

## **Out-of-home care hearing opens in Sydney this week**

The Royal Commission's 24<sup>th</sup> public hearing began in Sydney this week examining the issue of child sex abuse in out-of-home care.

When children are placed in out-of-home care it is hoped a new roof over their head will also mean a better life.

For many, tragically this is not the case with the Royal Commission hearing this week that 40 per cent of the 3000 survivors of child sexual abuse, who have spoken to the Commission during private hearings, were abused in out-of-home care, mostly in the 1950s and 60s.

This is the Royal Commission's first policy-focused public hearing, and it is the first time survivors who have been abused will not directly be part of a hearing.

The Royal Commission will instead hear evidence from a range of expert witnesses with experience in the sector. These include representatives from each of the state and territory governments as well as non-government out-of-home care providers.

Catholic organisations, including Mary Mackillop Family Services, Marymead Child and Family Services and CatholicCare Sydney will provide evidence about the successes and improvements that can be made to the way they care for hundreds of children not considered safe in their own families.

Unlike previous case studies, there will be no findings made following this hearing. Evidence gathered during the hearing will be used by the Royal Commission to formulate an issues paper on out-of-home care to be released for response following the hearing.

I am writing this blog from Perth where I have been participating in the third of our national reform forums. We are meeting with representatives from dioceses and religious orders, schools, health and social services and parishioners, and in some cases, survivors of abuse. We are discussing options to develop a structure that will ensure children and vulnerable people are safe in Church institutions.

So far the forums have been lively, productive and well attended with 25 participants in Canberra, 40 in Adelaide and 45 in Perth.

# Blog

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Forums will continue in Tasmania this week. While there I will also speak at the 'Pints of Faith' event organised by the Archdiocese of Hobart at the Hotel Soho. Similar to 'Theology on Tap' or 'Spirituality in the Pub', it's an opportunity to enjoy a meal, meet with locals and talk about the work of the Council and the Royal Commission. Everyone is welcome.

Following Tasmania we have two forums in Sydney and one in Brisbane before the final forum in Melbourne.

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[www.tjhcouncil.org.au](http://www.tjhcouncil.org.au)