



Chance to tell of sex abuse

By NICOLE MILLS

TERRITORIANS affected by childhood sexual abuse will soon have an opportunity to tell their story to a royal commission.

One organisation is encouraging those who do want to take part in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse to have counselling sessions first, to help put their story together.

Relationships Australia NT chief executive Marie Morrison said some of those who face the commission will be telling their story for the first time.

Ms Morrison said speaking to a counsellor beforehand could help victims deal with

the trauma so they were better positioned to clearly explain themselves.

“It can be a very emotional, challenging and confronting experience for people to talk about what happened to them,” she said.

“Once they decide to tell their story, a lot comes up. They want to not only tell that story but unpack and process it as well.”

Relationships Australia NT has received \$650,000 in federal funding over three years to provide free counselling to victims of child sexual abuse — even those who don’t want to talk to the royal commission.

Ms Morrison said that the increased media spotlight on

child sexual abuse could often be enough to dredge up suppressed trauma.

She said victims were often afraid to speak because they felt it was partly their fault.

“The perpetrators are very clever — they try to make the children feel it’s a secret that they have to keep.

“Often they prey on children who are very lonely, they groom them and they convince them that they’re partly to blame for this — which, of course, they are not.”

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses in Child Sexual Abuse will be held in Darwin on October 15 for the first round of private

hearings.

The private hearings last for one hour and are informal and confidential.

Ms Morrison said she was not sure how many Territorians were affected by child sexual abuse but expected many would be Aboriginal.

She said Relationships Australia NT had indigenous advisers, cultural consultants and Aboriginal family workers to help victims.

For more information or to book a private session with the royal commission, visit childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au or call 1800 099 340.

For Relationships Australia NT, call 1300 364 277.