

MEDIA RELEASE

Truth Justice and Healing Council CEO meets 150 members of local clergy in Perth

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Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, has met with 150 members of the local clergy in Perth to discuss the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Mr Sullivan said this week's meeting at the Vietnamese Catholic Community Centre in Westminster was overwhelmingly positive. Delegates responded with determination and compassion and all involved understand the importance of the Commission to victims and to the Church.

"For the Church's part, the first step to coming to terms with the devastation and the enormity of child sexual abuse is to have an open and honest discussion.

"The silence that accompanies sexual abuse in the broader community is too often the same as the silence that goes on within institutions including the Catholic Church," Mr Sullivan said.

"When there is no discussion, people are left in the dark, with no answers and nowhere to turn. In this environment the problem can only grow.

"We need to talk to each other about what has happened in the church, the impact on victims and what needs to be done to make sure children are safe and justice is done.

"At every level, from regional, rural and suburban churches to the Cathedrals in our capital cities, we must have an open and comprehensive discussion about the Church's history and the way we have dealt with sexual abuse in the past and how we approach those crimes now.

"The Truth Justice and Healing Council was established by the Catholic Church to coordinate the Church's response to the Royal Commission.

"Its role is to oversee the Church's engagement with the Commission, to develop new policies to protect young people and to ensure the Church responds to any future complaints appropriately and with justice, putting the needs of victims first," Mr Sullivan said.

Mr Sullivan also used the visit as another opportunity to encourage victims to tell their story to the Commission.

"The Church supports the work of the Commission and hopes as many people as possible will attend," Mr Sullivan said.

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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/Pages/default.aspx>

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