

MEDIA RELEASE

Priest and male religious register now up and running



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Around 500 priests and male religious are now registered on a new national Catholic database which lets bishops and leaders of religious congregations check the background of clerics and brothers visiting or moving to their region.

The Australian Catholic Ministry Register (ACMR) will, for the first time, provide up-to-date online information on whether a priest or male religious has a working with children check and has been 'licensed' to work in a diocese or congregations.

Fr Tim Brennan msc, an Executive Officer of the National Professional Standards Office, said the new data base is a huge leap forward in ensuring the many priests and religious who move around the country for many different reasons don't have a black mark against their name.

"This new register is an internal tool church leaders can use to better understand the history of clerics and religious entering their diocese.

"The objective of the ACMR is to implement a secure and auditable web-based system that records the clearance status of priests and male religious.

"It will allow Church Authorities to check the references of priests and male religious who are visiting or transferring interstate or from another diocese," Fr Brennan said.

The ACMR has been developed by the Catholic Church's National Committee for Professional Standards. The ACMR uses a personalised ID number which is provided to each person on the register so that it can be given to a church leader to verify the standing of the visitor.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the ACMR reflects a new approach to ensuring priests and brothers are accountable for their past behaviours and history.

"As this register grows it will become increasingly difficult for a priest or a brother to try and hide past problems by simply moving to another part of the country," he said.

"This initiative is another clear indication of the changing face of the Catholic Church in Australia.

"We are now regularly seeing religious leaders putting in place new policies, employing new people and sharply focusing their attention on ensuring their diocese or congregation are as safe as possible for children and venerable adults," Mr Sullivan said.

Fr Brennan said that he expects that within the next year most, if not all priests and male religious, will be on the register.

“As religious leaders increasingly rely on the register to determine the standing of a new or visiting priest or brother it will quickly become the case that without being on the register it will be very difficult to move or visit another place,” Fr Brennan 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

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