

MEDIA RELEASE



TJHC meets with Discalced Carmelite Friars in south west Sydney

4 February 2015

CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has met with Discalced Carmelite Friars at their Mount Carmel Retreat Centre in south west Sydney to discuss the child abuse royal commission and the Church's reform agenda.

Speaking to more than 20 friars including the Provincial leader, Fr Greg Homeming, OCD, this week 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.

"All of us, but particularly priests and religious, need to articulate the needs and concerns of survivors back into their communities," he said.

Mr Sullivan and the group spoke about church culture which has had an influence on the way in which leaders and others, over many years, have responded to survivors of child sexual abuse.

"Our closed culture and the impact of clericalism, where church leaders including priests and religious, have been placed above others, has seen too many people in the past fail to act compassionately and justly towards abuse victims.

"While we have made giant leaps forward over the past decades, we need to be developing policies and procedures which continue to strengthen our approach to child protection."

Mr Sullivan spoke about key parts of the Church's reform agenda including;

- the creation of a national redress scheme for survivors, which would be operated by Government but funded by the institutions responsible for the abuse;
- a proposal for an overarching national approach to safe guarding children within Church institutions

Mount Carmel Retreat Centre has been used as a place of retreat for nearly 50 years. It is a venue where individuals and groups develop their spirituality by means of retreats, conferences and study groups.

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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/>