

# Blog



## Church leaders supporting change

I am preparing this blog from the gardens of Mary MacKillop Place in North Sydney. Part of the work of the Truth Justice and Healing Council (TJHC) is to provide recommendations to religious leaders, and today it is this group I am waiting to meet.

I can imagine Mary MacKillop here all those years ago and her determination to provide an education to children living in poverty. Despite many obstacles and setbacks she persevered, providing opportunity and a better life to countless children.

As a Church we need the same strength and determination to respond openly and honestly to the Royal Commission and the clerical sex abuse scandal. Like Mary MacKillop we need the same resolve to care for the people abused by the Church and we must work harder to ensure children are safe in our care.

When the TJHC was established in 2012 a smaller group of religious leaders was also set up. The group, made up of the eight member standing committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and three members from Catholic Religious Australia, is called the 'Supervisory Group' and is the body through which we make our reform recommendations to the broader Church.

You can read more about the Supervisory Group and the TJHC terms of reference [here](#).

I meet with the Supervisory Group regularly, and update them on the work and direction of the TJHC. Meeting with the group is always a positive experience as it reconfirms the determined resolve of the Church leadership to fully embrace the Royal Commission and everything it demands and requires from the Church.

The Church leadership and the TJHC are at one. After eight Royal Commission public hearings involving the Catholic Church we have heard a great deal about our dark history, and some very poor leadership. It is now incumbent on us to act, and implement our internal reforms.

We must demonstrate, to the community, that we are taking responsibility, making the necessary changes and putting in place the essential safety nets and supervisory structures to ensure that children and vulnerable people are safe in our Church.

For further details on just a few of the reforms put to the Supervisory Group by the Council click [here](#).

Early next year the Church will begin a comprehensive consultation process across the entire Church. The results and findings will be reported back to the Church leadership by the middle of next year. It will be the beginning of a process of much needed change and renewal for the Church.

Over the next few weeks, and leading up to Christmas, I will again be on the road visiting local parishes and providing them with an opportunity to ask questions and express their thoughts on the clerical sex abuse scandal. I will also update parishioners on how the Church is responding to the Royal Commission.

### **ABC cutbacks**

The cuts to the ABC, announced this week, will have a dramatic impact on its religion and ethics reporting.

While programs such as Andrew West's *Religion Report* and John Cleary's *Sunday Nights* radio program got through at least the first round of cut backs and the excellent *Religion and Ethics* online website edited by Scott Stephens and Geraldine Doogue's *Compass* seem to have come through relatively unscathed, there have been major losses and the structural changes are far reaching and questionable.

There has been a major overhaul of the way specialised religion and ethics programs now fit into the overall operation of the ABC with many of the specialised religion and ethics staff and programs now falling under different ABC units. This is sure to impact on the ABC's past commitment to the coverage of religion and spirituality.

The ABC and its commitment over the years to reporting on religion and its relationship to culture and current events has served the nation well.

Nowhere else in the media, particularly now there are no longer dedicated religion reporters at any of the major metropolitan newspapers, has the time and effort been given for faith and ethics based issues to be discussed, debated and reported.

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[www.tjhcouncil.org.au](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)