

Royal Commission Hearing



UPDATE 2

10 December 2013

Day two of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continued to focus on the *Towards Healing* process and the experiences of Mrs Joan Isaacs.

Council assisting the Commission read a statement from Mr Laurie Rolls from Catholic Church's Insurance, who was excused from appearing before the Royal Commission on health grounds.

Mr Rolls' statement described the role he as Professional Standards Resource Management, and Catholic Church Insurance, played in Mrs Isaacs' *Towards Healing* process and the resolution of the compensation claim she made against the Archdiocese of Brisbane.

Ms Bernadette Rogers, the current Director of the Queensland Professional Standards Office, gave evidence this morning about her role in Mrs Isaacs' *Towards Healing* process. Ms Rogers was responsible for the facilitation meeting between Mrs Isaacs and representatives of the Brisbane Archdiocese.

Ms Rogers said in her view the protracted negotiations around compensation after the *Towards Healing* facilitation had finished was not a compassionate response from the Church and had the effect of "re-abusing" her.

Father Adrian Farrelly, current Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Brisbane gave evidence about his participation in the facilitation process and the drafting of the apology. He acknowledged that Mrs Isaacs and the many others who had been abused by Church personnel, deserved an apology from the Church. He also said: "I don't expect the *Towards Healing* facilitation to be the end of the involvement between the complainant and the Church authority".

The Commission then heard from Dr James Spence, the retired Chancellor and Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Dr Spence was involved in the lengthy process

of negotiation which took place between 1999 and 2001 to resolve Mrs Isaacs' claim for compensation. The Commission heard that Mrs Isaacs received \$30,000, but \$20,000 of this was taken in legal fees to her lawyers and the lawyer for Frank Derriman. During Dr Spence's evidence there was substantial discussion about the impact and nature of an apology by the Church. Dr Spence said that the advice at the time was that to offer an apology would admit responsibility for damages. He went on to say that he didn't think he should have accepted that advice at the time.

On a couple of occasions Justice McClellan explored with witnesses the question of Church structures, Archdiocesan finances and the Church's liability to victims. He indicated that he will be exploring this further with others. Both Dr Spence and Fr Farrelly were asked about the responsibility of the Church for the action of individual priests and religious who were guilty of the abuse of children.

Both Fr Farrelly and Dr Spence agreed that the Church should apologise and that it had a responsibility to help people repair their lives.

Transcripts of evidence given today will be on the Royal Commission web site in the next day or two.

The Truth Justice and Healing Council is coordinating the Catholic Church's engagement with the Royal Commission.

For more information about the Truth Justice and Healing Council and the Royal Commission visit: tjhcouncil.org.au