

UPDATE 8

Royal Commission *Towards Healing* Hearing



18 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 eight of the hearing, the Royal Commission heard evidence from the fourth *Towards Healing* participant, DK.

DK was abused by three Marist Brothers while a student at St Augustine's College in Cairns in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the Brothers, Brother Ross Murrin, was later convicted twice for child sexual assault.

DK made a complaint to the Marist Brothers in 2009, and his *Towards Healing* process ended in settlement in 2010.

During today's hearing DK read his statement about his abuse and his *Towards Healing* process.

He testified about the profound effect that the abuse has had on his life. He spoke of his need to move on, saying he needed to forgive the Marist Brothers, and they needed to let him forgive them. He said "From what I have read, I believe the Marist Brothers are hurting and are in pain. I do not want to carry any malice against them into the future and I have no personal desire for them to have any personal pain. I hope they can heal also."

In response to questioning from Mr Gray SC on behalf of the Truth Justice and Healing Council, DK modified some of his recollections of his *Towards Healing* experience.

He said that he had experienced healing as a result of the Royal Commission process, having received documents which he regarded as containing the truth about his matter.

In the afternoon, Br Alexis Turton, former director of professional standards for the Marist Brothers gave evidence about his role in DK's *Towards Healing* process.

Br Turton began his evidence by acknowledging DK's very personal statement about his desire to forgive the Marist Brothers.

He said "...most heartily we would want to do the same thing, so if there is a pastoral atmosphere in which that can be done...we totally accept that and acknowledge that."

During the afternoon, Counsel assisting raised the following issues with Br Turton:

- Whether DK's *Towards Healing* process should have been referred to the NSW Professional Standards Office rather than being managed internally by the Marist Brothers
- Whether DK was offered a choice of facilitator
- Whether DK was advised that the proposed facilitator, Michael Salmon, was a church employee, being the Director of the NSW/ACT Professional Standards Office,

- On this basis, whether DK's consent to the appointment of Mr Salmon as facilitator was informed consent, and
- Whether Mr Salmon should have been appointed as the facilitator at all

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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