



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse



Case Study Summary

Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay

Based on the public findings in the Royal Commission into Child Sexual Abuse's case study report



- > **1** Case summary overview 3
- > **2** What was the purpose of the hearing?..... 5
- > **3** What happened at Parramatta School for girls? 7
- > **4** Important issues and events of note specific to the case..... 8

> 1 Case Summary Overview

This case study examines the daily living conditions and alleged physical and sexual abuse carried out by staff of the Parramatta Training School for Girls (Parramatta Girls) and the Institution for Girls in Hay.

Within this case study summary, key information surrounding the case is provided to give an insight into what occurred and the allegations that were brought upon several staff members of the institutions mentioned above.

The events in question in this case occurred between 1950 and 1974, at Parramatta Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay. Whilst both of these facilities were designed as care facilities for neglected young women or those convicted as juvenile offenders, outcry over the living conditions at both institutions soon arose.

Evidence presented by residents of these institutions at the time details repeated systematic physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of those responsible for the care of these girls. Eventually, both sites were forced to close in 1974 amidst protest about what had occurred within these facilities.

The alleged offenders were all male Superintendents or Deputy Superintendents working at the institutions at the time. Many of the men accused of carrying out the abuse never faced investigation, and others simply resigned or were dismissed without legal consequences. Of the 11 alleged perpetrators, only 3 are still alive: Noel Greenaway, Ronald Ward and Frank Valentine.

What follows is a summary of the experiences of young women in the welfare system that were exposed to abuse at the hands of their carers, and the subsequent legal proceedings that have been brought forward, seeking justice for the survivors and redress for all victims affected by the events that took place.

> Key information on the case

> **The Parramatta Training School for Girls first opened in 1887 (Originally known as the Parramatta Girls Industrial School). It was intended to be a correctional facility where girls would be sent if they were convicted of indictable offences and as a training school for girls that were a part of the welfare system.**

> **The Institution for Girls in Hay was setup as a higher security extension of Parramatta Girls, where the most troublesome girls would be sent for behavioural correction and education.**

> **At the time these institutions were running, they operated under the Child Welfare Act 1939, which has since been replaced in 1987, and again with the Child and Young Person (Care and Protection) Act 1998 (NSW).**

> **Evidence was provided to the Royal Commission from 16 former inmates of Parramatta Girls (all of whom were aged seventeen or younger at the time).**

> **Details provided by witnesses included physical and sexual abuse and the deprivation of basic rights and amenities.**

> 2 What was the purpose of the hearing?

The Royal Commission hearing is a means of achieving justice for all those who were abused whilst in the care of the State institutions in question.

By having a full inquiry and allowing witnesses to provide evidence, it is hoped that the victims will experience some degree of closure from their extremely traumatic experiences.

Furthermore, the Royal Commission can recommend redress and compensation for the victims of such horrendous crimes. Whilst this can usually offer little in terms of repairing the emotional and physical pain caused by child abuse, it is an attempt to assist victims in living the best life possible.

When an in depth hearing is able to be carried out, the perpetrators of the offences can be held Publicly accountable for their actions. It is the intention of the Royal Commission that all perpetrators be brought to justice and face the appropriate penalties in accordance with the Royal Commissions Act, 1902 (Cth).

> The Institutions in question

Both the Parramatta Training School for Girls and the Institution for Girls in Hay were run as facilities to provide support and as a correctional facility for girls aged between 10 and 17 years.

These institutions were State run, taking responsibility for the care of young girls who were wards of the State. There were typically up to 200 girls living in these institutions at any one time.

It is important to provide some context into the law and social expectations regarding these types of facilities in the 1950s-1970s. Governed by the Child Welfare Act 1939 at the time, Parramatta Girls was legally allowed to

administer minor corporal punishment which was limited to “up to 3 strokes to the hand” although this was under that condition that “every effort had to be made to enforce discipline without corporal punishment”.

Isolated detention was also legally allowed, where a purpose built room was provided and could not extend beyond 48 hours for girls aged 16 and above. However, the experiences recounted of girls living in Parramatta and Hay depicts situations clearly outside the Child Welfare Act 1939.

The evidence presented by former inmates of these correctional facilities graphically details

repeated and extensive abuse and violence, where girls suffered in silence and were too intimidated or scared to make an effort to report these events.

The Royal Commission heard that in some cases, attempts to alert other staff members of the facility or other people outside the institutions would receive no response or assistance whatsoever.

The evidence presented by former inmate of Parramatta Girls suggests that these kinds of institutions were breeding grounds for a culture of abuse, and some of the people in power carried out extreme violations of basic human rights.

> 3 What happened at Parramatta School for girls?

Details arising from the Royal Commission enquiry paint a shocking picture of the living standards of the girls sent to Parramatta or Hay.

> The conditions that girls were forced to endure included:

- > Having their hair cut off upon arriving
- > Strip searches and invasive examinations, no doors on showers or toilets, a requirement to show used sanitary pads to officers
- > Restricted to using the toilet to certain times of the day
- > Not allowed to move at all whilst in bed
- > Not being allowed to speak unless spoken to and having communication with other inmates severely limited (sometimes only 10 minutes per day)
- > Manual labour such as building and scrubbing footpaths, painting, sanding, working in an industrial laundry and in sewing rooms for long periods.
- > Food and clothing deprivation
- > Physical abuse including punching, kicking, hair pulling and assault with other objects
- > Drugging
- > Sexual abuse and rape, verbal and psychological abuse
- > Restriction of medical supplies

These conditions amount to an unbearable experience for many of the victims and the emotional trauma has had a lasting effect on the survivors.

> 4 Important issues and events of note specific to the case

The hearing and subsequent evidence presented in this case highlights a very concerning societal issue: institutionalised abuse and violence at the hands of people in a position of power.

This is particularly concerning given the vulnerability of the girls that had been sent to both Parramatta and Hay. The victims in this case suffered and had no chance to escape or successfully report what was happening to them.

Instead, they were failed by the system designed to support them. Any access to external support was virtually non-existent at the time, and inmates file records from the hearing show that when

independent professionals came to visit, such as psychiatrists or welfare officers, the girls were prevented from seeing them as they were in “isolation or segregated detention”.

No staff members of either institution were ever arrested or convicted as a result of what occurred in the period between 1950 and when the facilities eventually closed in 1974.

> Compensation for victims

Of the 16 former inmates who appeared at the public hearing, only two had received any compensation from the State of New South Wales with respect to their time spent at either the Parramatta Training School for Girls or the Institution for Girls in Hay.

Prior to the Royal Commission hearing, some of the witnesses had attempted to launch civil claims. According to the witnesses, they faced difficulty when seeking advice from legal teams enlisted to help, primarily in regard to the cost of

undertaking such claims and concerns over statutes of limitations.

Whilst many of the witnesses have expressed that monetary compensation can never make amends for their experiences, it may alleviate some of the impact. The impact on the victims runs into many areas of their lives, as expressed by one of the Parramatta Girls, Ms Mulquiney, “We haven’t been able to have the life that we could have had. We haven’t been able to realise our potential”.

Monetary assistance from the government in the form of redress can help the witnesses to access services, housing and care for children. The Royal Commission has released findings on the topics of civil litigation, government redress schemes and statutory victims of crime compensation schemes. Kelso Lawyers completed submissions in response to all these issued papers.

Case Study Summary

Parramatta Training School for Girls
and the Institution for Girls in Hay

Kelso Lawyers

Sydney: (02) 8315 8900 | **Newcastle:** (02) 4907 4200 | **Free call:** 1800 650 707

kelsolawyers.com