

MEDIA RELEASE

The Catholic Church's final Royal Commission case study starts Monday

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The Catholic Church's final Royal Commission case study, which starts this Monday (6 February 2017), will be an intense examination of why historical child sexual abuse was so prominent in the Church and the changes put in place by the Church in recent years to respond to abuse and better protect children.

Mr Francis Sullivan, CEO of the Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council, said the hearing will look into issues such as celibacy, seminarian training, clericalism, the structure of the Church, canon law and how they may have contributed to clerical child sexual abuse.

"The Commission will also release data, collected through the TJHC, relating to the extent of claims of child sexual abuse in the Church," he said.

"It will reveal a horrific picture of the extent of the claims of abuse by priests and brothers whose responsibility was to protect and care for children.

"The data will shock and confront the community and will once again make plain the extent of the suffering, damage and loss victims of abuse have endured.

"It is absolutely important that this information is made public. It is part of being transparent and ensuring the complete story is told," he said.

The hearing is expected to run for approximately three weeks and will examine issues including:

- Current child protection policies, procedures and standards including responding to allegations of child sexual abuse;
- Factors that may have contributed to the occurrence of child sexual abuse in the Church;
- Factors that may have affected the institutional response of Catholic Church authorities; and
- Church responses to relevant case study and other Royal Commission reports.

Mr Sullivan said that over the past 20 years and particularly the past four years the attention of the Church on issues relating to child sex abuse has come into very sharp focus.

"We can never be complacent, but the Church today is a very different place to what it was when most of the abuse which has been examined by the Commission took place," Mr Sullivan said.

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