

Honestly and openly facing the Royal Commission

The completion of the John Ellis case in Sydney last week brought to an end a tense couple of months of Royal Commission hearings for the Catholic Church.

Since the end of January, the Catholic Church has been involved in four hearings: Queensland Marist Brothers, Toowoomba Catholic Primary School, St Ann's Special School in South Australia and the John Ellis hearing in Sydney.

It has been a harrowing time for victims and their families and for Catholics and non-Catholics alike. The Church has honestly and openly faced the Royal Commission and admitted where mistakes were made and where the Church failed. The Church is publically fessing up to the past, it is explaining its actions, and it is acknowledging where it fell short of what is expected of a Church.

This is in keeping with the promise and commitment by the Church to fully co-operate and embrace the Royal Commission. Throughout the year there will be many more hearings, there will be more submissions and we will participate in a number of round table discussions. In all cases, we will continue to adopt this open and honest approach. There is no doubt it is humbling, and at times embarrassing, but it is necessary so that the scourge of child sex abuse in Institutions can be faced head on, and as far as possible, eradicated.

The John Ellis case has triggered a lot of discussions about the prospect of revisiting old cases, and the possibility of reexamining past settlements.

The whole purpose of *Towards Healing* is to ensure victims are treated justly. There is a review process build into *Towards Healing* protocols and I would encourage anyone who believes they have been treated unfairly to make representation to the relevant Bishop or Church authority.

In a few weeks the Catholic Church will be the centre of another public hearing. Once again, it will be a difficult time for survivors and their families. Hopefully they will feel the support of the broader community as the details of their cases are revealed. Equally, it will be a time for Catholics and the Catholic community to once again see the value of its Church being open and honest about its past and demonstrating a determination to make child protection its highest priority.

Blog



On a sad note, I would like to acknowledge the passing of Bishop Michael Putney AM DD from Townsville. I worked closely with Bishop Putney when he chaired an innovative project to develop ethical standards for Catholic health and aged care services.

This was a world first project and a marvelous resource, not only for services in Australia, but in other parts of the Western world. Bishop Putney was a highly intelligent and insightful person, always committed to finding the common path for people, particularly those from diverse backgrounds.

He had a long and fruitful history in ecumenical activity as well as being a driving force for a contemporary understanding of the theological underpinnings of Catholic health services.

It was sad to hear of his passing, but I know from discussions I had with him last year that he was well and truly prepared for the next phase of his journey.

Francis Sullivan

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www.tjhcouncil.org.au