

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC joins Notting Hill community at 'Spirituality in the Pub' meeting



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The future of the Catholic Church and its response to child sex abuse were the main focus of a 'Spirituality in the Pub' meeting in the Notting Hill pub in Melbourne's east this week.

More than 120 people attended the event, titled '*Is Truth, Justice and Healing possible*', to hear the CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, talk about the reforms which have taken place in the Church over recent years and the challenges it continues to face.

"It is unlikely that we will ever be able to do enough to allow healing to take place for all survivors of clerical child sexual abuse. But we must keep trying," Mr Sullivan said.

"For a long time the Catholic Church has hidden and often covered up clerical child sexual abuse. Being real about this means we now have to talk about it, bring it out of the dark and say what it means.

"We need to be open to how abuse survivors feel, their anger and rage, and what they need.

"Most abuse survivors live silent desperate lives. It is now up to all people in the Catholic Church, its leaders and the lay people to play a part in their healing."

At the meeting Mr Sullivan outlined a range of reforms and changes that had taken place within the Church since the Royal Commission was established in late 2012 including:

- changes to the way the Church responds to civil claims of child sexual abuse
- ongoing calls for and engagement in the development of a national independent redress scheme
- the development of a comprehensive data base detailing all available information relating to individual cases of child sexual abuse within the church
- the establishment of a new independent child protection and vulnerable adult safe guarding office which is soon to be announced
- the introduction of dedicated child safe-guarding and professional standards officers into many diocese and religious orders.

Mr Sullivan told the meeting that it was only in the early 1990s that the Catholic Church started to deal more compassionately with abuse survivors.

"Before this the approach was to try to hide the scandal, to move offending priests and brothers, to protect the reputation of the Church.

"The response now, in most cases, is more pastoral with a very real attempt to put the interests of the survivors first."

Truth Justice and Healing Council

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“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 more still needs to be done,’ Mr Sullivan said.

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For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

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