

# MEDIA RELEASE



## TJHC addresses Catholic Religious Australia National Assembly

25 June 2014

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, addressed nearly 200 leaders from Catholic religious orders and institutes from across Australia in Melbourne today on important developments in the Council's work with the Royal Commission.

The assembly was also attended by the Australian Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, and by Cardinal Joao Braz de Aviz, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

There was time for frank discussion about the role of the Vatican and its impact on the Australian Church's response to the issue of child sexual abuse.

Mr Sullivan encouraged leaders within the Church as they take responsibility for the way the Church has responded to the scandal of the sexual abuse of children within its institutions.

And he outlined the tension between the need to act now, and the need to consider the recommendations of the Royal Commission. He encouraged leaders to address the institutional inertia that has led to some of the terrible events of the past.

He described the physical environment of the hearings. He acknowledged the pain and suffering of survivors. He painted a picture of the experiences of the 70 Church witnesses to date.

Mr Sullivan also discussed the public response to the hearings, saying the church's history of dealing with abuse has absolutely no credibility.

"But when we acknowledge we are learning from the past and we talk about a new agenda – a forward-looking transparent and responsive church – people's eyes light up," he said.

He said even though the Royal Commission is examining other institutions, the Catholic Church has been the overwhelming focus to date and that they were cooperating fully with the Commission.

"Of the 14 public hearings to date, 7 have involved the Catholic Church dioceses, congregations or institutions. The TJHC has responded to six issues papers which make policy recommendations that will help ensure children are safe. The TJHC has attended 2 policy roundtable discussions and is assisting the Royal Commission with its research.

The Royal Commission will deliver its interim report this month and is due to deliver its final report at the end of next year, although it is understood the Commissioner is likely to request an extension, in light of the volume of people who still have not yet been able to tell their story.

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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](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)

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