

UPDATE 26

Royal Commission St Ann's Special School Adelaide



21 March 2014

Day five of the Royal Commission's hearing into St Ann's School in Adelaide heard evidence from witnesses associated with St Ann's Special School and Catholic Education South Australia.

Paedophile Brian Perkins died in prison while serving a ten year sentence for the sexual abuse of children at St Ann's Special School between 1986 and 1991.

Claude Hamam was principal of St Ann's during that time and was responsible for employing Brian Perkins. He gave evidence about the management structures and procedures in place for St Ann's between 1986 and 1991 and the process he completed in employing Perkins.

In employing Perkins, Hamam said he did not check Perkins' references, and, despite maintaining for some time that he had done so, did not obtain a police check for him. Police checks were not required at that time. He described these actions as a mistake and an error of judgement. He understood that Perkins would drive the bus for vulnerable children and that he would be the only responsible adult on the bus at the time.

Hamam said that in the following years, Perkins' role grew to include voluntary activities including wood work and yard work. He said he was also aware that parents were being offered respite care by Perkins, outside the school.

Hamam resigned from his employment with the Catholic Education Office in 2003 after losing the confidence of the Director of the CEO, Allan Dooley.

Martin Aartsen, a teacher who had been appointed acting principal at St Ann's while Mr Hamam was on long service leave in term 4 of 1991 then gave evidence. He said that he had not informed parents about the allegations because he understood from what he had been told about confidentiality that this could compromise the police investigations.

The last witness for the day was Michael Critchley, who had been director of education services, with responsibility for human resources at the CEO in 1991.

Critchley testified that Hamam had contacted him in 1991 seeking advice about how to remove Perkins as a volunteer at the school. He obtained advice from lawyers about terminating Perkins' role at the school.

The hearing will continue in Adelaide on Monday.

For more information on the Truth Justice and Healing Council go to: www.tjhcouncil.org.au
For information on the Royal Commission go to: <http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/>

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