

MEDIA RELEASE



TJHC Chair appointed to Pope's peak child protection council

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Mr Neville Owen, Chair of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, has been appointed to Pope Francis' clergy sexual abuse commission along with another seven new members from around the world.

The 17-member Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, headed by Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, is the Pope's peak advisory body on clerical sexual abuse and child protection issues.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the appointment of Neville Owen to the Commission was significant and insightful.

"Having worked with Neville for more than three years in his capacity as Chair of the TJHC I am confident he will bring unique insights and experience to the Commission.

"There are few people, anywhere in the world, who have both a deep understanding of the Catholic Church and of the clerical child sexual abuse crisis which has had such an impact on it over the past decades," Mr Sullivan said.

A media statement from the Commission said the new members of the Commission were chosen "from a multi-disciplinary field of international experts in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults from the crime of sexual abuse."

Members come from several different countries, "reflecting the global reach of the Church and the challenge of creating safeguarding structures in diverse cultural contexts," the Commission said.

The statement went on to say it is understood some of the members are abuse survivors but had not publicly identified themselves. The Commission said it "believes that their privacy in this matter is to be respected."

Mr Sullivan thanked Kathleen McCormack, a child protection expert from Wollongong, who is leaving the Pontifical Commission for her tireless work.

"Kath is one of Australia's greatest advocates for stronger child protections in our schools, homes, parishes and other places run by the Catholic Church. We all owe her a debt of gratitude for the three years she has been on the Commission," Mr Sullivan said.

The next meeting of the Pontifical Commission will be in April commencing with a meeting with some survivors of sexual abuse.

The Commission said discussions are under underway for the creation of a new a separate advisory panel of individuals who have been abused.

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