

MEDIA RELEASE

Royal commission releases out-of-home care consultation paper



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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is seeking submissions to a major research project on out of home care (OOHC) where children were often at a heightened risk of sexual abuse.

More than 40 percent of the 4,700 child sexual abuse survivors who have told their story to the Commission report they were abused in out of home care including foster homes and residential settings.

The consultation paper will look at issues such as the adequacy of screening checks, assessment of carers, grooming and reporting to police. It also asks for feedback on how to improve information sharing, prevention, and support services.

It will investigate sexual abuse perpetrated by carers, residential care staff, other professionals and volunteers. It will also investigate child sexual exploitation and child-to-child sexual abuse.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said it is important to recognise that children removed from family and placed in care are vulnerable to further abuse, at both an individual and systemic level.

"No single strategy will be effective in preventing sexual and other abuse in out of home care without attention to the individual needs of children and the strengths and limitations of particular placement models.

"A significant way to ensure children are safe in out of home care is to build a single, national regulatory body to ensure consistent oversight of child-related organisations in Australia.

"This will not be easy to achieve, but like national redress and many other child protection issues a national approach is the first and most important step in ensuring all children are safe," Mr Sullivan said.

Over 51,000 children in Australia were in OOHC during 2013–14, of whom 35 per cent were children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Over the past decade, the number of children entering the OOHC system has been steadily increasing, and the period of time that children stay in care is also increasing.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is currently considering a response to the consultation paper. The Council's previous submission to the Royal Commission is available [here](#). The Royal Commission's consultation paper is available on the Royal Commission website [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.

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/>

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