

MEDIA RELEASE

Royal Commission public hearings into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse start in Sydney



Sunday 15 September 2013

The CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has welcomed the start of public hearings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Sydney on Monday.

Mr Sullivan said the hearings will examine how institutions, including church and state bodies, handled complaints about the sexual abuse of children in their care.

"This is a very important and significant day for the victims of sexual abuse within Catholic Church and other institutions. Many have been waiting for this day for a very long time," Mr Sullivan said.

"The Royal Commission is the opportunity for the Catholic Church in Australia to face the way it has responded to the victims of child sexual abuse.

"This is an opportunity for us to re-commit to the pastoral care of victims, apologise for our actions and face up to the shameful history of sexual abuse in Church institutions.

"It is only when the full truth is revealed, justice is achieved for victims, reparation is made, sincere and appropriate apologies are offered and accepted that healing can start.

"This will be a difficult time for victims and survivors as many re-live their experiences. Many will be traumatised again by telling their stories and hearing the stories of others. We must all be acutely aware of these dangers.

"It will also be difficult for members of the Catholic community who will hear some stories of past abuses and the failure of some church leaders to do the right thing. The full story, the good and the bad, must be told," Mr Sullivan said.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council was established by the Catholic Church in Australia 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 children and young people and to help the Church respond to any future complaints appropriately and with justice, putting the needs of victims first.

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