



Abuse still haunts man

BY HAMISH HASTIE

Men who attended the Christian Brothers run Castledare boys school in Wilson have told of abuse of all forms including children being groomed as 'sex pets' and slave labour that littered the school's 54-year history.

Harrowing stories from men who attended Castledare during its operation from 1929 to 1983 were heard at the royal commission into institutional child abuse, which visited Perth earlier this month.

One of the most shocking tales was from a man known only as witness VI who spent four years at Castledare from 1964 to 1968.

The man, who was seven when he started at Castledare, spoke of his shame of being groomed and molested by one of the school's brothers, Brother Dick.

"I was there for four years and it was an on going part of my life, it seemed like it was almost every night."

The witness said he felt so guilty and ashamed of his abuse he tried to hide it.

"As the other boys knew that I was Brother Dick's 'pet', they did not include me in their games," he said.

"I always tried to isolate myself to reduce the risk of them finding out about the sexual abuse.

"I tried to be as invisible as I could.

"At Castledare I never felt safe, as there was always the threat of Brother Dick."

He also told of the child slave labour used to build the famous Castledare miniature railway at the site.

"I recall that the most arduous project I participated in was the construction of a railway which carried trains around Castledare on open day," he said.

"The irony of that was all the kids built this train and every Sunday, all the parents - not of the kids, but of Perth - would come out and enjoy this fantastic railway we had built.

"None of them really realised who had built it, it was kids from seven to 12, every day, day in, day out.

"If anyone knew how it got built I'm sure they would never have used it. It wasn't just ignorance by us, but ignorance by the whole of Perth."

Care leavers Australia network chief executive Leonie Sheedy hoped the stories about Castledare and other institutions would help hold them to ac-

count.

"They were given taxpayers dollars to look after these children and they need to be accountable," she said.

"We need to expose the dark past of the Christian Brothers organisation and the crimes against the boys who had no one to turn to."

Member for Swan Steve Irons who was a part of a group of MPs who called for the commission hoped the royal commission had some positive outcomes for the people who went through horrific experiences.

"They're reliving these horrific experiences and I know how hard it is for them to do that and that is why I'm hoping the commission will make some good recommendations to help them."

Mr Irons called for a memorial to be installed at the Castledare miniature railway site to recognise the children abused at the school.



Member for Swan Steve Irons called for a memorial to be installed at the Castledare site to recognise its dark past after harrowing tales of abuse were told at the royal commission this month. Photograph – Matt Devlin.