

# Royal Commission Case Study 50

## Catholic Church Final Hearing



Monday 20 February 2017 – Day 10

The morning's panel discussion looked at issues related to the operation and establishment of the new professional standards setting body within the Catholic Church, Catholic Professional Standards Ltd.

The panel was made up of Justice Neville Owen, Chair of the Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Mr Francis Sullivan CEO of the TJHC and Archbishop Mark Coleridge, a member of the TJHC.

Justice Owen told the Commission that while CPS would be funded by the Catholic Church it would in effect be functionally independent of the Church with its own board having fiduciary duties to carry out the constitution of the new business.

Justice Owen told the Commission that the creation and establishment of CPS had been in discussion with members of the ACBC and CRA for some time and it was his expectation that most if not all Church Authorities would sign up to the new company.

He told the Commission current statutory standards dealing with child protection and other areas would not be replicated by CPS rather, standards would be developed in areas that do not currently exist within the Church.

He told the Commission that the bishop or congregational leader would be audited, most likely by an external accredited audit firm, as part the compliance of the dioceses or congregation with the standards.

Justice Owen gave evidence about the appointment of board members to the company, its relationship with church leaders, the companies auditing and reporting roles, the appointment of board members and the funding of the company.

Archbishop Coleridge told the Commissioners that standards should be set by CPS in areas which could help reform church culture. Other areas in which standards could be developed could include the operations of seminaries, selection of parish priests and dismissal of priests – in conjunction with Canon law.

He was asked about provisions within the CPS constitution which provides a board scope for the company to not publish an audit report of a dioceses or congregation saying there are areas in which the constitution might need to be amended including the non-publication clauses.

Mr Sullivan was asked about the proposed national redress scheme and the ability of a diocese or congregation to opt into the scheme if the state in which they are based is not part of the scheme.

Commissioner McClelland said 'it would be remarkable if a state stood in the way' of a national redress scheme.

Archbishop Coleridge was asked about the Australian Catholic Ministry Register which provides church leaders with information on 'the good standing' of a priest wishing to enter and work within a diocese.

Mr Sullivan said that it would be 'silly' not to build on the current data collected by the Royal Commission so that an ongoing data base could be kept within CPS on data relating to claims, payments, convictions and other relevant information.

Archbishop Coleridge said the establishment of the TJHC and CPS represents a slow but significant change in the culture of the Catholic Church. He said while the establishment of these bodies might seem modest they are significant in terms of the Catholic Church.

The hearing was adjourned until 10:00am Tuesday 21 February.

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