

MEDIA RELEASE

Parish priests asked to read Catholic Church sexual abuse commitment statement at Mass



12 November 2013

Parish priests around Australia have been called on to acknowledge the start of Royal Commission hearings into *Towards Healing* on December 9 by reading the Catholic Church's child sexual abuse commitment statement at Mass over the coming weeks.

The statement, which has been endorsed by Church leaders across Australia, acknowledges the damage sexual abuse has done. It acknowledges past failings including cover-ups, failures of leadership and not believing victims.

It also provides a commitment to work towards repairing past wrongs, listening to and hearing victims, putting victims' needs first, and doing everything possible to ensure a safer future for children.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council has written to some 1100 priests suggesting they read the statement, first published in the Council's *Towards Healing* submission to the Royal Commission in September, during Mass, make it available in Church foyers and publish it on Parish websites.

"On 9 December, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse will examine the Catholic Church's protocols for addressing sexual abuse within the Church, *Towards Healing*", Mr Sullivan said.

"This will be the first time the Catholic Church will be the central focus of the Royal Commission.

"Catholics around Australia need to know how Church leaders are approaching the issue of sexual abuse and the disposition we are taking to the Commission. This is succinctly outlined in the commitment statement."

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is engaging with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse on behalf of the Catholic Church in Australia.

The Commitment Statement can be read at:

www.tjhcouncil.org.au/media/42284/131114-Our-Commitment-doc.pdf

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For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

For more information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au>

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