

UPDATE 15

Royal Commission Toowoomba Hearing



19 February 2014

The Toowoomba hearing of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse continued for a third day in Brisbane today.

Counsel assisting the Royal Commission continued his cross examination of Mr Hayes, the former principal of the primary school where 13 students were abused by former teacher Gerard Byrnes who is now in prison

Mr Hayes accepted responsibility for the failure to report KH's (the child who made the complaint) abuse allegations to the police. Counsel also sought to understand action taken by Mr Hayes once allegations were made.

Counsel for Mr Fry, Senior Education Officer at the Toowoomba CEO and for Mrs Long, Student Protection Officer at the school also sought to clarify evidence relating to their clients.

In response to questions from Justice Jennifer Coate, Mr Hayes said he believed KH when she brought allegations to his attention. In response to further questions Mr Hayes said he thought asking the child to demonstrate the abuse (using her father) added further depth to the child's evidence and that it demonstrated that they were taking her seriously.

Counsel for the Truth Justice and Healing Council put it to Mr Hayes that he had lied to parents, and had failed to alert senior staff at the Catholic Education Office in Toowoomba and the Bishop to the abuse allegations against Mr Byrnes. Mr Hayes denied these claims.

Counsel assisting also exposed conflict between Mr Hayes' evidence at Mr Byrnes' trial and the evidence he provided to the Royal Commission.

Justice Coate asked why Mr Hayes did not report suspicions of child sexual abuse to police following the meeting on 6 September with KH's father. In response Hayes said he should have been more assertive and that's something he's learned over time.

Christopher Fry, Senior Education Officer from the Diocese of Toowoomba was called to the stand.

The trial continues.

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/>

Contact: Michael Salmon 0417 495 018