

MEDIA RELEASE

Irish Catholic Church child abuse watchdog says Australian Church can learn from Irish experience

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The man credited by many with the dramatic change in just six years to the approach the Irish Catholic Church takes to child safety says the Church in Australia could benefit from the experience in Ireland.

Mr Ian Elliott, the former CEO of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church in Ireland, says when he came into the job there was a lot of scrutiny of the Irish Church, a lot of anger and a view that the church leadership had failed the task of managing the issues around clerical sexual abuse.

“The establishment of the Board and its work over the past six years is seen both within the Church and publically as a sincere and transparent way of safeguarding children and dealing with the impacts of clerical sexual abuse,” Mr Elliott said.

“Setting in place national standards and a national response, a structure that could be held accountable and a process of review and monitoring are all ideas that are worthy of consideration by the Church leadership in Australia,” Mr Elliott said.

In a wide ranging interview with the CEO of the Catholic Church’s Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, Mr Elliott says there has been a sincere and honest attempt to address the problems in the Church in a principled way.

“It goes back to transparency, including letting people know what we are doing, how we are doing it and what we have found. And accountability in the sense that if we find wrong doing we will address it, we will not shy away from it.”

Mr Elliott was the inaugural CEO of the National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church from 2006 until his retirement in 2013.

He has been in Australia for the past two months at the invitations of the Catholic Church’s National Office of Professional Standards meeting with Church and other organisations to discuss the Irish experience in dealing with clerical sexual abuse.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council were established by the Catholic Church to coordinate the Church’s response to the Royal Commission.

Its role is to oversee the Church's engagement with the Commission, to develop new policies to protect young people and to help the Church respond to any future complaints appropriately and with justice, putting the needs of victims first.

A full interview with Ian Elliott and Francis Sullivan is on the Truth Justice and Healing Council Website at <http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/media/video-gallery.aspx>

Media Contact Michael Salmon 0417 495 01

Truth Justice and Healing Council

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

www.tjhcouncil.org.au