

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse
Case study 43
September 2016

Peter Carroll, Marist Provincial –
Opening Statement (Apology to Nash family)

I have been here since the opening day of this Case Study and have listened to many terrible stories, told with courage and determination. I want to apologise again to all of those survivors, but before I do I want to say something specific about the evidence I have heard about the death of Andrew Nash.

I acknowledge the pain carried by the Nash family for the past 40 years. I express my admiration for the way they have summoned the courage to give evidence this week. Andrew's family has honoured his memory and expressed their enduring love and grief.

I heard what Audrey Nash and CQT have said, and yesterday with the evidence of CQS, I think we gained more information about the terrible events of 1974. I want to acknowledge today in public that I accept on behalf of the Marist Brothers that all the evidence points to Andrew having been sexually abused, and the evidence also points to Andrew having taken his own life.

Importantly, it's obvious that many things have been said about the circumstances of Andrew's death, some of which must be corrected. It has been suggested in some places that Andrew's death was a prank gone wrong involving a family member, and yesterday we heard that the school at the time told the students that Andrew might have died, by an accident involving another family member. To me it is obvious that no member of the Nash family was involved in causing his death. Any suggestion that they were is completely wrong and hurtful to the family. These ideas must be totally rejected. Such comments have immeasurably compounded the family's pain and sense of loss.

I am concerned about what was said at the school at the time about Andrew's death, and what information was given to the students. I have agreed with the Nash's request to look into this further, and find out what I can for them. I have already taken steps to start that process.

I want to speak now to all the survivors, and all those who have been affected by sexual and physical abuse by the Marist Brothers.

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Br Peter Carroll, Marist Provincial – Statement Paragraphs 20 to 25

We cannot deny the unpalatable truths that have been revealed about the Marist Brothers' responses to child sexual abuse; vulnerable young people were sexually abused by Brothers, criminal activity took place, our response was entirely inadequate, the serious effects of sexual abuse were unrecognised, leaders failed to take strong decisive action, victims were offended against by means of aggressive legal processes. Our responses were naive, uninformed, even callous at times.

I know that this Case Study will reveal similar patterns- failures, inadequacies and ignorance.

My predecessor in his statements at both previous case studies involving the Marist Brothers has expressed our collective remorse and apology. I reiterate that today. What happened in the past should not have occurred. Children should not have been abused by those into whose trust they were willingly placed. Our response to victims and their families should have been immediate, compassionate and authentic.

As a Religious Order we have failed to protect the young people for whom we were founded and for whom many thousands of men have dedicated their lives. Those who have offended against young people have betrayed the trust placed in them by children and their parents, and by their own fellow Brothers.

Our commitment today is what it should have been in the past: full cooperation with authorities, thorough, professional and effective processes and protocols to protect children and ensure their safety, compassionate responses to victims. We ask forgiveness for ourselves in our failure we hope for the healing of victims of past crimes.

I have read a number of statements and other documents in connection with this case study detailing the dreadful abuse committed by the three brothers. I want to acknowledge that the impact of the abuse both in the short term and long term has been devastating for the victims.