

MEDIA RELEASE

Information sharing submission vital for the protection of children



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Reforms to put in place nationally consistent arrangements for information sharing concerned with the safety and wellbeing of children within and across sectors and jurisdictions in Australia are of fundamental importance.

In a major submission to the Royal Commission's discussion paper on information sharing the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council says consistent and cross jurisdictional sharing of information relating to teachers, carers, and police records is vital for the protection of children.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said Information sharing has consistently been identified by TJHC stakeholders as an issue affecting the safety of children in schools, parishes and other places.

"There are currently a number of significant problems to the timely and appropriate sharing of information to protect children including confusion about privacy requirements, concerns about defamation and a reactive rather than proactive attitude to information sharing.

"This confusion needs to be eliminated across sectors and jurisdictions to provide for the safety of children in institutional contexts. The safety and wellbeing of children is paramount," he said.

The submission recommends that where there is tension between this principle and statute or the common law, the safety and wellbeing of children should have priority over the protection of confidentiality, individual reputation and privacy.

It also says smaller organisations should be supported in the practical implications of information sharing.

The submission recommends that all faith-based institutions, including the Catholic Church, its schools, welfare organisations and parishes, should be prescribed bodies for the purposes of both reportable conduct and information sharing schemes nationally.

While the submission supports reforms it says safeguards must also be put in place given a broad permission to share information presents risks to privacy and, in the absence of safeguards, may be subject to misuse.

Read TJHC submission: [Strengthening Information Sharing Arrangements](#)

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

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