



## **Retired WA Supreme Court Judge appointed Chair of Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council**

### **STATEMENT**

**Archbishop Denis Hart, President Australian Catholic Bishops Conference  
Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC, Chair Catholic Religious Australia**

5 June, 2014

Former judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia and HIH Royal Commissioner, the Hon Neville Owen, has been appointed Chair of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and developing the Church's child protection and survivors' assistance reform agenda.

Mr Owen's appointment follows the death of the Council's inaugural Chair, the Hon Barry O'Keefe, early last month.

Mr Owen has a long and distinguished 40-year career as a judge, barrister, solicitor, advocate and reformer. He has worked closely with many charities and educational bodies advising on governance and reform initiatives.

He is still actively involved in the community and education sectors particularly within primary and secondary schools. He is currently the Chair of the Board of the Iona Presentation College in WA and trustee of the University of Notre Dame Australia.

From 1991 to 2010 he was a judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia and from 2005 an inaugural member of the Court of Appeal following its establishment as a separate division of the Supreme Court.

In April 2003 he completed the two-year Royal Commission into the collapse of the HIH Insurance group.

In July of the same year he started the three-year hearing into Alan Bond's Bell group of companies. It was one of the nation's longest running and most expensive civil actions.

Mr Owen brings to the Truth Justice and Healing Council the skills of one of Australia's most experienced and respected legal minds and community advocates.

He will join the eleven-member Council, made up predominantly of lay people of mixed denominations including three who are or who have close family who are survivors of child sexual abuse within the Church.

The Council's role is to oversee the Church's engagement with the Commission, to develop new policies to protect children and young people and to help the Church respond to any future complaints appropriately and with justice, putting the needs of survivors first.

Mr Owen's CV to follow.

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For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to:  
[www.tjhcouncil.org.au](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)

For more information on the Royal Commission go to:  
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

## NEVILLE JOHN OWEN

The Hon Neville Owen, 67, was educated at St Ildephonsus College, New Norcia, Western Australia and the University of Western Australia (UWA). He graduated with an LLB (Hons) in 1968. In 2010 UWA conferred on him an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

He practiced as a barrister and solicitor from 1972 to 1991 and was a partner in the firm Robinson Cox (now Clayton Utz). He had a broadly based commercial practice. While in practice he acted as a director of several public and private corporations.

From February 1991 until July 2010 he was a judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia and one of the inaugural members of the Court of Appeal when it was created as a separate division of the Supreme Court in February 2005. He was the senior judge of the division and spent an extended period as Acting President.

Mr Owen was on the bench for almost 20 years and conducted trials and appeals in all areas of the Court's civil and criminal jurisdictions.

In April 2003 he completed a two-year Royal Commission into the collapse of the HIH Insurance group making significant recommendations which now influence the operation of Australia's peak financial regulators, the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

In July 2003 he started hearing the three-year case involving the fate of the assets of the Bell group of companies. The trial was the second longest in Australian legal history and resulted in a judgment extending over more than 2500 pages.

He has presented at many international and national conferences and seminars on various aspects of the law and business practices often focusing on corporate governance and professional and business ethics.

He has assisted several not for profit organisations with advice on corporate governance systems and board member induction programmes.

Mr Owen has a long held and deep interest in the education system.

He is an Adjunct Professor of Law and visiting lecturer in law at both UWA and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA). He has been a member of the Board of Governors of UNDA almost since its inception and remains on its Board of Trustees.

Between 2005 and 2008 he was Chancellor of UNDA.

He has been the Chair of the governing body of a number of different primary and secondary schools and is currently the Chair of the Board of Iona Presentation College.

In December 2010 he was appointed Chair of the WA Electoral Distribution Commissioners.

Mr Owen is married with five children (one deceased) and ten grandchildren. He lives in Perth Western Australia.