

MEDIA RELEASE



Royal Commission gives directions on finalising Ballarat and Melbourne public hearings

18 April 2016

The Royal Commission held a direction hearing on Wednesday last week to make further orders regarding the response of Church personnel to complaints and allegations of child sexual abuse in Ballarat and in the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

In relation to Ballarat and the late Bishop Mulkearns, none of the parties raised any submissions in relation to his part-heard evidence which will now be taken into account by the Commission as it stands.

The Commission also dealt with issues relating to the evidence of Mr Dan Torpy, a former priest in Ballarat.

Mr Torpy had a private hearing with the Commission earlier in the year and was also scheduled to give evidence in person in February but could not attend on medical grounds. He continues to be ill and the Commission has ordered counsel for one of the survivors ask any questions he has of Mr Torpy in writing and that they be responded to by 29 April.

The main issue relates to evidence Mr Torpy gave in a private hearing to the Commission in which he spoke about a conversation he had with another priest in Rome in 1981 dealing with Gerald Ridsdale and why he was asked to leave the Parish of Edenhope.

The Commission also lifted a suppression order in relation to the remarks made by a Victorian court when sentencing a former abuse victim of a Christian Brother. The Commission is now satisfied that the redactions made to the document sufficiently protected the identity of the victim and others.

Regarding the Melbourne Archdiocese hearing the Commission has ordered four former employees of the Catholic Education Office give evidence in Sydney later this month in relation to written statements they have provided to the Commission. A hearing date of 27 April and, if necessary, 28 April, has been set for Counsel Assisting and others to question them.

The Commission has also set a time table for submissions relating to the Ballarat case study which will see Counsel Assisting the Commission providing her submission by 10 June and representatives of other parties providing submissions in reply by 15 July.

The submission timetable for the Archdiocese of Melbourne hearing has already been agreed, with submissions from Counsel Assisting due by 28 April and submissions in reply due by 23 June. This may change following the scheduling of further evidence from the former CEO officials on 27 April.

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