

Royal Commission Case Study 41

Disability service providers

TJHC update



Friday 22 July 2016 – Day 8

The Royal Commission's inquiry into the response of Mater Dei School and the Congregation of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan to allegations of child sexual abuse continued today.

Mater Dei was one of three institutions which are part of the Commission's 41st public hearing inquiring into disability service providers. The others were The Disability Trust in NSW and FSG Australia.

Former Principal and CEO of Mater Dei, Ms Suzanne Dixon, gave evidence today. Ms Dixon told the Commission she started work with Mater Dei in January 1991 and held her position until the end of 2000.

Ms Dixon gave evidence about reports of sexual abuse of students CIL, CIN and CIB in the early 1990s by CID, a house parent at one of the residential cottages operated by the school at the time. She also gave evidence about an incident of child-on-child abuse in 1992.

Ms Dixon became aware of the allegations against the worker CID in March 1991, soon after she started at the school. She imposed conditions on CID's employment at that time, however by June of that year she had 'lost confidence' in CID and had asked him to resign. CID resigned and left the school in June 1991 and later departed Australia in July 1991.

Ms Dixon gave evidence about her response to the reports she received, which included reporting the conduct to FACS and the NSW Police. Ms Dixon said the steps she had taken in relation to CID were in line with advice she received from FACS.

She told the Commission that the incident involving CIB led to a number of changes to the residential program at Mater Dei including an increased focus on personal development, a strengthening of reporting procedures and more professional development for staff dealing with sexual abuse and vigilance.

The public hearing concluded today.

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