

MEDIA RELEASE

Royal Commission releases child sexual abuse redress and civil litigation consultation paper



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The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has released a consultation paper dealing with options in relation to redress for victims of child sexual abuse and possible reforms to civil litigation.

The paper was released in Sydney today and identifies possible redress scheme options including:

- redress schemes run by individual institutions using a common approach
- a national redress scheme or separate state and territory schemes.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the paper identifies the concept of a national redress scheme with the participation of all Australian governments and institutions responsible for child sexual abuse.

The scheme would be independently managed and funded by governments and relevant institutions.

"This concept is consistent with a scheme proposed by the Truth Justice and Healing Council in its submission on redress to the Royal Commission in August 2014.

"It will be crucial that all governments in Australia make it clear now they are willing to participate in such a scheme.

"The Commission has now fired the starting gun on developing a new way of providing fair and consistent redress for the survivors of child sexual abuse.

"A generous national redress scheme, funded by the institutions responsible for the abuse but led by the Australian Government is now broadly supported as the best option.

In the paper the Royal Commission also identified possible reforms to civil litigation systems including:

- whether limitation periods for actions relating to child sexual abuse should be removed
- whether the states and territories should legislate to ensure that there is always a proper defendant to sue
- whether there should be change to the law to impose a duty on any institution in which child sexual abuse occurs
- whether governments and non-government institutions should adopt model litigant approaches for how they will handle civil litigation in relation to child sexual abuse claims.

Mr Sullivan said the release of the paper is a major milestone for the Royal Commission and goes to the heart of its work.

"For two years now we have watched as the Royal Commission has looked back, and in its own words, borne witness to the abuse of children in many different institutions.

“Now the Royal Commission is firmly focused on the future – how should survivors be treated, both financially and with practical support by the institutions in which they were abused and how, if a survivor wishes to sue, the legal system should deal with these cases.

The Royal Commission will endeavour to make findings and recommendations in relation to redress and civil litigation by the middle of 2015.

Written submissions responding to the consultation paper close midday on Monday 2 March 2015, and can be lodged electronically to **redress@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au**

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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

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