

MEDIA RELEASE

Commission's final report released, Catholic Church must act



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CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council (TJHC) said today that the release of the Royal Commission's final report into institutional responses to child sexual abuse is an historic occasion which brings to an end one of this nation's most important judicial inquiries.

"While the release of this report signals the end of the Commission, the work on implementing its latest set of recommendations and findings is only now just starting," Mr Sullivan said.

"An initial reading of the Commission's recommendations, specifically those relating to the Catholic Church, seem to be very sensible and practical. Many of the recommendations are consistent with recommendations made by the TJHC throughout the Commission's issues papers process."

The Commission has identified a range of factors that may have contributed to child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions including clericalism; organisational structure and governance; leadership; Canon law; celibacy; selection, screening and initial formation; oversight, support and ongoing training of people in ministry; and the Sacrament of reconciliation (confession).

"What now needs to be made clear by the Church leadership is that they take these recommendations and findings seriously and that they are willing to act swiftly in implementing the findings.

"This process will start with the TJHC doing a comprehensive analysis of the report and in particular the recommendations that relate either generally or specifically to the Catholic Church. We expect to have this report finalised and provided to the Church leadership early in 2018.

"While there have been many changes over the past 20 years to the way in which the Catholic Church responds to the survivors of child sexual abuse, there is still much to be done.

"The work of rebuilding trust and confidence in the Catholic Church will be hard and will take many years. This report and its findings provide, at the very least, a way in which this can be achieved. It is essential that every element of the Catholic Church in Australia commits to the serious business ahead."

Mr Sullivan acknowledged the work of the Commission and its staff.

"For five years the Royal Commissioners and their staff have been involved in what must surely be the most difficult and confronting royal commission ever undertaken.

"Their dedication to this work and their commitment to seeking the truth will be a legacy that will live long after the Commission has ended.

Mr Sullivan also acknowledged the participation of the thousands of abuse survivors who gave evidence during the Commission's hearing or attended one of its more than 8,000 private sessions.

“The Commission process has been extremely difficult for the Church and the Church community. But this pales compared to the difficulty and anguish survivors, both those who have come forward to the Commission and those who have not, have endured.

“We will never really be able to measure the sacrifices and hardships they have endured during this process. The Church and the broader community owe them an enormous debt of gratitude,” Mr Sullivan said.

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