

MEDIA RELEASE



Royal Commission releases findings in public hearing about residential homes run by the Christian Brothers in WA

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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has released its report into the response of the Christian Brothers and other Western Australian authorities to allegations of abuse at four child residential homes in Western Australia during the 1940s, 50s and 60s.

The report, tabled in Federal Parliament on Friday 18 December, follows a public hearing held in Perth in April this year.

The public hearing examined the experiences of 11 men who were abused as children in Castledare Junior Orphanage, St Vincent's Orphanage Clontarf, St Mary's Agricultural School Tardun and Bindoon Farm School.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the experiences of the 11 men who gave evidence at the public hearing were horrific.

"These young boys, some as young as four, had been sent from England and Europe on the promise of a better life. They arrived in Australia where they were sexually, physically and emotionally abused and betrayed by the very people who were charged with their care."

The report found that in the 1990s, the Christian Brothers took a number of actions on the issue of child sexual abuse and related matters within its Order by:

- issuing an apology to ex-residents of the institutions
- giving financial and other support to the Child Migrant Friendship Society
- funding assistance for family tracing services
- setting up a trust fund to give financial assistance to child migrants
- facilitating access to counselling services
- establishing Christian Brothers Ex-Residents Services (CBERS)
- commissioning a study of child abuse within its own congregation.

In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the Christian Brothers made changes to the way members are recruited and trained including requiring candidates have a tertiary qualification. In addition, candidates are vetted and must complete a psychological assessment.

The report found the Christian Brothers have a number of current child protection policies in place.

Mr Sullivan said that while the case study focuses on historic events, valuable lessons have been learned in relation to educational principles, the care and welfare of children in out-of-home care and the formation of candidates entering the Christian Brothers.

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