

MEDIA RELEASE

Pope announces new Child Sexual Abuse Commission



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CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has welcomed news Pope Francis has set up a commission to fight child sex abuse in the Catholic Church.

The announcement was made overnight from the Vatican by Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Sean O'Malley.

The Cardinal said the new commission would "study the present programs in place for the protection of children, to come up with suggestions for new initiatives" by the Vatican in collaboration with national bishops' conferences and religious orders around the world.

Cardinal O'Malley said the new sex abuse commission would be made up of around 12 international members, including lay people, members of religious orders and priests with "competence in the safety of children, relations with victims, mental health, law enforcement" and other relevant subjects.

Working proposals for the Commission include:

- drafting of guidelines for the protection of minors;
- promoting pastoral care for victims and their families;
- developing training programs and protocols to create safe environments;
- plans for cooperating with civil authorities; and
- collaborating with research experts and bishops and religious superiors.

Francis Sullivan said the establishment of the new commission sent the strongest possible signal the Catholic Church at the very highest levels is continuing to act to address sexual abuse within the Church.

"This is the most significant international initiative yet coming from the Vatican, to face head on a tragedy that has shadowed the Catholic Church for decades.

"Importantly, this initiative has at its centre the concerns of victims and the development of child protection policies within the church."

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

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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