

## **Cultural and structural changes to universal Church need to follow TJHC Findings**

Peter Johnstone, 14 December 2014

The Catholic Church's Truth Justice and Healing Council has released an 'Activity Report' describing the activities of the Council over the past two years to December 2014. The report is worth reading as it reflects the development of the Council as it has come to grips with the enormity of both clerical child sexual abuse and the institutional Church's immoral cover-up and consequent exposure of further children to harm in order to protect paedophiles and its institutional reputation. The Church must acknowledge, face up to and establish a basis for working towards correcting its extraordinarily bad culture and dysfunctional governance. Also, canon law and local church procedures need reform. Kieran Tapsell article in John Menadue's 'Pearls and Irritations' is very informed on these issues - <http://johnmenadue.com/blog/?p=2911>

The TJHC Activity Report recognises that the Church leadership as a whole must take responsibility, and quotes the Australian Bishops' Commitment Statement ". . . those in positions of authority concealed or covered up what they knew of the facts, moved perpetrators to another place, thereby enabling them to offend again, or failed to report matters to the police when they should have. That behaviour too is indefensible. Too often in the past it is clear some Church leaders gave too high a priority to protecting the reputation of the Church, its priests, religious and other personnel, over the protection of children and their families, and over compassion and concern for those who suffered at the hands of Church personnel. That too was and is inexcusable."

In acknowledging its inadequate and immoral, let alone un-Christlike, behaviour the Church must follow up in publicly addressing the cultural and governance deficiencies that have become so clearly evident. Present secular corporate standards of governance throughout the world would reject as totally inadequate the level of accountability and transparency currently displayed by the Catholic Church. CathfR struck resistance from Church authorities when it drew attention to the grave cultural and governance deficiencies in its submissions to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry and the Royal Commission. The TJHC, in its role of "putting in place a reform agenda for the Catholic Church", has yet to identify these cultural and governance problems of the Church which resulted in Christ's Church behaving in such an immoral and criminal fashion. Church authorities have still not accepted the ultimate accountability of the Holy See for this failure in the Church's governance and the nature of the international governance dysfunctionality, both cultural and structural, which have facilitated the worldwide institutional betrayal of trust.

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini recorded the following trenchant critique of the Church's governance just weeks before his death on 29 August 2012 "The church must recognize its errors and follow a radical path of change, beginning with the pope and the bishops. The paedophilia scandals compel us to take up a path of conversion." He went on to say: "The church is 200 years behind the times."

Reasonable and achievable organisational change in the Church's social structure will most likely only happen when laity, especially women, are appointed to senior positions in Church governance. Only then will the wall of clericalism be breached". We hope and pray that the

TJHC will come to grips with these governance and cultural deficiencies as it seeks to develop a reform agenda for the Church. It needs to look at the whole universal Church, not just Australia.