

MEDIA RELEASE

TJHC meets with Bathurst diocesan leaders



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CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has met with priests, religious leaders and the heads of Catholic welfare, education and health agencies in the NSW central west to discuss the child abuse royal commission and the Church's reform agenda.

Speaking in Bathurst with a group of 40 local church officials including Bishop Michael McKenna, Mr Sullivan gave an overview of the Church's development of new policies to protect young people in the future and to help it respond appropriately and justly to survivors.

"It is vital we always put the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse first," he told the group.

"We need to be developing policies and procedures which continue to strengthen our approach to child protection but also demonstrate that the Church leadership is engaged and fully understands the concerns of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Key elements of the Church's reform agenda include:

- Requiring all diocese or religious orders that are the defendants in a child sexual abuse case to identify an entity that is backed by insurance or assets that can be sued;
- the creation of a national redress scheme for survivors, which would be operated by Government but funded by the institutions responsible for the abuse;
- the appointment of lay and independent experts to strengthen the Church's National Committee of Professional Standards
- a proposal for an overarching national approach to safe guarding children within Church institutions

Mr Sullivan said the Catholic community and the Church leadership needs to continue to push for reform.

"Because it will be in getting that part right that we can be confident we will be doing the right thing for the survivors of abuse within the Church," he said.

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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/>