

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC visits Stella Marris Parish on Queensland Sunshine coast



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Almost 200 people and 10 parish priests from Queensland's Sunshine Coast met last night with the head of the Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council to talk about child sexual abuse and the response of the Catholic Church in Australia.

The meeting heard from a number of parishioners angry at the failure of the Church leadership to be fully transparent about abuse within the church and to take action to address the past and put in place reforms for the future.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, said of the 60 or more parish meetings he had attended over the past two years the frustration and anger of parishioners had never been so strongly on display.

"Last night it would have been very valuable for every Church leader in Australia to have been in the Church to hear the frustrations and concerns of the 200 or so people who came out on a rainy night to talk about child sex abuse in the Catholic Church.

"I could feel the frustration in the room as one after another asked me why the leadership has failed to do what, to everyone else seems so obvious – to take responsibility for the way in which survivors of abuse have been dealt with and to make the reforms necessary to, as far as possible, ensure the abuse never happens again.," Mr Sullivan said.

The meeting came just ahead of the announcement from Rome overnight that Pope Francis has approved a new Vatican department which will judge bishops accused of covering up or not preventing sexual abuse of children.

The new department is being reported as "a breakthrough moment on an issue that has plagued the church globally.

The changes establish clear procedures to make bishops more accountable for abuse in their dioceses, even if they were not directly responsible for it and could also see bishops judged if they had failed to take measures to prevent sexual abuse of minors.

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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/>