

Church faces child abuse failings

Catholic leader discusses royal commission impact with parishioners



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A NATIONAL church leader has told a South East forum the Catholic church and its members must adopt recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to move forward.

Catholic Church Truth Justice and Healing Council chief executive Francis Sullivan hosted the gathering in Mount Gambier on Wednesday evening, sharing details about the commission and listening to concerns.

Mr Sullivan spoke about the challenges facing the church and its members as the royal commission approaches its final hearing in February 2017.

Murmurs of agreement met his assertion that the church, which included the involvement of everyday parishioners, was very different to the one which was at the centre of the commission's investigations.

"The way the royal commission is approaching the issue is to look at the institution," Mr Sullivan said.

"Looking at the leaders and how they bungled, mismanaged and, worse, at times tried to actively cover up how they put institutional welfare first, before the welfare of children.

"The Catholic community understands the church more broadly than just the institution and it is the community owning the church beyond that which is going to mean its survival."

He acknowledged failures of the institution had begun to erode confidence in representatives of the church, leading to a feeling of shame within the Catholic community.

"The trust in the church is so low, no one is listening," Mr Sullivan said.

"The good the church does in its schools, its health services, its social outreach, its counselling services, is all eroded because of this scandal and how it has been handled."

HARD TRUTHS: Catholic Church Truth, Justice and Healing Council chief executive Francis Sullivan spoke on Wednesday night to South East residents about the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Pictures: MITCH MOTT



While the damage has been done, Mr Sullivan says the church's forthright and cooperative stance with the commission is the first step on the way to healing rifts and absolving the church of shame.

"The first thing the church has to do is demonstrate how it is not scared of the truth and how the truth is going to be communicated," Mr Sullivan said.

"The commission and its findings will signal a point of resolution.

"At the same time, wearing shame will lessen the more the community believes it has been upfront, honest and taken

responsibility."

Questions from the audience showed concern for the future of the church and the stigma child sexual abuse cover-ups has left on the church and its parishioners.

Mr Sullivan said the result from the commission's final report would not be

an easy read, but it would mark the next stage in the church atoning for the acts of a small minority.

While the majority of cases of child abuse to go before the commission occurred in metropolitan areas, Mr Sullivan said regional and rural epicentres had their own victims.

"Regional areas have the added factor of being more secluded and seclusion was a big issue in how the activity of these abuses could go less detected," Mr Sullivan said.

Mount Gambier and Millicent Parish Priest Father Dean Marin said Mr Sullivan was very clear in outlining the failures of the church and the work of the council to try to address those failures.

"There is still a lot more to do," Fr Marin said.

"But Mr Sullivan showed the council is collaborating totally with the Royal Commission to ensure nothing like this happens again."

The final report into the Catholic church's handling of child sexual abuse and recommendations are expected to be handed down at the end of 2017.



MOVING FORWARD: Mount Gambier Parish Priest Father Dean Marin and Francis Sullivan from the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council faced questions on the future of the church at a meeting on Wednesday night.

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Catholic Church Truth Justice and Healing Council chief executive Francis Sullivan

Star Watch

WITH Sarah Kulkens

ARIES: (March 21 - April 20)

Lucky Colour: Cream
Lucky Day: Monday
Racing Numbers: 1.6.8.9.
Lotto Numbers: 1.15.26.34.40.22.
A time of romantic opportunities if you have the notion of following them up in the social scene. Keep your temper or some of your remarks could upset a close friend and rebound on you.



TAURUS: (April 21 - May 21)

Lucky Colour: Yellow
Lucky Day: Wednesday
Racing Numbers: 7.6.2.1.
Lotto Numbers: 7.15.12.29.30.33.
Romantically most could be on the right wavelength at last. A strong impulse to investigate unusual and strange happenings and the results could surprise you.



GEMINI: (May 21 - June 21)

Lucky Colour: White
Lucky Day: Tuesday
Racing Numbers: 2.3.6.5.
Lotto Numbers: 2.13.30.15.22.9.
Travel plans could experience setbacks or delays. Communication difficulties could be work related and most will have to be careful not to let their temper get out of control.



CANCER: (June 22 - July 22)

Lucky Colour: Violet
Lucky Day: Monday
Racing Numbers: 2.3.6.5.
Lotto Numbers: 2.13.25.40.45.33.
Double check on the accuracy of any information receive during this period before any action is taken. Most should have more reason to feel happier about personal relationships.



LEO: (July 23 - August 22)

Lucky Colour: Blue
Lucky Day: Friday
Racing Numbers: 5.6.1.9.
Lotto Numbers: 1.15.26.29.30.11.
Old friends, old flames and past contacts should keep most of you occupied. The chance to go back and rectify past mistakes and take up the chances let by before, is indicated.



VIRGO: (August 23 - September 23)

Lucky Colour: Red
Lucky Day: Tuesday
Racing Numbers: 8.5.3.2.
Lotto Numbers: 7.9.11.16.18.35.
Your life is likely to be enriched when you least expect it and for most there should be family reasons to celebrate. Travel could be over longer distances than usual.



LIBRA: (September 24 - October 23)

Lucky Colour: Orange
Lucky Day: Wednesday
Racing Numbers: 4.6.2.5.
Lotto Numbers: 4.15.18.29.7.33.
An opportunity for career advancement is there for the quick. A lost object could turn up after a long time. Travel is indicated and should bring the unexpected.



SCORPIO: (October 24 - November 22)

Lucky Colour: Yellow
Lucky Day: Thursday
Racing Numbers: 4.9.6.5.
Lotto Numbers: 4.12.26.35.9.33.
Many could be patching up past quarrels, meeting with old friends and having fun. A more fortunate period financially and money is a little easier to come by. Bargain in real estate is indicated.



SAGITTARIUS: (November 23 - Dec 20)

Lucky Colour: Cream
Lucky Day: Monday
Racing Numbers: 4.9.5.6.
Lotto Numbers: 9.12.6.33.37.5.
There could be more depth in close ones than what you realise. Mores social activities and chance to really let your hair down and have fun, a romantic overture could surprise.



CAPRICORN: (December 21 - January 19)

Lucky Colour: Pink
Lucky Day: Sunday
Racing Numbers: 4.6.9.5.
Lotto Numbers: 4.15.5.33.39.7.
Luck is with you and there could be many financial or career benefits. A hobby or side line could prove to be profitable and loved ones more cooperative.



AQUARIUS: (January 20 - February 19)

Lucky Colour: Red
Lucky Day: Wednesday
Racing Numbers: 4.9.6.2.
Lotto Numbers: 4.12.26.35.40.45.
More on the go than usual and more going out with friends who put you in touch with a new set of values. Some luck with an Aries person.



PISCES: (February 20 - March 20)

Lucky Colour: Peach
Lucky Day: Saturday
Racing Numbers: 6.9.5.2.
Lotto Numbers: 1.15.26.34.40.33.
Many could be keeping a few secrets and someone could be prying into your affairs. A mystery could play a part in your week and a love overture could intrigue.

