Special School in South Australia.

The report which was released on Thursday 4 June 2015, follows a public hearing held in Adelaide in March 2014.

The public hearing examined the employment, monitoring, supervision and oversight of Brian Perkins, a school bus driver who in the late 1980s abused intellectually disabled children from the school.

Perkins drove children to and from school each day unsupervised and also undertook volunteer work and provided respite care for students during his employment.

The report makes it clear that at the time of the abuse, while there was no requirement to undertake police checks on employees, this and other systemic failures at the school allowed Perkins to abuse the children.

The report also points out that procedures and policies are now in place that, as far as possible, ensure the abuse of the past cannot happen again.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the experiences of the children were horrific and appalling.

"These intellectually disabled boys and girls, who in many cases were unable to understand or disclose what was being done to them, were at the mercy of a perpetrator who would now never be let anywhere near a school," Mr Sullivan said.

"It is now our hope that the lessons that can be learnt from these findings will make all schools safer for children and that the report and the hearing will provide some satisfaction and healing for the young people who were abused and their families."

The Commission also found the group approach the Church took to the payment of 'gifts' to former students of St Ann's did not provide an adequate response for some families.

However the Commission also found some families responded positively to the group approach and some families received financial reparation which they would not have received under *Towards Healing* protocols.

The Commission found that, since 2001, the Catholic Education Office has created a new position of principal consultant who works directly with school principals and provides an initial point of contact for reporting abuse allegations to the Catholic Education Office.

Truth Justice and Healing Council

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St Ann's Special School was established in 1975 and catered for 50 to 60 students with intellectual disabilities aged between five and 20 years.

The hearing also examined the nature of the investigation by the South Australia Police (SAPOL) and found a series of failings by SAPOL, combined with poor practices and systems, contributed to years of delay in bringing Perkins to trial.

The findings can be read on the TJHC website www.tjhcouncil.org.au or by clicking [here](#)

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For more information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>