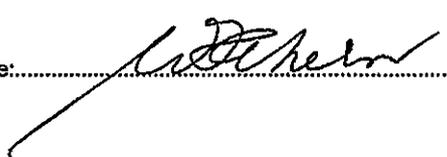


Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse  
**Case Study 6: Diocese of Toowoomba: Catholic Education Office**

**WITNESS STATEMENT**

Name	Bill Ahern
Address	
Occupation	School Principal
Date	20 February 2014

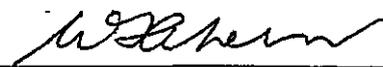
1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and recollection.
2. I was a principal in the Toowoomba Catholic Education Diocese from 1999 until the end of 2011.
3. My overriding memory of directions given to me in my role as principal was that there was a lot happening in the law relating to mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse. The message was clear that principals needed to address the matter, that reports were to be taken seriously and were not to be sidelined. Mandatory reporting was a central agenda item, it was common item in principals' meetings with Catholic Education representatives.
4. I have a clear recollection of being told on more than one occasion by Catholic Education representatives, directions to the effect that: the mandatory reporting law is in place, we have dealt with the mandatory reporting law in the manual, but any report is to be directly given or communicated to your next in line.
5. I understood that to mean that I was to take any report of possible sexual abuse to the Senior Education Officers, Chris Fry or Ian Hunter.
6. We were told that we had to make 100% disclosure and tell everything to the CEO, but that they were definitely to be the first port of call.
7. We were told that we were not to investigate complaints and were not to make judgements. We were not to run interviews with parents or kids or teachers (except as was necessary to receive the complaint of course). The first port of call was very definitely to be the Senior Education Officers, Mr Fry or Mr Hunter.
8. I believed we were told these things in the context that the SEOs would make sure we did the right thing. CEO appointed good people, including Ian Hunter and Chris Fry, to advise principals and the idea was that we ought to go to them for advise and that we could rely on the advice they give us.
9. I listened to the CEO and I knew I needed to do what they told me.

Signature:.....

Witness:.....

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse  
**Case Study 6: Diocese of Toowoomba: Catholic Education Office**

10. I recall attending meetings with Catholic Education Office representatives after the matter involving Gerard Byrnes became public knowledge. I clearly recall a meeting conducted by Ian Hunter around that time where we were told about a definite change of tactic of what we were to do. I remember being in at least one meeting, thinking to myself that from that time onwards, I intended to report any complaint I got whether from a parent, student or teacher, straight to police. This represented a very different approach to what we were previously directed by CEO to do.

Signature: 	Witness: 
Name: William Thomas Aherne	Name: Tom Kruger
Date: 20/2/2014	Date: 20/02/2014

Signature: 

Witness: 