

MEDIA RELEASE



Royal Commission Roundtable looks to national Working With Children Checks

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council joined the Royal Commission's second roundtable discussion on Working With Children Checks, in Canberra today.

TJHC CEO, Francis Sullivan, said the discussion saw consensus from governments and non government groups on the importance of a national approach to Working With Children Checks, which is one of a suite of measures currently used to help keep children safe.

"Each state and territory currently has its own requirements for Working With Children Checks and today's discussion exposed some of the difficulties in the current arrangements," Mr Sullivan said.

"While there were differences of opinion around the table, it was pleasing to see consensus on the importance of sharing information nationally, of establishing minimum standards across the states and territories and of investing in medium term costs for data and associated infrastructure for long term social benefit.

"This is a significant step and one that has not so far been achieved in other other forum.

"The welfare and safety of children is paramount and must take precedence over concerns about logistics and costs.

"The Council called for a national Working With Children Check last year when we released our submission to the Royal Commission's issues paper.

Mr Sullivan said that while a national approach must be simple and cost effective, there must be no exemptions.

"A national approach will provide greater transparency and consistency across jurisdictions and help close loopholes that currently pose a threat to the safety of children.

"It will enable the sharing of intelligence across jurisdictions and ensure continuous monitoring of relevant records across jurisdictions. A national approach will also provide greater 'portability' for workers, enabling them to travel from state to state," he said.

The discussion was convened by Royal Commission Chair, Justice Peter McClellan AM and Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald AM. Participants included state and territory government representatives, children's commissioners, advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-government organisations.

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

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

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