

Factsheet

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

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Free legal help to navigate
the Royal Commission

Free advice line 1800 605 762 | Website knowmore.org.au

What is the Royal Commission?

The Royal Commission is a public inquiry that has been set up to look into Australian institutions: how child sexual abuse happened 'on their watch' and whether they responded appropriately. The Commission is independent of the government. Members of the public can contribute to the inquiry by giving evidence or making submissions.

What is an institution?

For this Commission, institution is any public or private body, agency, association, club or organisation that provides activities, facilities, programs or services for children.

Examples of institutions are childcare centres, schools, religious organisations such as churches and mosques, sporting clubs, foster care or respite care centres, detention centres and juvenile justice centres.

The Commission will not look into child sexual abuse that has happened within a family.

Who is a child?

A child is a person under 18 years old.

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse means any sexual act or behaviour involving a child. It includes touching or looking at a child in a sexual way, exposing or involving a child in pornography and setting up a child to be abused.

If you are unsure what is included you can contact us.

What will the Royal Commission do?

The Commission will hear stories from survivors of child sexual abuse in institutions and hear evidence from other people or organisations. The Commission can require witnesses give evidence and that documents and information be produced to the Commission. The Commission will travel around Australia to hear people's stories and to take evidence. After listening to all the stories and hearing all the evidence, the Commission will write a report and make recommendations. The report is usually publicly available.

What can't the Royal Commission do?

A Royal Commission cannot charge someone with a criminal offence and will not make a finding that someone has committed an offence.

A Royal Commission cannot award compensation.

How do I let the Commission know I want to tell my story?

You can register with the Royal Commission to tell your story, or find out more information about the Royal Commission:

By phone 1800 099 340

In writing GPO Box 5283, Sydney NSW 2001

By email registerinterest@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au.

How will the Commission hear my story?

You can make a written or oral statement, speak to a Commissioner in a private session or give evidence at a private or public hearing. Written statements

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

You can write down what you want to tell the Commission and send it to them. The Royal Commission has guidelines on their website at www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au. knowmore has a fact sheet about writing statements. Contact **knowmore** for a copy or to see if we can help you write your statement.

Private sessions

In a private session you will tell your story to one or two Commissioners. There is no-one there from the institution you are talking about. You can have a support person present with you. The Commission may ask you to tell your story again at a hearing. The Commission will not force you to do this if you don't want to.

Hearings

If you give evidence at a hearing, you will be asked to take an oath or make an affirmation that what you say is the truth. You may be asked questions from other people or organisations or their lawyers.

The evidence you give can be specifically used by the Royal Commission in their report and recommendations.

You can't refuse to answer a question because the answer may be an admission that you have done something wrong, but the evidence you give cannot generally be used against you in other proceedings.

If you are appearing at a hearing you may want to obtain a lawyer to represent you.

There is financial assistance available to assist with legal fees for representation at a hearing. Contact **knowmore** for information about this.

What can the Royal Commission do with information given to it?

This depends on how the information is given to them. If you are concerned about the Royal Commission passing on your information to law enforcement agencies or concerned about getting into trouble for talking to the Royal Commission, then you should get some legal advice about what to do next. Contact us for more information.

Contact knowmore

knowmore is an independent legal service giving free legal assistance to people who are considering telling their story or providing information to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

Free advice line 1800 605 762

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