

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC CEO hears from Catholic Social Services leaders in Victoria



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Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council addressed leaders from Catholic Social Services in Victoria at a forum in Melbourne today following the release of the Royal Commission's interim report.

Mr Sullivan outlined the work of the Royal Commission so far, noting that the Catholic Church, through the Truth Justice and Healing Council is participating fully in the inquiry.

"To date there have been 14 public hearings, 7 involving the Catholic Church. The TJHC has provided submissions to all 6 of the Royal Commissions issues papers and has participated in the two round table discussions. It has also contributed in other ways to the Royal Commission's research after consulting widely with Church agencies across Australia," Mr Sullivan said.

He acknowledged the Church's shortcomings when it comes to dealing with sex abuse and the need for urgent reform.

"What the Catholic Church has done for the poor and disadvantaged is admirable, but what it has done to victims of abuse falls well short of the mark," Mr Sullivan said.

He talked about the cultural problems that exist in the Church which contribute to the sexual abuse of children, including clericalism, the exclusion of women from the highest levels of participation and decision making, institutional inertia, problems applying canon law in a contemporary sense, and the failures to properly deal with the perpetrators.

And he called for the separation of reparation (or payments to victims) from pastoral care, saying that over time there has been a bleaching of roles from the pastoral to the legal.

"The Church should stick to what the church is about – which is walking with people and supporting them pastorally for as long as it takes," he said.

Mr Sullivan repeated the call for a national, uniform redress scheme (funded by offending institutions) across jurisdictions to ensure a fair and consistent outcome for survivors.

He also flagged the upcoming consultation looking at reform of the way the church approaches the safety of children in its institutions.

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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/>