

MEDIA RELEASE

Catholic Church calls for fair, just and compassionate national redress scheme for child sexual abuse survivors



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Generous financial payments, ongoing care and support and a meaningful apology should be key elements of a national child sexual abuse redress scheme according to the Catholic Church submission to the Royal Commission released today.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council's submission to the Royal Commission's redress and civil litigation consultation has supported Commissioner Peter McClellan's call for governments to establish an independent national redress scheme funded by the institutions responsible for the abuse.

Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the issue of redress is at the very heart of the Commission's work.

"A national scheme is necessary to ensure survivors of child sexual abuse are treated consistently across Australia. It would effectively provide consistent, easy access redress for all survivors of child sexual abuse regardless of where or when the abuse occurred," he said.

"It would also remove the justifiable criticism that the investigation and determination of abuse claims by the very institutions against which the claims were brought lacked transparency."

Consistent with the Commission's preferred model the Church's redress proposal includes:

- a single national redress scheme led by the Australian Government and with the participation of state and territory governments and non-government institutions;
- direct financial redress capped at \$150,000;
- a table or matrix that takes account of the severity of the abuse and the impact of the abuse used to determine financial redress;
- additional funding for counselling and psychological care;
- a mechanism for a genuine, meaningful apology delivered as a direct personal response from a senior member of the institution responsible for the abuse;
- an application process for accessing the scheme that is as clear and simple as possible
- claims determined on the balance of probabilities.

In the second part of the submission relating to law reform the Church has also recommended:

- an extension of the time available for abuse survivors to bring a legal claim to 25 years after turning 18 with a further extension available at the discretion of the courts;
- all institutions facing a claim for child sexual abuse identify and make available an entity that can be sued which is backed by insurance or assets;
- guidelines for both government and non-government institutions to follow when responding to child sexual abuse claims;

- introduction of a statutory duty to make institutions liable for child sexual abuse committed by their employees or agents unless the institution can prove it took reasonable precautions to prevent the abuse.

The Royal Commission will hold a public hearing this week in which the Catholic Church and other institutions will talk in detail about their response to the Commission's proposals.

The hearing will commence Wednesday 25 March 2015 at 10:00am in Sydney and will be streamed live to at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au.

A copy of the Truth Justice and Healing Council's submission is available at:

<http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au/media/94979/150316-SUBMISSION-Consultation-Paper-Redress-and-civil-litigation.pdf>

Media contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018

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

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