

Spreading the good news - the Church is changing

The pace and work of the Council continues this week with meetings in rural NSW, Perth, Melbourne and Sydney.

The Royal Commission has certainly raised the awareness of child sex abuse throughout this country. The Catholic Church is responding by recognising past failures, driving reforms and contributing to the public debate in critical areas of civil litigation and redress for survivors of abuse.

The Church is committed to tackling the scandal of child sex abuse head on. We want survivors to know they are heard and will be well cared for.

We are establishing reforms to ensure the safety of children not only in the Church, but also in all areas and institutions where children play and learn. Despite this, sometimes even just talking about clerical sex abuse is still difficult for many in the Church. Many priests and bishops, who I know care deeply for survivors and feel strongly about wanting to see change in the Church, still find it a challenging subject to talk and preach about.

It is important for all Catholics to keep talking, keep asking the questions and keep challenging the Church's response to the child sex abuse scandal. The Council is committed to informing the whole Catholic community about how the Church is responding to the Royal Commission, and importantly what changes and reforms are being developed and implemented.

It's important that your parish, school, welfare agencies, community groups and even your friends and family, possibly disenchanted by the Church, know what's happening. Encourage them to sign up to our weekly [electronic newsletter](#), which gives a brief overview of the weekly work of the Council, news from the Royal Commission and media and other material.

To further help people the Council has produced artwork for postcards and flyers. You can download the artwork from the TJHC website [here](#).

Meeting the community of the Bathurst dioceses

At the invitation of Bishop Michael McKenna I met with many priests, religious and laity from the diocese of Bathurst in the Cathedral Parish Centre last Friday.

From the moment I walked through the door it was clear this was a community determined to support and care for victims. Participants are acutely aware of the sad history of child sex abuse in the region, but they want to be part of the solution to reform the Church.

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA)

After Bathurst I flew to Perth to attend to the Catholic School Parents Association meeting. The CSPA is the national body for parents with children in Catholic schools in Australia. The group represents the views and needs of all parents in state and national education forums.

Catholic schools are a beacon of hope for the Church in the face of the scandal of child sex abuse. During the meeting we talked about ensuring the high standard of child protection in Catholic schools is applied to all aspects of Church life.

The CSPA and other parent groups are a vital link for Church administrators and management to communicate and inform parents about the planning and ongoing management of child protection policies in Catholic schools.

It was great to be part of this important meeting and I look forward to continuing to work with and update this group on Council activities.

Truth Justice and Healing Council Meeting

Our Council members are hard working and care for the Church and how we are establishing and implementing our reforms. It is inspiring to be surrounded and supported by such dedicated, motivated and professional people at our Council meetings.

In Melbourne on Monday the Council had an extremely productive and thought-provoking meeting. A number of the working parties updated the group on their work around the pastoral and moral obligations of the Church in the National Redress Scheme and the legal issues surrounding litigation.

Dates for forums about the new supervisory structure for the Church were confirmed for early next year. This will be an important and lasting legacy in the area of child safety and will prove the Church is serious and totally committed to transparency and accountability.

After the Council meeting on Monday I met with priests and Bishop Suriel of the Coptic Orthodox diocese of Melbourne.

I spoke with more than 30 Melbourne priests at their diocesan headquarters in the old Carmelite Monastery, Whitefriars, in Coburg.

Like so many other institutions, both religious and secular, they are acutely aware of the abuse that has taken place throughout Australia and are looking for the best ways to respond in a compassionate and just way.

Preparing for the priesthood at the Good Shepherd

As I write this blog I am on my way to meet with, Father Tony Percy the Rector at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd in Homebush in Sydney. The Good Shepherd Seminary was established in 1996 for men studying to be priests.

In the past, the poor preparation and training of priests, particularly in human formation and psychosexual development, is thought to be one of the contributing factors in clerical child sex abuse.

The word seminary comes from the Latin word 'seminarium' meaning seed plot. I am looking forward to meeting with Father Tony and his staff and seeing how this seed plot is preparing individuals for the priesthood and what type of whole life education they are receiving.

Mass of Installation for Archbishop of Sydney

On Wednesday night I will attend the liturgical reception and mass of installation for the Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP as the 9th Archbishop of Sydney at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney.

In public statements Bishop Fisher has indicated he is committed to the Royal Commission and the work of the Council.

When asked about the child sex abuse scandal, Bishop Fisher said, *"I am absolutely determined, there will be no excuses, no cover-ups. We're going to take every victim seriously and do all we can to help the survivors and all those affected by child sex abuse, and put in place whatever we can to make sure this doesn't happen again."*

I look forward to the Council developing a close working relationship with Archbishop Fisher, and working together for best practice reform and change in the Church.

Over the coming weeks I will be visiting parishes in North Sydney, Sutherland in Sydney's south and in Griffith in the NSW Riverina. Dates and locations are in this newsletter. You don't have to be Catholic to attend. Everyone is invited.