

MEDIA RELEASE

Catholic Church calls for nationally consistent child sex abuse police reporting law



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The Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council has called for the introduction of a new, consistent nation-wide criminal law requiring the reporting to the police of suspected child sexual abuse.

In its submission to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse issues paper number 8, Police and Prosecution Responses, the Council recommends the new law should require anyone who has a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed against a child to disclose what they know to the police.

The only circumstance in which this would not be required is if the person has a reasonable excuse, such as where the person believes the allegations have already been reported under mandatory reporting laws.

Francis Sullivan CEO of the TJHC says nationally consistent police reporting legislation would enhance a nationally consistent, trauma informed approach to survivors of child sexual abuse.

"It is vitally important that any allegations of child sexual abuse are reported to the police.

"Too often over the past two years we have heard witnesses in Commission hearings saying they failed to report cases of abuse or did not know what the police reporting laws were.

"This should never have been the case and the best way to ensure it does not happen again is to have nationally consistent laws on police reporting that are clear and known by all.

"Not knowing the law can never be an excuse," Mr Sullivan said.

In its Police and Prosecution Responses issues paper the Royal Commission sought feedback on experiences people had with police and prosecution responses when matters were reported to the police.

The Commission will publish on its website submissions from other institutions and individuals soon.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council submission is available [here](#).

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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: www.tjhcouncil.org.au