

MEDIA STATEMENT

Royal Commission's release of full data report on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church



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Statement from Francis Sullivan, CEO Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council

Today the Royal Commission has released the full report of its survey results on claims made against Catholic organisations for alleged child sexual abuse by their personnel.

As such, it is the composite of Church records since 1950, of claims of abuse.

As we know these claims comprise records of known offenders, alleged offenders and unidentified offenders.

Over the years, dioceses and religious orders have used a variety of processes to determine the veracity of these claims.

Some claims were too obvious to warrant any investigation and were accepted on the information provided by the survivor.

Others were substantiated by formal investigations, police referrals or corroborated evidence.

Others proved difficult to establish because victims couldn't recall the actual names of their abusers or were uncertain over the extent to which some people were involved in their assault.

So, the data reflects the scope of alleged abuse within the Church. It does not break this abuse down into categories of certainty because Church Authorities themselves have struggled to be that accurate.

Today's data provides new insight into some aspects of child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church including:

- a massive drop off in child sexual abuse claims from the peak in the 1970s of some 1,245 claims in that decade to 41 claims in the 2010s (figure 3, pg 21);
- a massive drop-off in the number of alleged clerical perpetrators from a peak in the 1960s of more than 400 to less than 10 in the 2010s (figure 4, pg 22);
- a massive drop-off in the number of claims in schools from more than 600 in the 1970s to around 25 in the 2010s (figure 32, pg 74);
- across all the dioceses and orders where abuse has occurred some \$258 million in redress has been paid;
- nearly half of all the claims for redress went through the Church's Towards Healing and Melbourne Response; and
- that the average payments made through Towards Healing and The Melbourne Response were considerably lower than payments received through civil proceeding and other redress processes.

Just a little about the difference in these redress payments.

There is one view that will contend people were pushed into Towards Healing and The Melbourne Responses because the payments were low and it saved the Church millions of dollars.

There is another view that people went to Towards Healing and The Melbourne Response because they had no other options, because they had limited recollections and little evidence to pursue a legal claim.

Wherever the truth lies, what is clear is that payments made to survivors from Church Authorities over many years have varied widely and that there has been no consistency in how much they received.

This is at the very heart of the call by survivors and many others, including the Catholic Church, for a national independent redress scheme, coordinated by the Commonwealth Government which will determine redress payments to be paid by the institution in which the abuse took place.

As I have said on many occasions, the days of the Church investigating itself must be over – today's data reinforces this position.

As has been said today, we know that far more people were abused than have come forward.

These statistics are not the full story and, if anything, are understated rather than overstated.

Importantly, the data shows the amount of time alleged perpetrators remained in dioceses and religious orders.

This gives an important indication of the level of potential risk children may have been in across the various dioceses and religious orders.

A full analysis of this data will form the basis for policy developments in the Church.

We will learn from it and use it as further impetus for change in the church, as a basis for better policies and procedures.

That analysis will happen soon but right now is the time for the Church to be humble, receptive and in a state of confession.

A copy of the statement is available on the Royal Commission's [website](#). The Royal Commission's explanation document is available [here](#).

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.