

News Release

Deputy Premier John Rau
Attorney General

Minister Grace Portolesi
Minister for Education and Child Development of



Government
of South Australia

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Debelle inquiry to receive Royal Commission powers

The inquiry into events surrounding a sexual assault of a child at a western suburbs school will now have the powers of a Royal Commission.

The inquiry was announced on 31 October and is being conducted by former Supreme Court Justice Mr Bruce Debelle AO, QC.

Attorney General John Rau said Mr Debelle had written to him requesting he be given powers under the *Royal Commissions Act 1917* in order to complete his investigation effectively.

“Today, the Governor approved a recommendation to give Mr Debelle the powers of a Royal Commissioner to complete this matter,” Mr Rau said.

“The Terms of Reference for the investigation will not change, neither will the timing or the scope.

“What will change will be the powers available to Mr Debelle.

“The investigation has so far proceeded well, all public servants have cooperated fully, but these new powers will assist in interviewing witnesses outside the public service.”

As Mr Debelle has the powers of a Royal Commissioner a witness will have the same protection and immunity as a witness has in proceedings before the Supreme Court.

It will also mean that anyone asked to give evidence, including those who are not members of the public service, will be compelled to do so.

Minister for Education and Child Development Grace Portolesi said it is imperative that this inquiry have the capacity to find out what occurred in this case.

“Mr Debelle has been asked to undertake some very important work and it is vital he feels he has the tools at his disposal to do this job thoroughly,” she said.

“The inquiry is underway and it is important to let Mr Debelle complete his work without any of us speculating on the outcomes.

“Once the inquiry is completed the report will be made public and will be tabled in Parliament.”

Mr Debelle is due to complete his report early in 2013.