

## **Release of the Activity Report**

Last week we released our Activity Report, which details the work of the Truth Justice and Healing Council (TJHC) over the past two years in response to the Royal Commission.

The report reviews the eight Royal Commission public hearings involving the Catholic Church so far.

It provides a comprehensive review of the Church's reform agenda including proposed changes to the way Church authorities approach civil litigation and redress. It outlines plans for a new entity to set, monitor and publically report on child protection standards in Catholic institutions.

It summarizes our reform proposals, including those dealing with Child Safe Institutions, Working with Children Checks, Out of Home Care and Victims of Crime Compensation.

In addition, it also identifies many of the issues, which have been raised both in the Commission and in broader consultation involved with the way the Church has responded to the abuse crisis. The report does not make any findings or recommendations on these issues but rather names them as issues that need to be part of the ongoing discussion.

All up there were close to 50 'emerging issues' identified across a range of areas including access to justice, the pastoral responses of the Church, the way the Church approaches civil claims, the inconsistent applications of Church redress and child protection policies, the influence of cultural issues and failures in accountability and transparency.

Media coverage surrounding the launch of the Report has focused heavily on one of these issues: whether obligatory celibacy of priests and religious may have contributed to abuse in some circumstances.

The Council has made no findings or recommendations on celibacy. What we are saying is: the issue has been raised both in the Commission and in broader consultation. In a major investigation into sex crimes within the Church and other institutions, it needs to be part of the debate, part of the discussions.

Men join the priesthood and religious life fully aware of their commitment to celibacy. To continue in their ministry they must have a very good understanding of their sexuality and their own sexual development.

This is called psychosexual development training, and is now an important aspect of training and development in seminaries and religious orders throughout the country. It is vital this training is best practice and ongoing.

# Blog

**TRUTH  
JUSTICE  
HEALING  
COUNCIL**

Just a few thanks before I sign off for the year.

To the victims of abuse who are at the heart of this Commission, thank you for your courage and determination. And for those who have approached me personally, thank you for the insight you have provided.

Thousands of people across the Church have been involved in the huge task of preparing for Commission hearings, develop submissions and contribute to the reform agenda process.

I would like to thank you all for your support and commitment to ensuring the Church is prepared and able to front the Royal Commission openly, honestly and transparently.

I would also like to thank the many hundreds of people who have come out on mostly cold, but sometimes hot, nights to parish and school halls around Australia to meet and talk about the Commission and child sex abuse in the Church. These are not easy meetings and they require commitment and a real willingness to be part of the solution. Thank you.

Next year the TJHC will continue to push our reform agenda and work alongside church leaders, governments and other institutions in developing a national redress scheme.

From the middle of the year the Catholic Church will again become the focus of a number of public hearings. Again, it will be an arduous time for survivors and their families.

We have a lot of work to do and a lot to be achieved. The Church must continue to be open and willing to change. Our progress will only be measured when survivors feel they have been heard and are treated with justice and respect.

This is my last blog for the year; I will post my next blog towards the end of January 2015.

I wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas.

Francis Sullivan  
17 December 2014  
[www.tjhcouncil.org.au](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)