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## Retired Toowoomba teacher accused of sexual abuse

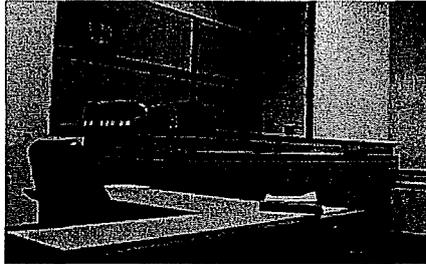
Peter Hardwick | 18th November 2008

MORE child rape charges have been laid against a retired Toowoomba primary school teacher who was arrested at the weekend.

Shocked staff and some parents were called to the school on Sunday to be told of the allegations.

Counsellors were provided for parents and children at the school yesterday.

Toowoomba Magistrates Court was told that the retired teacher, 59, is accused of molesting eight of his students during a period when he was the school's child protection officer.



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The man who appeared yesterday has been held in custody for his own safety and a suicide watch ordered.

The man, who cannot be named, was granted bail on Saturday morning after an initial complaint of sexual abuse against a 10-year-old girl was lodged with police on Friday.

During a brief court appearance on Saturday, he was not required to enter pleas to five counts of rape and one of indecent treatment of a child and was remanded on bail to front court again on December 1.

However, he was re-arrested on Sunday after further police investigations.

He appeared in court yesterday on a further seven counts of rape and 19 counts of indecent treatment of a child.

Objecting to the man's application for bail, prosecutor Sergeant Morrie Turner said there were now eight separate complainants in the case, all aged about nine or 10.

He said during the initial police interview with the man five other names of children had emerged and, when police investigated those matters, another two names had been given to police as well.

Of great concern to police was that the man had been doing relief teaching work at the school and, had he not been charged at the weekend, he could quite possibly have been at the school again this week, Sgt Turner said.

The allegations arose from reported incidents in a classroom situation during last year and this year, the court heard.

Sgt Turner said some of the children concerned had attempted to disguise themselves at school when the man returned there as they were afraid of him.

The allegations amount to a "serious breach of trust" for a man in his position.

Some incidents are claimed to have occurred in the classroom while other students were present, he said.

One allegation had the man molesting two children at his desk at the same time, he said.

Sgt Turner said police had concerns the man might re-offend if bailed and police also had concerns for the accused man's safety.

The man's solicitor, Nathan Bouchier, said there had been no specific threat against his client and, apart from the further charges, nothing had really changed since his client was granted bail on Saturday morning.

His client had no previous criminal history whatsoever and could live with a family member away from Toowoomba during the remand period if required, he said.

However, Magistrate Kay Ryan refused bail, citing the nature and seriousness of the charges and the strength of the case against the accused.

Ms Ryan said the man should also be remanded in custody for his own safety and ordered a suicide watch be kept on him while he was on remand.

