

## **Royal Commission ignites action throughout the country**

In November the Royal Commission will hold their 20th public hearing. The issues and concerns regarding child sex abuse have never been so prominent, particularly in the Catholic Church where we have so far been the focus of eight hearings.

Our most recent hearing was in August. But it's encouraging to see there is a continued strong push for reform in the Church driven by an urgent desire to prevent abuse and to care for survivors.

As I travel throughout both regional and metropolitan Australia there is real enthusiasm to work together to find solutions and practical ways to support survivors.

Again I want to emphasise the support we are getting from the Church leadership and from the thousands of ordinary Catholics I meet, for the Church's reform agenda which is now very much starting to take shape.

### **Catholic Social Services Australia**

This week I was part of a panel at Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) Leadership Forum in Canberra. The CSSA is the Church's peak national body for Catholic social service organisations, which help over one million Australians every year.

I always welcome the chance to spend time with people who are delivering on the core message of the Gospel, to help and support disadvantaged people. These dedicated workers are a witness to the true value and contribution the Catholic Church makes to the community every day.

The Royal Commission has raised many challenges for people working within the Catholic Church. The way the Church has historically handled child sex abuse has put a heavy burden on people in our social services, education and health organisations.

Despite this, there is no doubt the network of Catholic social services around Australia and the work of these groups within the Catholic Church is highly regarded and their contribution to the community very much valued.

### **Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council**

Later in the week I fly to Launceston for the General Meeting of the Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council. It will be another great opportunity to meet with ordinary Catholics and explain how the Church is approaching the challenges we face through the work of the Royal Commission.

At meetings like this I am always encouraged by the willingness of the people to recognise the past, while doing whatever is possible to acknowledge, comfort and support survivors.

Travelling to places like Launceston (last week I was in Leeton and in the next few weeks Bathurst and Perth) it is a great chance to talk about the work of the Council. It is also important to hear the views of regional Australians and understand their concerns and priorities.

## **Australian Catholic Youth Ministry**

The Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Convention was held in Adelaide at the beginning of this month. To support the group and to help them understand how the Church is confronting the child sex abuse scandal I recorded a short video that was shown during the Convention.

I explained that the Catholic Church's history is confronting. I said I understand the subject is difficult to talk about, but that as young people, and for the future of the Church, we must all work together to take our Church to a place of integrity:

*YOU have the opportunity in whatever setting you are in, any workplace or education setting, any parish, any meeting – to always remind others that the unfinished business for this Church of ours is how we are going to, with integrity, demonstrate that the people we have abused are our number one priority.*

[To view the video click here.](#)

## **Blue Knot Day**

Blue Knot Day is a major annual event, which works to focus the attention of all Australians on the plight of adult survivors of child abuse.

Regardless of where the abuse took place all members of the community are asked to stand together in support of the millions of adult survivors of childhood trauma across Australia.

This special day is organised by the child sexual abuse support group, Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA) and is on this coming Monday (27 October).

This is a chance for Catholic parishes, congregations, social services, health, and education organisations across Australia to show their support for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Blue Knot Day gives Catholics the perfect opportunity to send a very clear message that together we have an important role to play in ensuring the crimes and cover-ups of the past never happen again and that survivors are treated with justice and compassion.

## **Gough and Cardinal Clancy**

There have been many tributes paid to Gough Whitlam who died this week.

In Parliament on Monday Tony Burke, MP for the western Sydney seat of Watson told a story about a meeting between Gough and Cardinal Clancy:

“The late Cardinal Clancy used to often relate his conversation with Gough when Gough had inquired as to whether or not St Mary's Cathedral might be available for a funeral, which surprised Cardinal Clancy given that he was not expecting Gough to convert to Catholicism. Gough explained, no, no, no, it was not for the Catholic funeral; it was because he wanted to be buried in the crypt—claiming that he was willing to pay, but would only require it for three days.”

R.I.P. Edward Gough Whitlam