

**Synod Speech** Gilo – SRG representative for this Synod

I'm here today representing the Survivors Reference Group, survivors who have been trying to work cooperatively and proactively with the Church in recent years. We do not claim to represent the views of all survivors but we do believe that all survivors should be heard, and it is a shame that only 20 minutes is allocated at this Synod when safeguarding is so high on the agenda. It is survivors and our persistence in seeking truth and justice who have brought the Church to this point today.

IICSA only came about after decades of abuse, denial, cover-up and re-victimisation of survivors.

Recommendations go so far but are not the end of the story.

Talk of the Church apologising to survivors seems to us just more words, IICSA stated that: "Lasting change will require more than platitudes" – At present many bishops are hiding behind the centralised contrition by two archbishops – which allows the rest of the senior layer to hide behind a fire blanket. Genuine apology must be proactive, show genuine repentance & atonement.

This should include ownership of all the many re-abusive harms that have happened and a public act of penance.

There must be real accountability. Despite all of the reviews, enquiries and even after IICSA, nobody in authority has been prosecuted, held to account or even really disciplined over failures to protect, covering-up or the appalling treatment of survivors. The SRG calls for ownership of such bad behaviours as disclosure denial, silencing, gaslighting, distancing, dishonesty, complicity with corruption. Some of us have already started calling for published letters of apology. And some of us believe resignations for some of these behaviours are appropriate. The culture of the Church won't change until there is real accountability. That accountability stretches across the highest level of the Church.

There must be genuine and heartfelt commitment to never letting this happen again.

As for recommendations, when operational responsibility for safeguarding is removed from bishops they still retain statutory and must retain moral responsibility and accountability for safeguarding failures. It's not a get out of jail free card.

When DSAs are made accountable to an independent body, NST must also be made accountable and subject to external oversight. We fear a huge bureaucratic and expensive structure will be created with a new NCI, with even more layers of increasing complexity which does little to improve effectiveness. Keep it simple! Genuine external independent oversight. Remove the NST from the control of Archbishops Council comms, lawyer, management. The NST will need to be redesigned after years of control, manipulation and poor practice by Church House culture. And this should involve serious input from survivors.

Part of atonement is the redress scheme. We acknowledge the Interim Support Scheme but this is just a lifeboat to prevent survivors drowning whilst waiting for the actual redress scheme. And we are conscious that it has already moved considerably from the lead bishop's statement about it in Church times.

Final scheme must be properly resourced and funded. IICSA recognised the life-long impact of abuse and needs of survivors and the Church must too.

We urge you to end association with the lawyers who are also reputational launderers, who have already brought survivors much harm, and the Church much reputational damage – through their unethical and dishonest tactics. Letters from survivors about this have already gone to the lead bishops. You have a moral duty not only to your own survivors, but to others as well, to ensure that these lawyers and insurers are held to account for their unethical practices. We believe you should call on them to help repair the damage by paying substantially into your redress scheme. Redress should include all who have previously gone through this broken system.

Redress needs to also involve reconciliation and this must be survivor centred – restorative justice when asked for and even if not these apologies should be offered. We believe the Church should set up a Truth and Reconciliation process.

The whole of the redress scheme, both the repair of lives in face of enormous loss of pensions, housing, jobs etc and reconciliation must be designed in full co-

production with survivors. And that survivor input and expertise must be properly resourced and remunerated.

New Synod elections next year – we look forward to support from new members committed to survivors and preventing further abuse. And we thank Synod members who have stood with us in the fight for truth and justice. Some of us would not be here today without your encouragement and support in facing down systemic cruelty and corruption.

Implementing the IICSA recommendations will only go part of the way to improving things.

A clear majority of survivors support the introduction of well designed Mandatory Reporting law where knowledge or concerns about abuse of children in regulated activities MUST be reported to the statutory authorities with legal consequences for failure to do so. (Mandate Now model).

If the Church officially gets behind the call for MR then it can use its power and influence to benefit the whole of society, protecting children today and in the future and ensuring that the decades-long scandal in your Church is never allowed to happen again!