

# MEDIA RELEASE



## TJHC meets with Wollongong diocesan leaders and parishioners

11 December, 2014

CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, Francis Sullivan, has met with parishioners, priests, religious leaders and the heads of Catholic welfare, education and health agencies in the NSW Illawarra to discuss the child abuse royal commission and the Church's reform agenda.

Mr Sullivan met in Wollongong with a group of 60 local church officials in the afternoon and some 50 parishioners and members of the local community in the evening. Peter Ingham, Bishop of Wollongong, attended both sessions.

Mr Sullivan gave an overview of the Church's development of new policies to protect young people in the future and to help it respond appropriately and justly to survivors.

He outlined the key elements of the Church's reform agenda, which include:

- requiring all diocese or religious orders that are the defendants in a child sexual abuse case to identify an entity that is backed by insurance or assets that can be sued
- the creation of a national redress scheme for survivors, which would be operated by government but funded by the institutions responsible for the abuse
- the appointment of lay and independent experts to strengthen the Church's National Committee of Professional Standards, and
- a proposal for an overarching national approach to safe guarding children within Church institutions, that would set, monitor and report on standards.

"It is vital we always put the needs of victims and survivors of child sexual abuse first," he told both groups.

"We need to be developing policies and procedures which continue to strengthen our approach to child protection but also demonstrate that the Church leadership is engaged and fully understands the concerns of Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

Bishop Ingham said that the work of the Royal Commission over the past two years has consistently called us to face the truth of our failure to act with justice and integrity.

"It has strengthened our determination to learn from the Commission and face the future with honesty and transparency. It has been a salutary event, if painful, calling us again to truly respect the inherent dignity of every person," Bishop Ingham said.

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The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

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/>