



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church in Australia

About the Royal Commission

- On 11 January 2013 the Federal Government announced the establishment of a Royal Commission into the way institutions across Australia have responded to complaints of child sexual abuse
- The six-member Royal Commission will inquire into how institutions with a responsibility for children have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse
- The Commissioners will investigate where systems have failed to protect children, and make recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions
- The Commissioners can look at any private, public or non-government organisation that is, or was in the past, involved with children, including government agencies, schools, sporting clubs, orphanages, foster care, and religious organisations

About the Royal Commission

- The Commissioners have been appointed for three years. The Commission will release an interim report by no later than 30 June 2014
- The Royal Commission is an opportunity for the Church to explain the way it has treated victims and survivors, to acknowledge past wrongs and failings and to find ways in which to work towards justice and healing for all.
- Importantly, it is an opportunity for victims and survivors of sexual abuse to come forward and be heard in an environment of support and safety.

Truth Justice and Healing Council

- Shortly after the Commission was announced, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia established the Truth, Justice and Healing Council.
- ACBC and CRA represent more than 200 separate Catholic Church organisations in Australia including dioceses, archdioceses and religious congregations
- The Council has been established in recognition of the importance of the Royal Commission and the imperative for the Church to address the past openly and honestly, the good with the bad.
- The formation of the Council will allow the Church to speak with one voice before the Royal Commission

What the TJHC will do

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council will oversee the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission

- Speaking for the Church in matters related to the Commission and child sexual abuse
- Coordinating the Church's legal representation at the Commission
- Identifying systematic institutional failures that have impeded the protection of children
- Indicating to the Commission the procedures that have been put in place over the past 20 years to protect children and deal with victims and perpetrators.

What the TJHC will do

The Council will also:

- Initiate research into best practice procedures, policies and structures to protect children in the future
- Make submissions to the Commission about the procedures, policies and structures in place today and the improvements intended to be made
- Promote lasting healing for the victims and survivors of previous abuse
- Manage all public relations and communications for the Church in relation to the Royal Commission.
- Provide a focal point for other stakeholders associated with the Royal Commission.

The Council will approach its task with openness, courage and humility.

Who is on the TJHC

- The 13 members of the Council include men and women with professional and other expertise in the areas of child sexual abuse, paedophilia, trauma, mental illness, suicide, education, public administration and governance.
- It has three representatives from Church bodies
- The Council includes four people who have either been the subject of clerical sexual abuse or have family members who have been abused within Church organisations
- It is Chaired by a former Supreme Court Judge, The Hon Barry O'Keeffe
- Its CEO is Francis Sullivan, former head of Australia's peak doctor's association, the AMA
- The Council reports to and makes recommendations to a specially establish Church leadership group made up of representatives from ACBC and CRA

Issues and public perceptions facing the Church in Australia and overseas

- Historical denial and minimisation of child sexual abuse claims, crime, cover-up and incompetency
- Greater concern for protecting the church's reputation rather than concern for victims
- The Church's apparent lack of compassion
- The Church's failure to report allegations to legal authorities for investigation and prosecution
- The Church's self-interested approach to compensation: confidentiality clauses, adversarial and aggressive, protecting assets
- The perceived lack of credibility and trust in Church authorities

In conclusion

- The Council will work on developing new policies and procedures to protect young people in the future and to help the Church respond to any future complaints appropriately and justly, putting the needs of victims and survivors first
- The Council will coordinate the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission with a commitment to cooperation, openness, full disclosure and justice for victims and survivors
- The Council will tell the full story of child abuse in the Catholic Church in Australia including what has been done to protect children, particularly since the 1990s and the introduction of the reconciliation schemes, Towards Healing and the Melbourne Response

If you are the victim of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church

- If you have been a victim of sexual abuse in any of the Catholic Church institutions in Australia it should be reported to the police
- If requested the Church will provide assistance to anyone in taking their allegation to the police and will fully cooperate with the police in any investigation
- To contact the police in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australian, Tasmania, Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory call: 131 444
- To contact the Police in Victoria call: 1800 333 000
- You can report abuse to the Catholic Church by contacting the Church's National Committee for Professional Standards by email: consultant@ncps.org.au or by calling: (02) 9669 6218

Contact the TJHC

Call the Council

on 02 6234 0900 between 9am and 5pm AEST Monday to Friday

Email the Council

You can email the Council at info@tjhcouncil.org.au

Write to the Council

PO Box 4593

Kingston ACT 2604

or send a fax to: 02 6234 0999

Website

You can also go to our website to subscribe to receive our newsletters, media releases, blogs and other information www.tjhcouncil.org.au

Contact the Royal Commission

General enquiries about the Royal Commission can be made at the Commission website - www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au - or by calling the Commission's national call centre on: 1800 099 340.

For more information from the Royal Commission about how to tell your story go to: www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/tell-us-your-story/

To register your interest in being contacted to tell the Commission your story, please email registerinterest@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au