

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations

Melbourne — 23 January 2013

Members

Mrs A. Coote

Ms G. Crozier

Ms B. Halfpenny

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Chair: Ms G. Crozier

Deputy Chair: Mr F. McGuire

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Executive Officer: Dr J. Bush

Research Officer: Ms V. Finn

Opening statement by Chair

The CHAIR — Good morning and welcome to the first hearing of the Victorian parliamentary inquiry into the handling of child abuse for 2013. Since we last met, the federal government has released the terms of reference for the royal commission and named the commissioners they have charged with running the inquiry. Whilst this provides some assistance to us in terms of the likely implications for the inquiry here in Victoria, it will still be some time before we can know for certain what all the implications will be.

The federal government's announcement confirms that the scale and scope of the royal commission will be vast and will take some time to establish and get under way. Justice Peter McClellan, chair of the royal commission, said in a media statement last week that the commission's task was complex and will take significant time. He said that while they will work as efficiently as the issues which emerge will allow, it may be some months before the progress of the commission will be apparent to the general public.

In Victoria we have already made significant progress with our inquiry, and we will continue with our work. We will continue to hold hearings as planned, including visiting a number of regional areas. I am pleased to announce that our next regional hearings will be held in Geelong on 14 and 15 February. As well as continuing to hear from victims, there are some key individuals and organisations we are yet to hear from, but already the committee has gathered sufficient evidence to allow us to start forming some views on what our report may cover and the kinds of recommendations it may contain. We have made good progress and there is more we can achieve in a reasonably short time frame.

We hope our work here in Victoria will be of great assistance to the royal commission, and the Premier has said that the Victorian government will work to appropriately bring together the work of our inquiry and the federal royal commission. At this stage it is too early in the life of the royal commission for us to be able to determine how this might best be done. We are all working towards a similar goal — that is, to deal openly and transparently with what happened regarding the handling of child abuse in the past so that we can make changes to better protect our children in the future.