



Victims get \$44m boost for hearings

JANET FIFE-YEOMANS

VICTIMS of institutionalised child sex abuse have been thrown a \$44million lifeline to help them reveal their ordeals to the royal commission.

The federal government has agreed to pay for counselling and other services to support the victims and their families as they prepare to give evidence to what is becoming one of the biggest inquiries of its type in the world.

Bravehearts founder Hetty Johnston yesterday welcomed the funding as “critically important”. “What a relief,” Ms Johnston said.

As the commission delves into how many institutions with a responsibility for children, including the Catholic Church, have failed to protect them from abuse, Ms Johnston said many victims would consider the commission as an “institution” and find it daunting to tell their stories.

“They will see them as authority figures,” she said. “This is about looking at the holes in the system and they are the people who have the key to open the doors and we have to help them do that. It is most important organisations like ours are properly resourced to respond to their needs.”

The government will place

newspaper ads today seeking applications for a share of the funding from organisations that provide specialist support such as counselling and case management.

Those who support indigenous Australians, people living with disability and people who speak English as a second language and other diverse groups can also seek funding. This follows the government’s establishment of a free national legal advisory service to help victims compile submissions and approach the commission.

Commission chair, NSW Supreme Court judge Peter McClellan, has said he and the other five commissioners will be taking testimony in secret from victims around the country for the next five months before the commission holds its first public investigations.



Campaigner Hetty Johnston