

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

Tuesday, April 1, 2008

## **SA Child Abuse Inquiry Findings Released**

The South Australian Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry report has been released.

The 600 page report was tabled in State Parliament today, bringing the inquiry to a formal close.

Commissioner Ted Mullighan QC, who began his work investigating the sexual abuse of State children in December 2004, said the report contains 54 recommendations based on the extensive investigative processes and invaluable information from people who provided evidence, many of whom were victims of sexual abuse as children.

The report exposes the deep trauma experienced by many young children, who were sexually abused while in State care. It also concluded that information presented to the Inquiry about the extent of sexual assault of State children was just the “tip of the iceberg”.

Mr Mullighan said 1920 people had provided evidence or information to the Inquiry about child sexual abuse or child protection issues. Of this, 792 people said they had been sexually abused as a child in South Australia.

The 406 males and 386 females made 1592 allegations dating from the 1930s to the present, against 1733 alleged perpetrators. After investigation, a total of 242 people were found to be inside the terms of reference. Allegations from 170 people were referred to police.

The Inquiry held 809 hearings, which resulted in more than 46,500 pages of transcript.

“Many people told me it was the first time they had ever disclosed the sexual abuse, and that they had been ashamed and embarrassed for their whole lives. To have the chance to tell their story, and be believed for the first time, was an enormous relief,” Mr Mullighan said.

The Inquiry also investigated the deaths of 924 children, and ascertained that 391 had reportedly died in State care. Of these, it was found that criminal conduct was the substantial cause of death of 15 children.

Mr Mullighan said he was honoured to have lead the Inquiry and he felt privileged to have heard the personal stories of so many victims.

“I feel a deep sense of privilege and responsibility at having been entrusted with the disclosures of people’s most painful memories. The courage and strength they showed is something that must never be forgotten,” he said.

The CISC Inquiry legislation requires that Families and Communities Minister Jay Weatherill must respond to the report with a preliminary response within three months, stating which (if any) of the Commissioner’s recommendations will be carried out. The Minister will then make a full response within six months, and is then required to make an annual response, updating progress, for the next five years.

The report will be available on: [www.sa.gov.au/mullighaninquiry](http://www.sa.gov.au/mullighaninquiry)

Anyone who gave evidence to the inquiry is entitled to receive a free copy of the report. Please contact free call 1800 188 118 to arrange how to receive your copy.

Hard copies for those individuals or groups who did not provide information to the Inquiry are available for purchase through the Service SA Government Legislation Outlet, 101 Grenfell St, Adelaide.

## **Background**

The Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry held its first public hearing in December, 2004. The terms of reference of the Inquiry were to inquire into any allegations of:

- a. sexual abuse of a person who, at the time that the alleged abuse occurred, was a child in State care; or
- b. criminal conduct which resulted in the death of a person who, at the time that the alleged conduct occurred, was a child in State care.

The purposes of the Inquiry were:

- a. to examine the allegations referred to in clauses (a) and (b) above; and
- b. to report on whether there was a failure on the part of the State to deal appropriately or adequately with matters that gave rise to the allegations referred to in clauses (a) and (b) above; and
- c. to determine and report on whether appropriate and adequate records were kept in relation to allegations of the kind referred to in clauses (a) and (b) above and, if relevant, on whether any records relating to such allegations have been destroyed or otherwise disposed of; and
- d. to report on any measures that should be implemented to provide assistance and support for the victims of sexual abuse (to the extent that these matters are not being addressed through existing programs or initiatives).

**Media note:** Commissioner Mullighan will not be available for further comment today. He is continuing with final edits on the APY Lands, which must be finished by April 30, 2008.

**More information** – Jenny Turner, 0412 155 245