

UPDATE 7

Royal Commission *Towards Healing* Hearing



17 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.

On day seven in week two of the hearing, Br Michael Hill and Br Alexis Turton, both former provincials of the Marist Brothers, gave evidence in the DG case study. DG was abused by Br Raymond Foster, over a period of two to three years in the early 1970s when DG was aged about 12 and 13. He made his complaint to the Brothers in early 2000, and a settlement was reached in mid-2002.

Today's hearing centred on a number of issues including:

- Whether or not DG's case was dealt with within the *Towards Healing* framework;
- Whether the Marist response had been a compassionate response in line with the principles of *Towards Healing*;
- The knowledge of Br Turton and Br Hill in 1993 and 1994 of earlier allegations made against Foster at around that time;
- Whether the information in Foster's 1999 suicide note should have been revealed to DG at the initial meeting with Br Hill in 2000;
- The negotiations around the form of both a private and public apology as requested by DG; and
- Training for young men entering the Marist Brothers, and the broader issue of celibacy with the Church.

On questioning from Commissioner McClellan, Br Turton agreed that the available statistics showed that child sexual abuse had been a significant issue for the Marist Brothers.

Brother Turton said he maintains contact with some 25 people who have been through *Towards Healing*. He said some people leave happy, having related their story, but find they continue to suffer because of the abuse and whatever might have happened after.

"I don't think I'd ever call *Towards Healing* successful in the sense that anyone who has been the victim of sexual abuse is damaged seriously and some of that damage is never left behind. But I'd call it satisfactory in terms of they've taken a step to move forward," Br Turton said.

Case study four, involving Marist Brothers and victim, DK, commenced shortly before proceedings were adjourned for the day. DK, a boarder in a Marist college between 1976 and 1981, was sexually abused by more than one brother.

The hearing continues.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au

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

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