

MEDIA RELEASE



TJHC visits St Andrew's College in Cairns and meets with students and staff

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The CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Mr Francis Sullivan, met with students and staff at St Andrew's Catholic College in Cairns this week and tied a ribbon to the school's Loud Fence set up in support of the survivors of child sexual abuse.

Speaking at the school, Mr Sullivan said it was wonderful to see a school like St Andrew's with its 1400 students across both primary and secondary classes getting behind the Loud Fence initiative.

'Attending a school like St Andrew's where you are able to learn and play in a safe and secure environment is a wonderful experience,' he told the students.

'And, with the support of your principal and teachers, it is encouraging to all survivors of abuse that the next generation of Catholics is fully supportive of their struggle for compassion and justice.

'It also sends an important message to the broader community that it is not business as usual and that here in Cairns and across Australia there are many, many thousands of ordinary Catholics who are standing up in support of child sexual abuse survivors,' he said.

The visit to the school followed a community meeting in the Cairns RSL where Mr Sullivan spoke about the response of the Catholic Church to the Royal Commission.

He told the gathering about the range of initiatives that have been put in place by church leaders over the past three years to better respond to abuse survivors and to ensure children are safe in Catholic services and facilities.

Mr Sullivan outlined changes to the way in which Church leaders have agreed to deal with civil claims of child sexual abuse, calls from church leaders for a national independent redress scheme for abuse survivors, a new structure to develop, monitor and report on child and vulnerable adult safety standards in Catholic organisations and more.

'While much has been done over the past three years and major changes have taken place to the way in which church leaders respond to child sexual abuse claims since the mid-1990s more needs to be done,' he told the group.

'In particular we need to work hard to find answers to the questions dealing with why child sexual abuse was so prominent in schools and parishes across Australia right up to and during the 1980s and 90s.

'Honest and forthright answers to these questions will help survivors move on and inform how as a church we need to move into the future,' he said.

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