



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHAIR & CEO OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH COUNCIL FOR THE ROYAL COMMISSION**

**12 DECEMBER 2012**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) and Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) support the establishment of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Australia.

Archbishop Denis Hart, President of the ACBC, and Sr Annette Cunliffe RSC, Chair of CRA, reiterated the Catholic Church's support for the Royal Commission and the Church's desire to openly embrace and co-operate with its work.

Archbishop Hart said that, "I am confident that the Royal Commission will enable an examination of the issues associated with child abuse nationally and the identification of measures for better preventing and responding to child abuse in all those institutions that work with children."

The Catholic Church's leaders have recognised that the Royal Commission will demand a sophisticated and co-ordinated response across the country.

To that end the Church has established a national co-ordinating body, to be referred to as the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, to oversee the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission and the pastoral and other ramifications that have arisen from the sexual abuse scandal.

The Honourable Barry O'Keefe AM QC and Mr Francis Sullivan will be chair and CEO respectively of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council which will include representatives from the community to provide expertise, wisdom and guidance over the course of the Royal Commission. The Council will comprise men and women with professional and other expertise and importantly will seek to have an effective on-going relationship with people who have been damaged by the sexual abuse scandal.

Mr O'Keefe is a former Commissioner of NSW's Independent Commission Against Corruption, a former Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Chairman of Interpol's International Group of Experts on Corruption, Chairman of the International Anticorruption Conference and was Mayor of Mosman. He is a consultant to law firm Clayton Utz and was appointed as an Adjunct Professor at Notre Dame University in 2005.



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Mr Sullivan has worked in Government and private practice, and has held positions as Secretary-General of the Australian Medical Association, Chief Executive of Catholic Health Australia, and consultant to the Pontifical Counsel for the Pastoral Care of Health Care workers at the Vatican. He is an Adjunct Professor at Australian Catholic University and was the Chairman of the University's Canberra Campus Review panel.

Mr Sullivan said that, "this is a crucial time for the Catholic Church. We need to be open and transparent with the interests of victims and their families always our number one concern."

"It is our sincere hope that with honesty and compassion we may be able to provide justice and healing to victims and their families as well as restore the confidence of those who have become disaffected with the church, its people and processes."

The Truth, Justice and Healing Council fully supports the Royal Commission and will do everything within its power to cooperate with it and its exploration of truth for everyone who has been affected by the tragedy of child abuse by:

- Identifying systematic institutional failures that have impeded the protection of children;
- Promoting lasting healing for the survivors of previous abuse;
- Identifying all necessary measures to prevent abuse of children in the future.

Further announcements will be made in due course on the membership of the Council and the details of its operation.

The Bishops and the religious leaders of the Catholic Church acknowledge the pain and suffering experienced by victims of child abuse and their families. Our hearts and prayers are with them and with those charged with the responsibilities of serving on the Royal Commission.

### **About ACBC and CRA**

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) is a permanent institution of the Catholic Church in Australia and the forum used by the Australian Catholic Bishops to act nationally and address issues of national significance.

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) is the peak body for leaders of Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life resident in Australia. The CRA membership comprises more than 180 congregations of Sisters, Brothers and Religious Priests living and working in all states and territories.

### **Contact details:**

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