

Police Integrity Commission investigates relationship between the NSW Police and the Church

We had a very positive and productive Council Meeting in Melbourne to begin the week. After an inspiring reflection from Maria Harries that focused our attention on survivors and the very premise of our work, the meeting continued with a discussion about our commitment and involvement with the Royal Commission and the action plan required to implement our reform package.

During this time between public hearings involving the Catholic Church Council members are working in smaller groups on developing reform and policy proposals for the Church leadership across issues such as redress, what a pastoral response looks like, and legal issues.

Council members also heard a detailed report on the redress scheme roundtable discussions in Sydney, and Council member, Jack Heath, spoke about his recent meeting with the Melbourne Victims Collective Survivor Group.

This week the Police Integrity Commission (PIC) is holding a public hearing into the relationship between the NSW Police Force and the Catholic Church's Professional Standards Resource Group from 1998 to 2005. The hearing is focusing on unsigned draft abuse reporting protocols between the Church and the NSW Police.

The PIC is investigating whether there was any police misconduct in the participation of a sworn officer in the Church's Professional Standards Resource Group which was established in the late 1990s to provide guidance on the operation of the then recently developed *Towards Healing* protocol.

The Church welcomes this very important hearing, will cooperate fully and looks forward to its conclusions and a public report.

Last week the TJHC submitted our seventh issues paper to the Royal Commission on statutory victims of crime compensation schemes. In our submission on redress schemes we concluded that adult survivors of institutional child sexual abuse would be better off under a national redress framework than the existing arrangements for redress through state-based statutory victims of crime compensation schemes.

One of the major problems with the current schemes is that they are not uniform, they deliver different financial outcomes and they are sometimes difficult and complicated to access.

The TJHC has publically supported a statutory independent national redress, or compensation framework, to provide financial reparation to survivors of child sexual abuse within institutions in Australia. Our hope is this will provide survivors of abuse with justice and fair compensation.

Blog

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Our most recent submission adds weight to our belief that any scheme for survivors should be independent, generous and designed and developed in consultation with survivors. It should also represent best practice in terms of process and outcomes for survivors of child sexual abuse.

[Read our full submission here](#) .

Earlier this week I was in the Riverina district of NSW to meet with the Catholic community in Leeton's St Joseph's Parish to talk about child sexual abuse within the Church and the work of the TJHC.

The message from this group was loud and clear: a demand to see real reforms put in place to deliver fair and just compensation for survivors of child sexual abuse within the Church and the strongest possible child protection and welfare measures across all areas of the Church to ensure, as far as possible, the abuse never happens again.

It was a real pleasure to meet with this group of more than 80 parishioners and locals to talk about the crisis. Within minutes of the meeting starting it was clear these people were hungry for information, wanted to talk about the issues and where not prepared to let me leave without getting, as best I could, answers to their questions.

Again let me say, I am more than pleased to come and talk to any parish or other group that would like to hear about the work of the TJHC and the progress of the Royal Commission – just contact our office on 02 6234 0900 or emails us on admin@tjhcouncil.org.au

I was pleased to see that the Vatican's Sex Abuse Commission, appointed by Pope Francis, made significant inroads at their third meeting last week. Among many things, it was reported that the group approved its legal statutes, proposed new members and divided up work to focus on survivors, holding Bishops accountable and keeping pedophiles out of the priesthood.

It was the first meeting since Pope Francis appointed the Vatican's sex crimes prosecutor, Monsignor Robert Oliver, as the Commission's secretary. We hope to see further positive developments from the Sex Abuse Commission that will set the tone and example for the rest of the world to follow.

Francis Sullivan
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www.tjhcouncil.org.au