

# MEDIA RELEASE

## TJHC CEO addresses WA Bar association on child sexual abuse crisis in Catholic Church



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CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has told a group of Western Australian lawyers and barristers that advice provided by lawyers and passively accepted by church leaders had significantly compounded the clerical sexual abuse crisis.

Speaking to the Western Australian Bar Association earlier this month, Mr Sullivan said Church leaders, during the worst decades of the crisis, had lost any sense of moral leadership.

"Alongside this self-serving and institutionally protective culture were the lay advisors. Often they had legal and financial training,' Mr Sullivan said.

"Loyal sons of the Church these, for the most part, men would provide the necessary legal and risk management advice that assisted the institution to dominate survivors and effectively silence their voices.

"Whether it was through legal threats, or more subtle, persuasive means, bishops and their advisors ensured that the interests of the Church were always protected."

Mr Sullivan said the irony of this approach has not been lost on the Commission, the community and Catholics more broadly.

"With all the attempts to protect the good name of the Church has come the biggest scandal and corrosion of its reputation both here in Australia and in many other places around the world.

"(Church leaders) meekly adopted the approach that any other organisation's management would pursue when under threat.

"They failed to personify the very nature of the Church and rather, chose to handle the abuse cases as if they were any organisation facing the same crisis.

"Gone was any tangible sign of compassion for victims, outrage at the abuse itself and contrition for the actions of one of their own.

Read full speech to Western Australian Bar Association [here](#)

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