

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC meets with clergy in Brisbane and social services leaders in Sydney



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Priests now, more than ever, need to be at the forefront of rebuilding the reputation and credibility of the Church after more than four years of public hearings dealing with child sexual abuse and the Church's response to it.

Speaking at a meeting of more than 180 priests from across the Archdiocese of Brisbane, Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council said priests need to reach out to their parishioners and the Catholic community to let them know the changes that are taking place in the Church.

"It is also vitally important that priests encourage their parishioners to have the conversation about child sexual abuse and to work with them to engage with survivors in any way they can.

"At the hundreds of meetings I have been to with parishes, parishioners and other Catholic groups I am always asked 'what can ordinary Catholics do within their parishes and communities to play a part in the healing?'.

"This is something that priests and their bishops now need to start thinking about. It is high time for direct action and for the Catholic community, with the cooperation and engagement of parish priests, to work with each other and survivors.

"This will be key to re-building the Church," Mr Sullivan said.

Other issues discussed include the importance of supervision and ongoing formation for priests, seminary training and culture, the complexities of living a celibate life, and challenges more generally for the priesthood such as professional and geographic isolation, conflicting loyalties and loss of personal status.

The Clergy Convocation is an annual gathering of all Clergy within the Brisbane Archdiocese to discuss a range of pastoral and administrative matters. It was convened by Brisbane Archbishop, Mark Coleridge, and attended by more than 180 priests over two days.

Last week Mr Sullivan also attended the Catholic Social Services Australia Leadership Forum in Sydney where more than 50 senior executives from Catholic Social Services across Australia met to discuss the changes in the not-for-profit sector.

The two-day meeting looked at issues around entrenched poverty and also how members of CSSA will contribute to future processes to protect vulnerable people and support survivors, clients, staff and the community following the release of the Royal Commission's findings in December 2017.

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

Truth Justice and Healing Council

PO Box 4593 KINGSTON ACT 2604 | Tel: +61 2 6234 0900 | Fax: +61 2 6234 0999