

News

Royal commission into child sex abuse to examine culture of institutions

- by: JANET FIFE-YEOMANS
- From: The Daily Telegraph
- August 09, 2013 12:00AM

THE culture within institutions that allowed children to be abused by paedophiles is the latest target of the royal commission into child sex abuse.

Commission CEO Janette Dines yesterday called for submissions into the best ways to ensure institutions were safe places for children, including recruiting and supervision of staff and volunteers.

"The royal commission is also interested in what characteristics contribute to an organisational culture that is committed to child safety and protecting children from sexual abuse," Ms Dines said.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, due to begin its long-awaited public hearings in Sydney mid-next month, has been conducting private hearings across the country to take evidence in secret from abuse victims.

Some of that evidence may be made public with the consent of the victims.

The commission has also called for submissions on safety checks on people working with children and the Catholic Church's Towards Healing process, set up to deal with complaints and redress regarding victims of child sexual abuse within the church.

However it has spread its net wide to cover more than the Catholic Church and other religious institutions, such as the Salvation Army.

It is looking at sex abuse in orphanages, juvenile justice centres, detention centres including those housing refugees, defence forces, and educational facilities including kindergarten, primary, secondary and boarding schools, as well as the Girl Guides, Scouts and recreational and sporting groups like soccer and netball teams.

Ms Dines said good child-safe practices may also include promoting an organisational culture that is committed to child safety, and ensuring that children are able to express concerns about safety or disclose harm.

"The royal commission wants to hear from a wide range of interested people as well as government and non-government organisations, about what makes a child-safe institution," Ms Dines said.

"The royal commission is examining what organisational policies and practices like codes of conduct, complaint handling procedures, and recruitment and supervision processes for staff and volunteers are the most effective at reducing risks to children and keeping them safer in institutions."

Individuals as well as government and non-government organisations have until October 11, 2013, to lodge a submission on the Child Safe Institutions Issues Paper.

