

UPDATE 6

Royal Commission *Towards Healing* Hearing



16 December 2013

Towards Healing, the Catholic Church's protocol for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse, is the focus of the fourth public hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which continued in Sydney today. This hearing is expected to run for two weeks.

At the beginning of week two (day 6) of the hearing, Bishop Geoffrey Jarrett of the Lismore Diocese took the stand as the hearing into the case of Mrs Jennifer Ingham continued. Mrs Ingham was abused by Fr Rex Brown, a priest of the Diocese of Lismore, between 1978 to 1982, when she was aged 16-20 years old. Fr Brown was removed from active ministry in 1986.

Bishop Jarrett discussed the processes in place when he took over as Bishop of Lismore in 2001. By then Fr Brown had already been removed from office in Tweed Heads, due to alcoholic addiction.

The Commission asked about the difference between the 'removal of faculties', which is a lesser penalty than 'laicisation'. Bishop Jarrett said that while Fr Brown had not been laicised, he had had his faculties removed and was unable to practice or present himself as a priest.

The Bishop also said that where an accused person is alive, substantiated allegations of conduct against minors are referred to Rome, as only the Holy See can make the decision to return a priest to the lay state.

Bishop Jarrett said he has referred one case to Rome involving a priest who is no longer in active ministry.

Bishop Jarrett also gave evidence about the process of priests transferring from one diocese to another. He spoke about the checks required by civil legislation, including the Working with Children Checks, and church's National Committee for Professional Standards protocol directed to checking priests and religious seeking transfer. The Bishop explained that unless the documentation was attended to, and it is was clear there were no issues with the priest, a transfer would not take place.

Bishop Jarrett was also asked about the meeting Mrs Ingham had referred which she said involved Fr Mulchay.

Questions were also asked about the funding of Mrs Ingham's payment, and the fact that \$15,000 paid by the Diocese was later reimbursed to the Diocese of Lismore by Catholic Church Insurance.

Like other witnesses in these hearings, Bishop Jarrett said he felt separating reparation from the pastoral element of Towards Healing would lead to a better outcome for victims.

"I believe the pastoral element is paramount in the Towards Healing process," he said.

After lunch, the third case study, which involved Marist Brother Raymond Foster commenced. The victim, known as DG to protect his identity, read his statement, which described the abuse he suffered, and the response of the Marist Brothers to his allegations.

Brother Foster committed suicide before he was due to face criminal charges in court.

DG noted he could not pursue civil action because the perpetrator had died. He said he was made to feel he was harassing a sick old man, not a devious, drunken child molester.

The examination of Br Michael Hill, former Provincial, looked at the treatment of DG following his later complaint to the Marist Brothers.

The third case study continues.

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For information on the Royal Commission go to:
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>