

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC Chair addresses leaders of Catholic agencies in Perth



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The Chair of the Catholic Church's Truth, Justice and Healing Council (TJHC), Neville Owen, met with Perth Archdiocesan agencies today to discuss the work of the Royal Commission and the response of the Catholic Church.

Speaking at the at the Catholic Pastoral Centre in Highgate Mr Owen warned that the Catholic Church across Australia will face an "uncomfortable time" during the final Royal Commission 'wrap up' hearing into the church early in 2017.

He told the meeting the hearing will look into the reasons why child sexual abuse occurred within the Church's institutions and why the response was so poor.

He said it will examine factors such as clericalism, the seal of the Confessional, the formation of candidates for the priesthood and religious life, mandatory celibacy and the Church's handling of civil litigation.

"There is no doubt that that's going to be an uncomfortable time for those of us in the Catholic Church, particularly for our leaders, who have to give evidence," he said.

"This debate goes well beyond Royal Commission itself. We need to do whatever we can, to position the Church leadership so that when the dust settles, sometime in 2018, the Church leadership can re-enter the debate and really start to put the position of a return to Gospel values, which is what we are all about."

Mr Owen, a former Judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia, said this challenge was not limited to the clergy, but was one for all Catholics.

He called on the leaders of Catholic Church agencies to take the opportunities presented by the Royal Commission.

"You, as the leaders of Church agencies, have got to take the opportunities that you get, to be leaders yourselves, within this great conglomerate, amorphous body," he said.

"One of the things that I've heard a lot, and which worries me, is so many people and so many organisations within our Church say, 'Well, it's not my problem. This happened years ago and it's not my problem.' It *is* our problem," he said.

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