Your guide to

Giving evidence at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

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

kelsolawyers.com
Take a leap of faith and act now

Now is the perfect time to tell your story. Never before have we had a Royal Commission to give your story so much power and to give you so much support.

By telling your story, you will be helping to protect future generations from the trauma and cruelty you have endured.

You will understand that you are not alone. Your story will reinforce evidence supplied by those abused by the same offender. Together, your voices will help to achieve justice and the punishment this offender deserves.

The institution responsible will be forced to face-up to the damage they've caused you. And if you fit the criteria, there is a good chance I can help you achieve a genuine payout and an apology that matters.

None of us can change what happened in the past, but we can do our best to make sure it doesn't weigh down our lives forever. Telling your story to the Royal Commission takes courage, but having a team supporting you makes it much easier.

I've committed my life to achieving justice for people like you, so if you'd like me to help, visit www.royalcommission.com.au/contact/ and fill out the short form or give my office a free call 1800 650 707.

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Meet Peter Kelso, a lawyer who grew up in state care
I was physically and emotionally abused as a child

I haven't always talked openly about growing up as a ward of the state. I kept it quiet for most of my life, because I was ashamed of it. But now, I think it's important to tell my clients what I went through. When they hear my story it makes them feel safer in telling theirs. They seem reassured to learn that although I'm a lawyer, I'm not from a privileged background. My childhood was one of beatings, anger, disapproval and loneliness. As a child, and for years of my adult life, I felt worthless, unloved and convinced I was a bad person.

I was adopted by a couple in Sydney who raised me as their only child. They physically and emotionally abused me. I know what it is like to be beaten so hard and for so long that it feels like it will never stop. The only reason my foster mother ever stopped was because she was so physically exhausted she couldn't carry on. I was beaten so badly I planned to kill my foster parents. I plotted carefully how I would murder them. I'm glad I never did. My foster parents abused me emotionally too. My foster mother said I was nothing but a creature and one day, if I was ever good enough, I could change my surname to hers. I believed I was bad and I'd done something terrible. I longed for the day I would be worthy of her name. I grew up thinking the abuse was my fault. When I left home at 22, I sat my foster parents down and apologised for ruining their lives.

Growing up in foster care made me feel like I was different to everyone else and that's something many of my clients can relate to. I felt I was weird or unusual. It was overwhelming and I longed for the day I would be the same as everyone else.

I specialise in representing victims of abuse

As a lawyer, I represent victims of abuse who are making claims against churches, religious organizations, charities, state governments and other institutions.

Most recently, I've been supporting people who were sexually abused as children and who are telling their stories to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. These courageous people are helping to make sure that reforms are put in place, so that the abuse of children, in an institutional context, never happens again.

I work on their behalf to achieve financial compensation, even if they have received payouts before.

This work has become my purpose in life. I am passionate about it. I know that when I take my last breath, I will have helped thousands of people to achieve what they needed, in order to start healing. There is a lot of personal joy and reward in that.
Why should I give evidence at the Royal Commission?
Reasons for giving evidence vary

People always have specific reasons for giving evidence at the Royal Commission and those reasons vary. At Kelso Lawyers, we get clear on what clients want from the process and then set out to achieve it.

Find out what really happened

For many clients, having a solicitor on their side gives them their first opportunity to get real answers out of witnesses from the church or state. We can make sure people in power are fully questioned. We can unearth the truth, even when it has been covered up for a long time.

Make the church listen and respond

Some people give evidence to highlight how they were treated by the church when they first disclosed the abuse. They are very upset they weren't taken seriously, or were accused of lying, and they may want the bishop or professional standards director for the church publically embarrassed at the Royal Commission. We will take care of that for them. We want the church to be fully exposed for what happened and for those in power to show their contrition in public. For too long, they did what they wanted because they thought no-one was watching. Some need to be put down on their knees. I don't mince my words about that. I am a Christian myself and it shocks me, what went on in the name of God.
Have abusers imprisoned

Many of my clients have told me that they would die in peace if their evidence at the Royal Commission led to their abuser being imprisoned. They want their abusers hunted down, charged and put in jail. If a criminal act has occurred, the Royal Commission will refer the matter to the relevant state police force for investigation. Giving evidence at the Commission may help to ensure justice is achieved.

Make the truth public

Often my clients have spent a lifetime living in fear that their story won't be believed. Sometimes they've never told anyone what they've been through. While telling their story can be traumatic, it often brings long-term relief to tell it in a safe environment to powerful people who are in a position to make a difference.

Receive an apology

Consistently, my clients want an apology for what they went through. Some want the apology in writing. Others want to hear it first hand, from someone senior in the church. Either way, they want a heartfelt apology that acknowledges the enormity of the abuse they suffered and how poorly it was dealt with.

Although his experience occurred 50 years ago, until he decided to talk to the Royal Commission, Frank had not been able to tell any of his family what had happened to him. He disclosed to his children only two weeks before coming to the Commission. He was only able to tell his wife of his childhood experiences the night before he came to talk with us.

- Kerry
Kelso’s client

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
Make children safer

Most people give evidence because they don’t want other children to experience what they went through. They see the Royal Commission as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to contribute to the important process of making sure institutions do not make the same mistakes again.

Help with healing

Experts agree that coming forward to talk about abuse experienced as a child can be healing. Typically, my clients find that telling their story in a supportive environment, where they are believed, has helped to set them free of a dark shadow that has sat over them – and often their family – for far too long.

I have met many abuse victims who have stopped praying to God and who are stuck in a place where they believe nothing good ever happens to them. If something good happens, they fear something bad will happen to even the score.

Living without hope is a very dark place to be. I believe in giving everyone hope and helping them achieve a breakthrough which gets people from the past out of their heads – people who have been intruding into their thoughts for far too long. Once hope starts rising in their hearts, they start to have faith that better things will come.

“The Commissioners’ hope is that, through our work, a process of healing will be initiated for many survivors and permanent change made to the way institutions are managed and respond to sexual abuse of children.”

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
What is the Royal Commission aiming to achieve?
The Royal Commission's role is to identify common, serious mistakes that Australian institutions have made in the past that have led to children in their care being sexually abused. It will make recommendations about how laws, policies and practices can be improved, to make sure institutions and governments do not fail children in the same way again.

The Commission will investigate how institutions can better protect children from sexual abuse and how abuse can be prevented. It will explore what can be done to encourage the reporting of abuse and how to ensure that all allegations are investigated appropriately.

It is not the Royal Commission's role to achieve compensation for individual victims, but it will make recommendations about how justice can be best achieved. I am confident this will include suggesting that victims receive appropriate financial compensation. I can help you with this next stage in the process, once the Royal Commission has heard your evidence.

What stories does the Royal Commission need?

The Royal Commission needs to hear from people who were sexually abused as children while in the care of private organisations, such as churches, or public organisations run by commonwealth, state or territory governments.

Those institutions might have been providing child-care, accommodation, education and training, or cultural or sporting opportunities. Abusers may have been teachers, scout leaders, priests, carers in a children's home or others in positions of power.

The Royal Commission is only investigating sexual abuse, not physical or emotional abuse. It is not investigating sexual abuse that occurred within families or outside of an institutional context.

"The allegations that have come to light recently about child sexual abuse have been heartbreaking. These are insidious, evil acts to which no child should be subject. I believe we must do everything we can to make sure that what has happened in the past is never allowed to happen again."

- Kerry Kelso's client

"The success of the work that we do is of course dependent upon people coming to us to share their story."

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
**So do I contact you, or the Royal Commission?**

You need to contact the Royal Commission as well as my office. The Royal Commission often has a long waiting list, so it is important to make sure they have your details on file.

It is also important to contact me. I’m working closely with the Royal Commission, so I know what institutions and individuals are in the spotlight at different times. If I can see that the timing is right to present evidence from your case, I will be able to act quickly. I might also be able to include your case in a class action, when I’m working for a group of people who have had similar experiences with the same institution. Getting our timing right can help put us in a more powerful position to negotiate appropriate compensation.

**How do I contact the Royal Commission?**

Register your interest in telling your story to the Royal Commission by:

- making a free call from 8am-8pm, Monday to Friday (AEST): 1800 099 340
- emailing registerinterest@childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au
- sending a letter to the Royal Commission at GPO Box 5283, Sydney NSW 2001

The Royal Commission will respond with an email or letter, confirming it has received your details.

**When should I contact the Royal Commission?**

The Royal Commission is going to run until at least December 2017, so there is no need to panic. But it is important to remember that it won’t run forever and now represents a golden opportunity to be heard and make a difference.

Now there is momentum and a culture of belief. The Royal Commission and the general public now believe, without any doubt, that there were offenders in institutions who were serial abusers of children. There is also support, counselling, government-funded legal representation and a good chance that your evidence will later help you to achieve appropriate compensation.

I’ve seen people who have struggled to give evidence receive a standing ovation at the Royal Commission. Watching their faces, as they’re cheered by those listening, has really reinforced in my mind that now is the best time we’ve ever had to come forward.
How do I contact you?

To find out whether you might be entitled to compensation, even if you've received compensation before, visit

www.royalcommission.com.au/contact

and fill out the short form which will come straight through to me.

You don't need to provide lots of detail. In a few words, tell me:

• whether you were sexually abused
• who abused you
• how old you were at the time
• when the abuse occurred
• where the abuse occurred

If you don't feel comfortable using the internet, you can call my office to answer these questions briefly over the phone (free call 1800 650 707).

If you complete the form online, you will receive an automated message to confirm we have received your details.

If I need to clarify anything with you, one of my experienced team members will be in touch. They won't ask in-depth questions about your experience. We just need to make sure we completely understand the details you have already provided.

If I think we can help you achieve compensation, one of my team will organise a phone conference, so that you can tell your story to me in more detail.

If I don't think your case is strong, I will let you know and try to suggest other ways you might achieve an apology, a recognition payment or counselling.

“When I got compensation and an unreserved written apology from the Marist Brothers, I started to smile again. I spent years haunted by the high school principal who abused me. I attempted suicide several times and always felt uncomfortable around people. But getting a settlement has helped me to achieve a life-changing breakthrough. My wife is overjoyed to see me making jokes and laughing again after so many years.”

Alex
Kelso’s client
I got to know Peter and his team really well when they took on my abuse case. I felt really comfortable with them. They were so happy for me when I got my payout and written apology. I still drop in and say hello to them all whenever I can.

Alex
Kelso’s client

Will it be hard to tell you my story?

I always ask my clients how they felt about the process of telling me their story. Typically, they say it was nowhere near as difficult as they expected. Often our clients feel better after talking with me.

I have spoken to many people who have been abused as children, so I understand a great deal about the disturbing things that paedophiles do. This helps me to ask appropriate questions, which will make it easier for you to tell your story. As someone who grew up as a ward of the state, physically and emotionally abused by the people entrusted to raise me, you can rest assured that I understand better than most. You can be confident that I’m not going to judge you, doubt you, or think less of you, regardless of what deviant behaviour occurred.

I will use what you tell me to support any later claims for compensation. This means that after you have finished with the Royal Commission, you may never have to tell your story again.

The NSW Victim’s Compensation Tribunal only awarded me $45,000 for the horrific abuse I endured. But Kelso’s managed to get me a payout of $245,000. It hasn’t solved all of my problems, but it is good to know Christian Brothers have finally taken responsibility for the crimes that were committed against me. It is helping me to overcome the guilt and shame I’ve carried for nearly 50 years.

Tom
Kelso’s client
The commission expects that all institutions that may have entered into confidential agreements with individuals will cooperate with the commission in relation to the disclosure of those matters.

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

What if I've signed a secrecy agreement?

You are legally allowed to talk to me and the Royal Commission about abuse you have experienced, even if you have signed a confidentiality agreement or deed of release in the past.

The Commission's far reaching powers override any requirement in these legal documents that you must say nothing about the abuse or any related payout you received.

I have represented people who have been pushed into signing these documents, even when they haven't properly understood them. For instance, one client whose abuse denied him an education was forced to sign a deed of release that he couldn't even read.

It is highly unlikely that one of these secrecy agreements will stop me from achieving more compensation for you. I will look at anything you've signed very closely and we can have a detailed chat about any concerns you may have.

What experience do you have, representing people at the Royal Commission?

I have presented the Royal Commission with some of their most significant witnesses.

Kelso's represented a client in December 2013 at the Royal Commission's public hearing into Towards Healing – the Catholic Church's controversial response to abuse complaints.

In February 2014, I represented four clients who were abused at the Parramatta Girls Training School in Sydney. Four months later, we represented two clients who were abused at Marist College in Canberra. We then went to Perth to represent a client who was assaulted by one of the Christian Brothers.

My firm is based in Newcastle and Sydney, but my staff and I represent people right across Australia. There is no other law firm in Australia with the same specialised focus on representing clients who were abused as children.

If you have previously settled a claim against the state on terms that include obligations of confidentiality, you can still tell your story to the Royal Commission. The state will waive its reliance on any such obligations for the purpose of the Royal Commission.

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
What compensation have you won for your clients?
Clients have won significant payouts

The average award we have achieved for clients is $228,403. The highest award we have achieved is $500,000 from the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

Awards are getting steadily higher as time goes by and more institutions appear before the Royal Commission.

If your experience falls within the Royal Commission’s terms of reference, there is a good chance I will be able to achieve a compensation payout for you. However, the process of achieving compensation has nothing to do with the Royal Commission. It requires separate legal proceedings, but your case is likely to be strengthened by the Royal Commission’s findings.

I used my compensation to pay off my children’s debts and to buy my daughter a new car. I also took my wife away for a holiday at a resort. We’ve never had a holiday like that before.

Alex
Kelso’s client
How much of the award will I get to keep?

Some clients have already received a taxpayer-funded payment from a government department to acknowledge the trauma they have suffered. If they later achieve compensation from an institution that is held liable for their abuse, they then have to pay the government money back. For example, our client who was awarded $500,000 had to repay the $60,000 recognition payment she had previously received from Victims Services. She paid me $30,000 (plus GST) and another $2000 to a barrister. She kept the rest and was very happy with the result.

What if I have received a payout before?

Payments that are taxpayer funded will need to be repaid, but these payments are generally far less than what victims are now being awarded. These payments have typically been made by State Governments as an acknowledgement of what you experienced, rather than as compensation. If you’ve received a payment from the institution where the abuse occurred, you will be able to keep that money, regardless of what new compensation is awarded. It also doesn’t matter how long ago the abuse occurred. Laws that limit the period after an event when legal action can occur do not apply to cases being heard by the Royal Commission.

What do you charge?

The Commonwealth Government pays me to represent clients who are called to be public witnesses at the Royal Commission, so this process doesn’t cost my clients a thing. The government pays for all of the time that Kelso’s lawyers spend working on clients’ statements, and our other expenses like travel and accommodation.

However, I do charge clients for the work I do outside of the Royal Commission in order to achieve compensation payments for them. I do this work on a no-win, no-fee basis. You will only pay me when you receive compensation, and I charge on a sliding scale, so that clients who receive large awards pay more in costs than those who receive small payouts. I have never had any client complain about my fees.

Traditionally, lawyers charge on a time basis, which means clients pay for every minute they are travelling, on the phone or reading a letter. I don’t like this approach, as it means clients who receive relatively small payouts risk having their award swallowed up by their lawyer’s fees. I have carefully structured my fees to make sure I never receive a greater proportion of a payout than my client does.

The other thing I don’t like about lawyers charging on a time basis is that there is also no incentive for them to complete the case quickly. I know that digging up the past can leave my clients feeling really disturbed. Their wellbeing is important to me, so once I take a case on, I aim to achieve an apology and a lump sum payment in the shortest possible time.
Many lawyers tend to cherry-pick cases that are likely to achieve big payouts, but I do not want to turn away anyone who was abused as a child.

I also want to make sure that every case – including small claims – receives as much time and attention as it needs.

I ask all of my clients to sign a costs agreement, so everyone is clear on my fees before we start work. As soon as that is done, I can start working on your claim, giving you the best possible chance to take action against your abuser and their institution.

**Who will represent me if you take my case on?**

I speak to every one of Kelso’s clients, taking time to hear their stories first hand. I represent many clients myself, but I can’t represent them all. I have a team of experienced solicitors working at the firm and I have great faith in each of them. They have watched how I operate. They are sensitive to clients’ emotional needs, they are respectful and they know how to achieve justice.

**I don’t have a lot of money. What will it cost if the Royal Commission wants me to attend?**

The Royal Commission does a good job of looking after witnesses who are required to attend its public hearings. It understands that people can’t necessarily afford to pay for accommodation or fly to capital cities to give evidence, so it will cover these expenses for you. You will also receive taxi vouchers and a generous meal allowance, so attending the Royal Commission shouldn’t leave you out of pocket.

You will be allocated a witness support officer, who will look after all of your travel arrangements. They will be in touch to book your flights and organise somewhere for you to stay. If you have any problems, they are on hand to help you.

The Royal Commission also offers financial assistance to people giving evidence at private sessions.

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*"I got my financial settlement from the Catholic Church within seven days of it being negotiated. I used it to pay off my mortgage and go on an overseas holiday with my son."*

Kerry
Kelso’s client
5 How do I tell my story to the Royal Commission?
We will write up your story, which may accelerate your case

When you come on board as our client, we will take whatever time it takes to hear your story. In some cases, that can take many hours, but we are happy to spend that time with you. The information you provide will allow us to write your story up in a professional, logical and powerful way. You will have the opportunity to review and adjust what is written. Once you are happy that it is a true and accurate statement, we will send it to the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission often has a long waiting list, but having a clear statement ready means you are likely to have your case heard more quickly.

You get to talk to a commissioner in private

The Royal Commission has been set up to ensure people can tell their stories to a commissioner, without the trauma of being cross examined. While you can just give a written statement, I encourage my clients to have a private session with a commissioner. It only takes about an hour and it is very low key and relaxed. I tell my clients that it’s a bit like having a fireside chat.

You don’t need legal representation at a private session, but you can bring along a support person. No one from the government or church is allowed in the room and media are not able to attend.

The session is confidential. What you say will be recorded and typed up, so that the Royal Commission can refer to it later if they need to. However, the commission can give your information to a law enforcement body, without your permission, if it is concerned that someone is at risk.

“Some comments which are typical of people’s responses when asked by counsellors about their experience in a private session include “I felt immense relief” and “I felt empowered and glad that I attended”.

One attendee described the process as “fantastic” and that she felt “important” and “heard”. Another said the process was “surprisingly worthwhile”, and was “ecstatic” to be finally heard. A common response has been that if this process “would prevent this happening to one child then it would all be worth it”. Another person said “I was relieved, empowered, pleased”. One person said: “It was the best stressful experience I’ve ever had.”

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
You’ll have access to a counsellor

After the private session, you will have access to counselling support. The counsellor will also give you a follow up call, once you’re home, to check how you’re going.

Where are private sessions held?

Private sessions are held regularly in all Australian capital cities and many regional areas. The commission doesn’t advertise the specific time and place where private sessions are heard because it wants to protect your privacy. The Commission will send you a letter, explaining where and when your session will be held.

What happens to information I provide?

Any information you give to the Royal Commission in a private session is confidential. If the Commission needs to use it in one of its reports, it will keep your identity concealed. If it wants to use information you’ve provided in a public hearing, it will ask you for permission first.

Your information is entered onto the Royal Commission’s database, which is used to determine suitable witnesses for public hearings.

So the Commission might want to hear from me again?

If your evidence has potential to impact on the Commission’s findings, it will ask whether you will participate in a formal hearing. This could be a formal private hearing or a public hearing. Either way, if you agree to do this, you will need to swear that you have told the truth and the person or institution responsible for the abuse will have the chance to ask you questions.

Could police get involved?

In cases where a criminal offence has occurred, the Royal Commission will pass information on to the relevant state police force. You may not be informed of this, but you will be contacted later by the police.

If a criminal case is launched against an abuser, you may be required to give evidence. This criminal investigation would be totally separate to the Royal Commission. The organisation doesn't have the power to make decisions on criminal matters.

"We have in place professional counsellors to assist people who come to a session. Recognising that many people will experience a decline in mood following their session we are careful to follow people up to ensure they have adequate support available.

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse"
Could I end up giving evidence at a public hearing?

You don't have to give evidence at a public hearing if you don't want to, but many of my clients are keen to go public. We strongly encourage any of our clients to give evidence in person. In my experience, the most powerful and effective way to achieve justice is by delivering your evidence in person before the Commission.

If I can see value in your story being heard at a public hearing, and you are keen to appear as a public witness, then I will make an application for you to appear.

The Royal Commission can also summons people to give evidence, including victims, alleged abusers and representatives from institutions.

Appearing at a public hearing is a bit like appearing in court. Public hearings are formal legal proceedings, so there are legal teams, a judge and a witness box which is where you will give your evidence.

You’ll have a dedicated support officer

The Royal Commissioner will also allocate you a witness support officer, who will be in touch with you before the hearing to answer any questions you might have. They will also sit with you during the hearing to explain what is going on and what you’re required to do. They will be available to support you after the hearing, to answer your questions and organise any counselling you may need.

Many people, including those who suffered abuse 30 or 40 years ago, break down in the course of telling their story and require the assistance of support persons to be able to continue. The recounting of those stories is often traumatic for the persons telling the story.

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

You’ll have a barrister

I will hand pick a barrister to represent you at the public hearing and you will get to meet them before they present your evidence. I will brief the barrister, so they have a thorough understanding of your story. This will help them to ask you the right questions, so it is easier for you to tell the most important details of what happened. It means you don't need to worry about forgetting anything important. You just need to provide honest answers to the questions you are asked.

I will be there too

Together, your barrister and I will ensure your testimony conveys the true gravity of the abuse you experienced. That will help to strengthen the chance of you receiving an apology and compensation after the Royal Commission.
Will I be cross examined at a public hearing and what is that like?

The Royal Commission uses evidence presented at public hearings to inform its recommendations. To make sure this is a fair process, the Commission needs to hear both sides of every story, which means any institutions or individuals that are accused of wrong-doing will get to have their say. This means that you are likely to be cross examined by their lawyers.

Most people feel anxious about being cross examined, which is understandable, but rest assured, you won’t be cross examined by your abuser. You just need to answer the questions you are asked honestly, and your barrister and I will be on hand to make sure that the questions you are asked are reasonable.

Remember that we will also have the opportunity to cross examine your abuser and representatives from the institution where you were abused. We will understand exactly what you want to achieve from having your case heard at the Royal Commission, so this will influence the questions that we ask. For many clients, this process has shone light on unanswered questions that have been troubling them for years.

Who can go to a public hearing?

Anyone can attend the public hearing. It is also streamed live on the Royal Commission's website, so people who aren't in the room can see it too.

Journalists go to public hearings. What if they want to talk to me?

While journalists are not allowed at private sessions, they do go to public hearings and report on what happens there. This is a good thing, because it helps to build the general public’s understanding of how commonly child sexual abuse occurs in institutions. The media puts the spotlight on the long-term damage it causes. This widespread publicity helps to put pressure on governments to make sure the Royal Commission’s recommendations are adopted. It gives the Royal Commission more teeth.

“Nearly all of the leaders of the different religious bodies and other institutions we have looked at in public hearings have sat in the body of the hearing room throughout the evidence of the victims. While this must have been distressing, I have no doubt that their presence has helped them to gain an understanding of the survivors’ experience. For many who have suffered, it offers continuing affirmation of any apology they have been given.”

Justice Peter McClellan AM
Chair, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
If a journalist wants to interview one of my clients, the journalist deals with me first.

My clients appreciate that I act as a buffer for them, so they don’t feel pressured or vulnerable. My clients feel safe, because they know I have their best interests at heart, whether they want to talk or not. I negotiate with journalists about what my client wants to say and whether they are happy to be interviewed and photographed. If you’re happy to be interviewed, I help you work out what to say, so that the interview helps to put pressure on abuse perpetrators.

I have never had a client who has not been presented favourably in the media. They have felt completely validated by stories about their experiences.

How do people feel after presenting their story to the Royal Commission?

They often end up on an emotional roller coaster which has big highs and lows. In the lead up, they often run on nervous energy, because giving evidence is obviously a major deal. Straight after giving evidence, they are usually on a huge high and feel incredibly relieved. They feel euphoric, realising that they’ve just done something amazing for their country and knowing that their experiences have finally been properly acknowledged. They might be buzzing with excitement, having received a standing ovation from the public gallery, from people who are inspired by their courage and who can relate to what they’ve been through.

After that initial excitement, some people are left feeling emotionally drained. It’s not unusual to feel blank and exhausted. Often you need time to process the confronting and traumatic memories.

“Even journalists at the Royal Commission commended me for my dignity, acknowledging the strength it must have taken to stand tall and speak the truth.”

Jennifer Ingham
Kelso’s client

“I found the weeks after the public hearing draining. I kept to myself. I simply did not want to see anyone. I realised I just needed to ride out the sadness, the exhaustion, the anger, the relief and the ‘I’m so glad I did it’ emotions.”

Jennifer Ingham
Kelso’s client
Take a leap of faith and act now

Now is the perfect time to tell your story. Never before have we had a Royal Commission to give your story so much power and to give you so much support.

By telling your story, you will be helping to protect future generations from the trauma and cruelty you have endured.

You will understand that you are not alone. Your story will reinforce evidence supplied by those abused by the same offender. Together, your voices will help to achieve justice and the punishment this offender deserves.

The institution responsible will be forced to face-up to the damage they’ve caused you. And if you fit the criteria, there is a good chance I can help you achieve a genuine payout and an apology that matters.

None of us can change what happened in the past, but we can do our best to make sure it doesn’t weigh down our lives forever. Telling your story to the Royal Commission takes courage, but having a team supporting you makes it much easier.

I’ve committed my life to achieving justice for people like you, so if you’d like me to help, visit www.royalcommission.com.au/contact/ and fill out the short form or give my office a free call 1800 650 707.

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