

MEDIA RELEASE



Pope Francis renews Pontifical Commission on clergy sexual abuse giving greater role to survivors

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Pope Francis has renewed his Pontifical Commission on clergy sexual abuse adding nine new members and signalling greater involvement from survivors in its considerations.

A statement from the Vatican yesterday (Feb 17) said plans were at an advanced stage to create a group made up of survivors of sexual abuse known as the International Survivor Advisory Panel (ISAP) to offer consultation on "abuse prevention from the survivor's perspective".

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council welcomed the announcement saying that there had been many significant question hanging over it during the past few months.

"Several high profile members have left concerned about lack of action and their understanding of the commitment of the Pope to keeping clerical abuse at the centre of the Vatican's agenda," Mr Sullivan said.

"The moves to give survivors a greater say in the work of the Commission with the creation of a special survivor's advisory committee it a welcome move.

"Without clear input from survivors it is sometimes difficult to ensure that new initiatives and programs are hitting the right mark."

Yesterday's Vatican statement also announced the Chair of the TJHC, Neville Owen, has been appointed to the Commission. He is the second Australian to be on the Commission following Kathleen McCormack from Wollongong, who finished her three-year term late last year.

The opening session of the Commission's April plenary meeting will begin with a private meeting with several people who have experienced abuse.

The members will then discuss various proposals to foster on-going dialogue with survivors from around the world.

The mandate of the Commission, which includes lay academics and psychologists, priests and nuns, is to promote best practice initiatives and educational programmes to protect minors and vulnerable adults in local Catholic institutions around the world.

Its experts come from the United States, Britain, Australia, the Netherlands, Ethiopia, India, Italy, Tonga, Germany, Brazil, Poland, South Africa, the Philippines, and Zambia. Ten are non-clerics and eight are women, including three nuns.

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