

MEDIA RELEASE

Truth Justice and Healing Council CEO speaks at Brisbane Catholic Education Leadership Day



5 August 2013

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, has met with some 150 Catholic School principals from across the archdiocese of Brisbane at the Brisbane Catholic Education Leadership Day.

Pam Betts, Executive Director Brisbane Catholic Education also attended the meeting held in Hamilton, Brisbane, on July 5.

The leadership day is designed to provide local principals and education officers with the latest information on education trends and issues.

Mr Sullivan said teachers and schools in the Catholic system face unique challenges with the Catholic Church currently at the centre of three major investigations into child sexual abuse.

“In these days, where clerical sex abuse is so widely reported and discussed, Catholic teachers and Catholic school families may well feel the pressure about what is right and just in the unfolding story,” Mr Sullivan said.

“It is important to acknowledge that a lot of the past crimes were committed against school-aged children in our schools and parishes.

“At the same time over the last 20 years, all Catholic Schools across Australia have put in place the strictest working with children protocols and child welfare standards. But it can still be difficult to find ways to discuss the past betrayals and other failings,” he said.

Ms Betts said principals and senior staff appreciated the opportunity to receive an update from the Truth Justice and Healing Council.

“Our schools are committed to keeping members of our school communities fully informed about the progress of the Royal Commission, and the Church’s support and co-operation of this important investigation,” she said.

Almost 70,000 young people from across Brisbane are enrolled in 137 schools and colleges, from Prep to Year 12, under the control of Brisbane Catholic Education.

In 2013 student numbers in Catholic schools across the Archdiocese of Brisbane grew by some 3 per cent.

Mr Sullivan said the popularity and faith the Catholic and broader community place in Catholic Education has never been stronger.

“Every year hundreds of thousands of parents place their trust in the hands of teachers, asking them to look after and educate their children.

“This faith is repaid with Catholic schools consistently among the nation’s best performers academically.

“But the facts are that this is a very difficult time for everyone associated with the Catholic Church,” he said.

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.

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

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>