

Wednesday, 28 June 2023

## INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL ABUSE AT BEAUMARIS PRIMARY

The Andrews Labor Government is listening to Victorians who were in decades past, profoundly let down by the school system – experiencing trauma and abuse no child should face, in a place that should be their safest.

The Government will establish a Board of Inquiry into Historical Child Sexual Abuse at Beaumaris Primary School in the 1960s and 1970s, and abuse by the same employees at other government schools.

Following the Commonwealth Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, victim-survivors of child sexual abuse in government schools – particularly at Beaumaris Primary School – have advocated for a forum to tell their stories.

The Board of Inquiry – which is independent of government – will establish an official public record of the experiences of victim-survivors of historical child sexual abuse by staff at Beaumaris Primary School more than five decades ago, as well as abuse perpetrated by the same staff members at other government schools.

Establishing the Inquiry will give victim-survivors the opportunity to share their experiences on the public record – and will seek to provide a level of closure and healing for victim-survivors, secondary victims, and communities.

In addition, the Inquiry will report on:

- The response of the Department of Education during the 1960s and 1970s in relation to the historical child sexual abuse at Beaumaris Primary School at that time
- The most appropriate ways to support healing for victim-survivors, secondary victims and affected communities
- Whether support services for victim-survivors of historical child sexual abuse in government schools are effective, considering other inquiries and reforms that have taken place since the historical abuse occurred.

This Board of Inquiry will investigate historical cases of abuse – and is not investigating the current Beaumaris Primary School, or any other current school or contemporary staff members.

Kathleen Foley SC will chair the Board of Inquiry – an eminent Senior Counsel and Commissioner with the Victorian Law Reform Commission. Ms Foley will be required to deliver a final report to government by 28 February 2024.

Once established, the Board will develop processes for engaging with its work, alongside appropriate trauma-informed support for people who participate in the Inquiry – with details on how people can submit their stories to be released in the coming weeks.

Victim-survivors will continue to have access to the National Redress Scheme. Victoria was – together with New South Wales – the first state in Australia to opt into the Scheme, and the Government has advocated strongly to improve its operation to better support victims.

### Quote attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

*“Children should feel their safest at school – not be subject to harrowing abuse at the hands of teachers they trust. This inquiry won’t undo their pain, but we hope it gives victim-survivors the recognition and support they deserve.”*

### Quote attributable to Minister for Education Natalie Hutchins

*“Victims have carried the grief and trauma they experienced at school for more than five decades. We’re making sure they can share their stories and feel a sense of closure with their voices and experiences finally heard.”*

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