

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

Geelong — 15 February 2013

Members

Mrs A. Coote

Ms G. Crozier

Ms B. Halfpenny

Mr F. McGuire

Mr D. O'Brien

Mr N. Wakeling

Chair: Ms G. Crozier

Deputy Chair: Mr F. McGuire

Staff

Executive Officer: Dr J. Bush

Research Officer: Ms V. Finn

Opening statement by Chair

The CHAIR — Good morning, everyone, and welcome. We are pleased to have the opportunity to be here in Geelong to hear firsthand the evidence and experiences of the Geelong community. As you are aware, our inquiry is making significant progress and is continuing with visiting different parts of Victoria and hearing the testimonies of victims and other interested parties. These are in addition to the hearings we are conducting in Melbourne. We are pleased that the work we have done in our inquiry has been a major contributing factor to the establishment of the royal commission, and we look forward to working collaboratively with the commission.

We are yet to hear in public sessions from representatives of several organisations. We will do so over the coming months and after further investigations are completed. This leads us to the issue of timing and our existing 30 April reporting deadline. I have always said that our committee was focused on conducting a thorough inquiry, not a hasty one, and I am pleased to announce that our request to extend our reporting guidelines to 30 September has been granted.

We have a strong team working in the secretariat to support the committee. To date we have had more than 60 people give evidence at public hearings. Others have been heard in camera. We have received 370 submissions, over 80 of which have now been published on the website, with many more, both public and confidential, being analysed. Our research, investigations and information gathering continue behind the scenes, and the parallel processes we have set up also continue to operate.

Victoria Police's Taskforce Sano, set up during the course of this inquiry, made several arrests last week. We are all making progress, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank those of you who have had the courage to come forward and share your stories. Your commitment to seeking change and accountability on this issue has played a big role in this inquiry. Thank you for your determination.