



MEDIA RELEASE

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New advisory body to monitor Catholic reforms in response to child sexual abuse tragedy

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and Catholic Religious Australia have established a new advisory group that will play a crucial role in influencing and monitoring the Catholic Church's ongoing response to the child sexual abuse scandal.

Archbishop Denis Hart, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, explained that the new Implementation Advisory Group will monitor the response to the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse and the recommendations of the Truth, Justice and Healing Council, which led the Church's engagement with the Royal Commission.

Sr Ruth Durick OSU, president of Catholic Religious Australia, said: "There is a huge body of work completed by survivors, the Royal Commissioners and the Truth, Justice and Healing Council.

"The task of the Implementation Advisory Group is to be propositional as to the necessary reforms that Catholic institutions and communities will have to implement to be places of safety and transparency and places where we authentically live out our commitment to the values and vision of the Gospels."

Sr Ruth and Archbishop Hart said three key groups will take forward the work arising from the Royal Commission and the work led "prophetically and generously" by Francis Sullivan and the Truth Justice and Healing Council:

- [Catholic Professional Standards Ltd \(CPSL\)](#), which was established in 2016 as an independent not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, with a board of directors comprised of lay men and women. Its role includes establishing national safeguarding standards that provide a framework for all Catholic entities to build child-safe cultures;
- A National Redress Reference Group, working with the Commonwealth Government to bring about the establishment of the National Redress Scheme; and
- The Implementation Advisory Group.

"It is necessary that the groups work together to identify gaps in response and monitor progress to date in all areas of reform for the Church in Australia as it responds to the crisis, the recommendations of the Royal Commission and the work of the Truth Justice and Healing Council," Archbishop Hart said.

"The Implementation Advisory Group has a key role in monitoring the work done and proposing initiatives where a need has been clearly identified."

The members of the Implementation Advisory Group are:

- Ms Kerry Boland – Former Children’s Guardian in NSW;
- Professor Anne Cummins – Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Australian Catholic University;
- Mr Jack de Groot (chair) – CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society (NSW);
- Sister Berneice Loch RSM OAM – Former president of Catholic Religious Australia and former leader of the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea;
- Ms Kath McCormack AM – Former member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors;
- Bishop Robert McGuckin – Bishop of Toowoomba;
- Justice Neville Owen – Member of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, former chair of the Truth Justice and Healing Council and former Justice of the Supreme Court of Western Australia.

Mr de Groot, chair of the Implementation Advisory Group, said the members met recently and identified a program of work.

“The role of the group is to provide leadership by influencing all Catholic organisations – whether lay, religious or episcopal – in ensuring that we move to build a healthy culture that lives from a theology that has learned the lessons of the child abuse tragedy,” he said.

“Our intent is to offer advice on the development of the leadership and culture that is now required within the Church and expected by the wider Australian society, which still relies on the Church and its services in health, education, social services and spiritual and faith development.

“There is much work to do. We need to build on the very good practices that Church agencies have already put in place and, in doing so, we will be assisted by the Royal Commission’s recommendations on governance, transparency, accountability, consultation and participation of lay women and men.”

The program of work the Implementation Advisory Group has identified includes:

- Relationship with and spiritual support of survivors;
- Governance and Church culture;
- Child-focused standards;
- National Redress Scheme;
- Seal of confessional and mandatory reporting;
- Handling of abuse complaints.

“The leaders of the Church in Australia know that the end of the Royal Commission is not the end of the ongoing process of change – which has been taking place for two decades – but instead marks the start of a new phase during which new ideas and recommendations can shape Catholic ministry in this country,” Mr de Groot said.