



St Andrew's Hostel Inquiry



7 February 2012

Hon. Barry House MLC
President of the Legislative Council
Parliament House
Perth WA 6000

Dear President

ST ANDREW'S HOSTEL SPECIAL INQUIRY

On 15 November 2011, the Premier, under section 24(H) of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, directed a Special Inquiry (Inquiry) be held into the response of government agencies and officials in relation to allegations of sexual abuse at St Andrew's Hostel, Katanning. Attachment 1 is a copy of the Terms of Reference.

I am writing to request access be granted to me and the Inquiry staff to certain transcripts and submissions of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies 1982-1988 for its *Review of the Country High School Hostels Authority*, as listed in Attachment 2. I also request that permission be granted to me and the Inquiry staff to quote or otherwise refer to extracts of witnesses' testimonies and submissions for the purposes of my Inquiry. Please note that I do not consider the views or opinions of Committee members expressed during the course of the hearings to be relevant. I am conscious that it is, of course, beyond the scope of my Inquiry to inquire into the role of the Committee, or its deliberations, findings or recommendations.

I do believe, however, that the evidence of Board members, the Warden and other public officials provided to the Committee in 1988 in connection with the operations St Andrew's is of vital importance to my Inquiry. To date my inquiries have revealed no equivalent contemporaneous record of the views of parties integrally involved in the subject of my Inquiry.

I draw your attention to the first limb of Term of Reference 3 for my Inquiry which requires me to report:

- Findings about why the behaviour of staff the subject of allegations at St Andrews Hostel was able to continue for an extended period.

These transcripts and submissions would provide a unique opportunity to gain insight into how the hostel was able to maintain such a positive reputation at the same time that the sexual abuse of boarders appears to have become entrenched.

Further background to my request can be found at Attachment 3.

I would be grateful if this request could be considered by the Legislative Council as a matter of urgency. Public hearings for the Inquiry will commence on 20 February 2012 and my report is to be completed by 31 May 2012.

Please do not hesitate to contact Dr Jeannine Purdy, Principal Research and Report Officer, on 9420 4422 should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Blaxell', written in a cursive style.

Hon. Peter Blaxell
SPECIAL INQUIRER

Attachment 1

Special Inquiry – Terms of Reference

St Andrew's Hostel Inquiry

Hon. Peter Blaxell, former Supreme Court Judge, has been appointed to undertake a Special Inquiry under section 24H of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* to inquire into the conduct and response of relevant public officials and government agencies in relation to allegations of sexual abuse at St Andrew's Hostel in Katanning.

Terms of Reference

In examining this matter the Special Inquiry is to:

1. Examine when any allegations were made, who they were made to, what action was taken in response to those allegations, and the appropriateness of any action taken.
2. Consider any evidence of allegations of sexual abuse by any person at or connected with the hostel or related organisations.
3. Report with:
 - Findings about why the behaviour of staff the subject of allegations at St Andrews Hostel was able to continue for an extended period.
 - Recommendations on:
 - any disciplinary action that should be taken against any public official as a consequence of the findings; and
 - any changes that should be made to the policies, procedures or operations of relevant government agencies as a consequence of the findings.

Any issues which go to criminal behaviour that arise in the course of the Inquiry are to be referred to the WA Police.

The report is to be completed on or before Thursday 31 May 2012.

Attachment 2

Submissions and transcripts relevant to the St Andrew's Hostel Inquiry

Submissions

7. Country High School Hostels Authority
18. McKenna, D (Warden: Katanning)
19. Ministry of Education
25. Parks, A (Member: Katanning Hostel Board)
38. Sprigg, K (Member: Katanning Hostel Board)

Transcripts

Tuesday May 10 1988 – Katanning Hostel Board

- * Mr R L Hendry
- * Mr I W Murray
- * Mr A H Parks
- * Mrs P A Pringle
- * Mrs W Sprigg

Tuesday May 10 1988 – Mr D McKenna, Warden

Thursday August 11 1988 – Country High School Hostel Authority

- * Mr C Philpott
- * Archdeacon N Apthorp
- * Mr J Nicholas
- * Mrs A Harris
- * Mr R Cairnes
- * Mr J Stokes
- * Mr R McCreddin
- * Mr P Bache kard-Lammas
- * Mrs P Acton

Attachment 3

Background to request for access to Committee transcripts and submissions

In 1987 a Committee of the Legislative Council, the Standing Committee on Government Agencies, commenced a review of the Country High School Hostels Authority and it published a report in 1988. The review concerned the administration of country high school hostels by the Country High School Hostels Authority and hostel management committees.

St Andrew's Hostel was one of the hostels operated by the Country High Schools Hostel Authority. The Committee received submissions from a number of persons associated with the administration of that hostel and also met with the Board of Management and Warden of St Andrew's as witnesses for its review.

The Committee's review concerned only the administrative arrangements for relevant hostels and references to St Andrew's in the report are positive. The Committee commended the Katanning system of trainee supervisors and recommended that it be extended to other hostels (paragraph 4.31). In relation to the standard of hostel accommodation the Committee stated:

Katanning's Hostel is a magnificent example of self help, with many of the facilities being the result of the initiative of the warden and students (an example being the very well set out cinema which serves as a community entertainment facility) (paragraph 5.43).

Within 18 months of the Committee meeting with the Board members and Warden of St Andrew's, the Warden was charged with sexually assaulting a boarder at St Andrew's. Subsequently, he was convicted for offences involving the sexual abuse of eleven students resident at the hostel over thirteen years from 1977. Further allegations of sexual abuse of students by the Warden have been made to the Inquiry and the Warden's brother, a Supervisor at the hostel, is currently on trial for other charges involving the sexual abuse of boarders.

When the Committee's report was tabled in the Legislative Council on 21 September 1988, no additional materials appear to have been tabled (*Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Council, 21 September 1988, pp 3132-3134). At the relevant time, subject to any determination by the Committee during its inquiry, the Standing Orders provided that unless otherwise ordered by the Council all records and documents received by the Standing Committee during its inquiry would remain in the custody of the Council after completion of the inquiry. It appears that submissions to the Committee were private but the status of transcripts is less clear, with the Committee providing at least one transcript of evidence to a witness without any express embargo at the same time it provided a copy of the published report (Attachment 4).

Under the currently proposed Standing Orders of the Legislative Council Committee:

- all oral evidence is public and may be disclosed or published by any Committee Member or person, unless otherwise ordered; and
- although other evidence is private unless otherwise ordered and the Council advises that it is normal practice for Standing Committees of the Legislative Council to authorise the publication of submissions.



Standing Committee on Government Agencies

September 22 1988

Dear Mr Parks

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies tabled its Twentieth Report "A Review of the Country High School Hostels Authority" in the Legislative Council on September 21 1988.

A copy of this report is enclosed for your information, together with a corrected copy of the transcript of evidence given by you and members of your Board of Management to the Committee on May 10 1988.

Copies of the Report are being sent to all people who gave evidence to the Committee, including those of your fellow Board members with whom the Committee met.

The Committee would like to take this opportunity of thanking you and your Board for your contribution to this inquiry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "June McKinnon".

(Miss) J R McKinnon
Secretary to the Committee

Mr A H Parks
~~Mr A H Parks~~
~~Mr A H Parks~~