

MEDIA RELEASE

All Catholics need to take responsibility for how the Church responds to victims of child sexual abuse.



Catholics around Australia have been called on to take responsibility for shaping the emerging Church as it institutes reforms as part of its response to clerical child sex abuse.

In a wide ranging speech given in Ballarat today the CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan said many shocking crimes have been committed by people in the Church.

"A large number of those people have been brought to justice. Others have covered up those crimes, put the Church's interests before those of victims' and compounded victims' suffering," Mr Sullivan said.

"As the community of believers who make up the Church, we were not responsible for past crimes and cover ups, but we are responsible for how we react to them.

"We are responsible for how we respond to the victims, how we deal with the perpetrators, how we get reform and cultural change, and how we talk about sexual abuse in the Church with our friends, our families, our colleagues.

"We might not be responsible for the past, but we are most definitely responsible for our future and we will be judged by our actions," Mr Sullivan said.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council's reform agenda includes:

- The appointment of an independent body to determine payments to victims
- The appointment of independent, lay experts to strengthen the Church's National Committee of Professional Standards
- The introduction of an independent national corporate entity to develop and administer child protection standards
- Greater transparency through public reporting
- A national watchdog to ensure child-safe practices
- Mandatory data collection and accreditation by an independent national body to cover all institutions working with children
- A national approach to screening people who work with children

The full copy of speech is available at <http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/media/42582/131120-Speech-FINALBallarat-Speech-Taking-Responsibility-Francis-Sullivan.pdf>

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

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

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Information on the Royal Commission: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

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