

MEDIA RELEASE



Royal Commission closes registrations for private sessions

29 April 2016

The CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Mr Francis Sullivan, has today given his support to the call for a national 'truth telling' process to be part of redress for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Chair of the child abuse Royal Commission, Justice Peter McClellan, in a statement announcing registrations for Commission private sessions would close on 30 September 2016, said a form of restorative justice should be part of a redress scheme for child sexual abuse survivors.

Justice McClellan said the early deadline, more than a year before the Commission will hand its final report to government, was necessary because of stretched resources but he stressed the importance of the private sessions where survivors tell a commissioner their personal story.

'It is apparent to us that it is likely that there will be an ongoing need for people to tell their story after the Commission has ceased to exist,' Justice McClellan said.

'The Commissioners are of the view that when designing a national redress scheme or nationally consistent schemes, government and the relevant institution should ensure that an opportunity is provided for a survivor to be able to give an account of their experience to an appropriate person,' he said.

The Commissioner said that providing an opportunity for survivors to tell their story brings benefits including the acknowledgement to the survivor of both the failure of the individual institution and of society to adequately protect many children.

Mr Sullivan said the private session process had been a unique and vitally important part of the Commission process.

What has become clear is that information gathered from survivors in the private sessions has proved critical to the Commission's investigations and to a large extent has influenced which institutions would be the subject of public hearings.

'In the Commission's interim report in 2014 the statistics drawn from the private hearings showed one in three people coming to tell their story to the Commission had been abused in a Catholic institution.

'This one in three figure roughly represents the proportion of public hearings focused on the Catholic Church.

'But more significantly than just pointing to where the Commission should investigate, the private sessions have played a very real part for many survivors in their personal journey of recovery.'

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