

ק"ק בית אברהם
ELWOOD TALMUD TORAH CONGREGATION
INCORPORATING THE ERDI FAMILY CENTRE

בס"ד

February 20, 2015 | 1 Adar, 5775

The Royal Commission hearings have dominated the concern and conscience of many in our Jewish Community over the past few weeks. With its conclusion Elwood Shule can now comment on its own role in the proceedings.

Our Rabbi Gutnick presented evidence to the Commission both in his capacity as President of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria and as Rabbi of Elwood Shule. Neither organisation was actually implicated in the proceedings but questions were asked of Rabbi Gutnick regarding a number of related issues. Rabbi Gutnick's evidence and general comments were well received and did not attract any criticism and appeared to be appreciated by the Commissioners.

Elwood Shule became a topic of discussion due to the fact that one of the convicted paedophiles mentioned in the cases raised had been a long standing member of our Shule and had even a member of our Board of Management. The Commission queried the circumstances of his involvement in our Shule and accepted without criticism the fact that our congregation was completely unaware of any allegations against this individual until police investigations became public knowledge. Following this the individual concerned was asked to stand down from the Board of management and after he was actually committed to trial was asked to leave our Shule to attend services elsewhere. At no time were there any allegations of Elwood Shule having acted outside of its legal obligations in the circumstances.

We welcome the, albeit much belated, acceptance of responsibility by those in the communal institutions that were implicated in the Commissions enquiry and believe that important lessons were learnt by all of us. We were particularly shocked and immensely saddened by revelations of the suffering experienced by victims and their families and unequivocally endorse and join in the many apologies extended to them over the past few weeks. As mentioned in Rabbi Shmuel's statement to our community issued two weeks ago we pledge to encourage victims to go directly to the Police; to fully support anyone who chooses to disclose to us any sort of abuse; and to do our utmost to keep our children safe.

Members should be aware that we are currently upgrading our procedures, in conjunction with the initiative instigated by the RCV and the Australian Childhood Foundation assisting all Melbourne Shules, to ensure that we have in place the most effective and up-to-date methods of ensuring the safety of the children attending our Shule and premises – they deserve no less.

Mr. Mark Kuran (President), Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick and Rabbi Shmuel Karnowsky

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