

# TRANSCRIPT

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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

Bendigo — 14 March 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 Bendigo to hear firsthand evidence and experiences from people in the Bendigo region. Much continues to be reported about child abuse, and I am pleased to report that our inquiry continues to make significant progress on this very important issue. We have now heard from 95 people who have given evidence at public hearings, and by the end of this week we will have heard from well over 100. Many more have preferred to give evidence confidentially to the committee, and we have received nearly 380 written submissions.

We have gathered a huge amount of material to help inform our decisions on how we can make Victoria a safer place for our children, but we are not finished and there is still much work that needs to be done and still much more evidence we need to hear. From next month we will begin to hear from representatives from organisations. We will also hear from experts who can continue to inform the committee in relation to best practice and how we can design a framework in Victoria that better protects children.

We would like to advise all present that it may be necessary in order for the statements made before the inquiry to be properly investigated and tested that publication of some or all of the evidence of any witness may have to be suppressed. I have always said our committee was focused on conducting a thorough inquiry, not a hasty one, and extending our reporting deadline to 30 September has allowed us time to hear from these people.