

UPDATE 18

Royal Commission Toowoomba Hearing



24 February 2014

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse concluded its hearing in Brisbane today in relation to the abuse of 13 young girls at a Toowoomba Catholic primary School in 2007-08.

The final witness in the hearing was the former Bishop of Toowoomba, Bill Morris, who gave evidence about his time in the Diocese and the way in which the reporting of the abuse had been handled.

Bishop Morris gave evidence that there had been a number of significant systemic failings which lead to the failure to properly deal with the abuse following the initial report.

These ranged across the failure to report the abuse to police, re-engaging the abuser as a casual teacher after he had left the school, and the school's child protection kit being out of date at the time.

Bishop Morris said the abuse of the young girls had been the catalyst to major changes within the Catholic Education Office that have led to significant improvements in the diocesan sexual abuse policies and procedures.

Following media reports, in her closing comments to the public hearing, Presiding Member, Justice Jennifer Coate said any parent would be welcome to come forward and make a statement to the Royal Commission if they wanted to be heard.

From 10 March 2014 Commission hearings will commence into the case of civil action taken by John Ellis, the case that highlighted the difficulty that exists in suing the Catholic Church.

From 17 March 2014 in Adelaide, the Commission will look into the responses by the Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide and the South Australian Police to allegations of child sexual abuse at St Ann's Special School.

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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