

Meeting Catholics across the country

This week I am crisscrossing the country meeting with parishioners and people involved in all aspects of the Church, informing them about the Royal Commission and the work of the Truth Justice and Healing Council (TJHC).

It is important to promote the interests of survivors at a public policy level and also explain what we are trying to do to make up for our shocking and controversial history.

As I prepare for this blog I am flying to Brisbane to meet with parishioners from Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Kenmore, in Brisbane's western suburbs. On Friday I am in Bathurst speaking with the local community and senior religious leaders. I am heartened to see so many Catholics at local parishes meeting together and confronting the sex abuse scandal and looking for real solutions and real change in the Church.

On Saturday I fly to Perth and meet with Catholic School Parents Australia, the peak national body for Catholic school parents in Leederville.

Redress Round Table

I am looking forward to continuing our positive discussions on redress and civil litigation at a private redress round table in Sydney on Tuesday. I will meet with Justice McClelland, government representatives, lawyers, insurers and other faith based organisations.

This is the third roundtable on redress and the outcomes will feed into the Royal Commission as it prepares a national discussion paper to be released in January followed by recommendations to all governments by June next year.

It was interesting to read Dan Box's article in *The Weekend Australian* this week - '[Child abuse victims find growing support for a fairer scheme of redress](#)'. In the article Box outlines the initiative and support of the Catholic Church to develop a national redress scheme. In public statements Justice McClelland has made it clear he also views a national redress scheme as the most logical solution to provide survivors with easy access to reparations.

We will continue to push for an independent national redress scheme. It is our belief that people who have been abused in any institution should have access to the same redress scheme regardless of when or where the abuse occurred. The same independent body should also determine the amount of redress paid.

Experience has shown that civil litigation may not be the most successful pathway for survivors of sexual abuse. Civil litigation is expensive, conflict ridden, adversarial and has the potential to re-traumatise victims.

Adult survivors of child sex abuse are often confronted with the fact that the abuser is dead, that there is not enough evidence or corroborating evidence and that the legal process itself is time intensive and expensive.

The Church believes a generous, easy to access redress scheme, that provides survivors with lump sum payments, and ongoing funds for counselling and support are the preferable way forward for most survivors.

Important State Government reform

Over the past couple of weeks we have seen some real movement from state Governments as they announce reforms to the way in which they will respond to survivors of abuse in state-run institutions.

In a wide-ranging [announcement](#) from the NSW Attorney-General Brad Hazzard this week it was encouraging to see the NSW Government supporting the concept of a compensation scheme for survivors of institutional abuse and a range of other initiatives.

In addition the Napthine Government in Victoria has announced it would remove all limitation periods for civil claims by victims of criminal child abuse and has put in place new Working With Children Checks requirements for ministers of religion and strengthened the criminal provisions for the reporting to police of possible sexual offences against children. For further details click [here](#).

Catholic educators in Canberra Goulburn

Last Friday I met with more than 75 school principals, teachers and administrators from the Canberra Goulburn Archdiocese. It was inspiring to see so many motivated and dedicated people committed to quality education and the safety and well being of children.

We spoke about the impact of the child sex abuse crisis on lay people working in Catholic Church institutions. We acknowledged how respect for the Church leadership has taken a beating because of the child sex abuse scandal, but that the regard for the work of the Catholic Church on the ground, in schools, social services and health organisations is still high.

During the meeting we recognised the importance for all educators to remain vigilant and work hard to continue the high standard of care. While Catholic schools have some of the most rigorous child protection policies and procedures of any institution those protocols are of little value if teachers, administrators and other school staff are not aware of them and fully trained and accountable.

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5 November 2014
www.tjhcouncil.org.au