

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Truth Justice and Healing Council meets with Catholic community in Melbourne



29 September 2016

Catholics across Australia need to prepare for the final Royal Commission hearing into the Catholic Church openly and with a willingness to embrace the difficult questions around why the scandal occurred in the Church and the extent to which it did.

In a wide-ranging presentation to the Victorian chapter of the St Vincent de Paul Society's 'Social Justice in the City' speaker series in Melbourne this week CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, said the final hearing into the Catholic Church in early 2017 will be confronting.

"Like all Catholics and the broader community the Royal Commission wants answers to the 'why' questions.

"Why was abuse so extensive in Catholic Church schools, parishes, homes and orphanages? Why did so many Church leaders, seemingly independently of each other, respond very much in the same way, putting reputation ahead of children? Why has Catholic culture and clericalism been significant in the abuse crisis?

"Even after nearly four years in this job, it still confounds me to witness the way the institutional Church really was not up to the mark in properly dealing with perpetrators, alerting authorities and justly dealing with victims and their families," Mr Sullivan said.

Mr Sullivan also spoke this week at the Dominican Friars Assembly where some 20 members of the order met to discuss the future of the order including the roles of parish priests, university chaplains and formators.

He spoke about the extent of child sexual abuse in the Church since the 1930s and about the cultural and formation issues that may have contributed to the abuse.

"Some people say you can't look at the past with today's eyes. But that is part of the defensiveness in the church that needs to be eradicated. When we try to minimalise and contextualise – we are actually trying to excuse," he said.

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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](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)

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

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