

MEDIA RELEASE

Truth Justice and Healing Council addresses international gathering of priests



14 April 2015

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council met with 45 members of the Scalabrinian Missionaries at their Provincial Assembly in Sydney today.

Founded in Italy in 1887, the order has been providing pastoral care to migrants and refugees in Australia since 1952 and includes missionary priests from various ethnic backgrounds: Italians, Filipinos, Indonesians, Latin Americans, Haitians, Chinese and Brazilians.

In a wide-ranging discussion Mr Sullivan outlined the work of the Council and its engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

He spoke about the extent of child sexual abuse in the Church since the 1930s and about the cultural and formation issues that may have contributed to the abuse.

"Some people say you can't look at the past with today's eyes", Mr Sullivan said.

"But that is part of the defensiveness in the church that needs to be eradicated. When we try to minimise and contextualise – we are actually trying to excuse.

"It is that attitude that has been like a cancer in the Church, there have been circumstances where clericalism ran rampant and power and authority were abused.

"We must acknowledge a history of denial and cover-ups and of the lifelong impact of abuse on many survivors and their families.

"These cultural issues must be confronted if the Church is to re-establish its credibility – even now, that will take generations," Mr Sullivan said.

The Church has called for a national redress scheme, run by government where compensation is paid for by the institution responsible for the abuse.

At the same time the Church is examining options for a body that will set, require auditing and report on standards that will better protect children in our schools, parishes and welfare services.

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

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/>

Truth Justice and Healing Council

PO Box 4593 KINGSTON ACT 2604 | Tel: +61 2 6234 0900 | Fax: +61 2 6234 0999