

MEDIA RELEASE

Catholic Church to Review Training for New Priests on Child Protection

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Work is now underway within the Catholic Church to review the education of people training for the priesthood in Australian Dioceses.

As part of a Vatican initiative the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference, through a group of senior seminary directors and other professionals, is looking at current practices regarding child protection training in Australian seminaries and theological colleges.

The CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, met with the group engaged in the review in Sydney recently (23/4/14). He said a detailed study to identify gaps in child protection training for new priests is an important part of the Church's reforms.

"Priests have an important role to play in ensuring the safety of children in Catholic communities," Mr Sullivan said.

"Priests need to be able to recognise signs of child abuse, understand how to respond to allegations of abuse and be fully aware of the boundaries in place for all people working with children.

"Ultimately the group will provide advice to the Bishops Conference on current practices in seminaries and theological colleges on the formation of new priests.

"They will also provide advice on new protocols and standards to ensure that trainee priests get the best available information regarding child protection practices.

"The Royal Commission is likely to look at the issue of future clergy and their training.

"This is a timely review that will ultimately benefit everyone within the Catholic Church and provide greater protection for children," Mr Sullivan said.

It is expected the committee will make its recommendations to the Bishops Conference through the National Committee for Professional Standards by the end of the year.

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