Understanding the State Institutional Response Hearing

**What is this document about?**

This document is about the upcoming public hearing. The Royal Commission has done several public hearings. We do these so we can hear from and listen to people and places that have been affected by abuse and neglect in care.

This document will explain and answer:

* How this hearing is different from others
* What will be talked about
* Who will speak and ask questions
* Some key questions you might have.

**How is our next hearing different?**

Our next hearing is different because we won’t be hearing from survivor witnesses, state agencies will be our witnesses. State agencies are the organisations that help look after New Zealanders and are responsible for people in care.

The organisations include people like the Police, Corrections and the Ministry of Health.

**What sorts of things will be talked about?**

The state’s witnesses will talk about:

* What they have done to make things better for people in care now.
* How they learnt from and listened to other investigations by the Royal Commission.
* How complaints were listened to and handled.
* How people were looked after in care.
* How they followed te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).
* How the needs of different communities were met, including;
  + Māori and Tangata whaikaha Māori
  + Pacific people
  + Disabled and Deaf people
  + People experiencing mental distress
* The state witnesses may apologise for what happened to people in care.

**Will my story be told?**

The focus of this hearing is speaking to those people who were responsible for survivors while they were in care or speaking with organisations who are responsible for them now.

People’s individual experiences of abuse and neglect are not the focus of this hearing, so while examples of abuse will be part of the questions we ask the agencies, we will not be telling people’s individual stories and nobody will be named.

**Who will be there?**

The Crown and the Royal Commission’s counsel will be part of this hearing. Counsel are people who ask questions and keep witnesses on track so the hearing has the best outcome.

At this hearing, you will be hearing more from the Crown as they are responsible for the people speaking about state organisations. At the front of the hearing, the Crown is on the left and the Royal Commission’s counsel are on the right.

**What will the hearing be like?**

At this hearing the Royal Commission’s counsel will be asking state agencies questions and the person from the state agency will also have some time to speak.

It will go like this:

* **Witness speaks first:** the state’s witness will share a statement with the Royal Commission, during this time the witness will not be interrupted. They will be sharing their organisation’s view with the Royal Commission.
* **Then the Royal Commission asks questions:** the Royal Commission’s counsel will be able to ask the witness questions about what they said and about their organisation. The counsel asks questions of the witness to make sure that the Royal Commission is getting all the information they need. During the questions the counsel may interrupt the witness.

**Why can’t we see what they’re speaking about?**

The Royal Commission counsel will ask the witnesses about documents or pieces of evidence, but these documents and evidence won’t be shown on the screen to the public. This hearing has many more documents than previous hearings. Because of the large amount of documents and the sensitive personal information in these documents, they will not be shown publicly. Instead of showing the evidence on screen, the Royal Commission or Crown counsel will explain the evidence to the public.

**I can’t understand some of what is being said?**

The Royal Commission has worked hard to make sure that everyone can understand what is being said at this hearing, and to make sure there isn’t too much detail. At times, there may be some things that are said that are complicated, if you have a question about something that is said you can send an email to [contact@abuseincare.org.nz](mailto:contact@abuseincare.org.nz) or call us on 0800 222 727

Our website also has information <https://www.abuseincare.org.nz/>