

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse with a commitment to cooperation, openness and justice for victims and survivors. It has been established in recognition of the importance of the Royal Commission and the imperative for the Church to address the past openly and honestly, the good with the bad.

TRUTH
JUSTICE
HEALING
COUNCIL



Members of the Truth Justice and Healing Council



“ The Bishops and the religious leaders of the Catholic Church acknowledge the pain and suffering experienced by victims of child abuse and their families. Our hearts and prayers are with them and with those charged with the responsibilities of serving on the Royal Commission. ”

Australian Bishops
and religious leaders,
December 2012

“ Some years ago I served my turn as one of the bishop representatives on the National Professional Standards Committee. At that level and from these meetings I became even more accurately aware of the depth of pain victims experience and the breadth of the crisis for the Church. No matter how sensitively and well-intentioned efforts are taken to redress past failures, these are rarely adequate and can certainly never out-balance the after-effects of seriously sinful abuse. ”

James Foley, Bishop of Cairns

“ The memory and effects that child sexual abuse has on victims will never go away and we must do all we can to prevent such evil things happening in the future. We must try to acknowledge victims stories with total honesty and do all we can to ease their pain. ”

Brian Heenan, Bishop of Rockhampton

“ I am hoping that because of the Royal Commission, the Catholic Church in Australia will learn to exercise its responsibility better to care for and protect our young people, and in particular, to care for those who have been harmed in any way by Church personnel. We can only be glad and grateful for the Royal Commission if this is what it helps us to achieve. ”

Michael Putney, Bishop of Townsville

What will the Council be doing?

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council has been established by the Catholic Church to help the Church fully embrace the Australian Government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Council will help the Church deal with the tragic legacy of child sexual abuse and help victims and survivors to be heard and supported.

The Royal Commission is an opportunity for the Church to explain the way it has treated victims and survivors, to acknowledge past wrongs and failings and to find ways in which to work towards justice and healing for all.

Importantly, it is an opportunity for victims and survivors of sexual abuse to come forward and be heard in an environment of support and safety.

The Council will tell the full story of child abuse in the Catholic Church including what has been done to protect children, particularly since the 1990s and the introduction of the reconciliation schemes, Towards Healing and the Melbourne Response.

The Council will also work on developing new policies and procedures to protect young people in the future and to help the Church respond to any future complaints appropriately and justly, putting the needs of victims and survivors first.

Why has the Council been set up?

The Council will be the Church's representative during the Commission process. The Council will assist the Commission by dealing directly with the many different diocesan and religious organisations around Australia from which the Commission may be seeking information on how the Church has dealt with child sexual abuse.

The Council will help the Church and all its dioceses and religious orders cooperate with the Royal Commission by producing evidence and complying with all of the Commission's requests.

Who is on the Council and what are their backgrounds?

The Council is made up of 13 men and women with professional and other expertise in the areas of child sexual abuse, paedophilia, trauma, mental illness, suicide, education, public administration and governance. Ten of the Council members are lay people and four of the Council members have either been abused themselves or have direct family members who have suffered clerical sexual abuse.

Who has established the Council?

The Council has been established by the two overarching Catholic Church organisations, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia which, together, represent dioceses and congregations across Australia.

This is the first time dioceses and religious orders across Australia have authorised a single body to help represent them en masse to any legal body, let alone a Royal Commission.

Who will the Council represent at the Royal Commission?

The Council will represent dioceses and religious orders at the Royal Commission and will be the primary voice and the channel by which the Royal Commission will engage with the whole Church.

Contact Us

Call the Council

To telephone the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, call 02 6234 0900 between 9am and 5pm AEST Monday to Friday.

Write to the Council

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Or send a fax to: 02 6234 0999

Email

You can email the Council at info@tjhcouncil.org.au

You can also go to our website to subscribe to receive our newsletters, media releases, blogs and other information.

www.tjhcouncil.org.au