

Commission told senior rabbis knew of abuse



AS they took to the stand to recount the ordeals they suffered at the hands of their abusers and the bullying they

subsequently experienced, victims broke down in tears as they explained the impact that the abuse and the community's reaction have had on their lives.

From drug addiction to thoughts of suicide, they recalled the pain and hurt they felt when those who had abused them were allowed to get away with their crimes by religious leaders, and when they were targeted by those in authority and former acquaintances after eventually going to the police.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse at Yeshivah in Melbourne and Yeshiva in Sydney began on Monday and is scheduled to last until the end of next week.

As well as hearing from the victims themselves, the impact on their families has also been highlighted. The wife of one victim recalled her daughter's anguish over community members shunning her bat mitzvah party.

"As a spouse of a victim and whistleblower, I feel hated and isolated ... I have lost faith in the leadership of the Jewish community," she said.

Among the revelations that emerged during the hearings were that authorities at Yeshivah were made aware of convicted child abuser and rapist David Cyprys's abuse of students as early as 1984, and that he still had a key to the mikvah, where he had abused youngsters, as recently as 2007.

It was also revealed that convicted abuser David Kramer had admitted abusing children to Dr Ramon Lewis, who was helping Yeshivah with professional staff development, in 1992. According to Dr Lewis, Kramer claimed the students had initiated the physical conduct and wanted it, and he had reported back what he learnt to Yeshivah authorities.

It was further claimed at the hearings that then-principal Rabbi Avrohom Glick, who still holds a senior position at the Yeshivah Centre, was among those aware of Kramer's conduct.

Kramer was subsequently spirited away to Israel.

Meanwhile, a victim of convicted abuser Daniel "Gug" Hayman from Sydney stated that Hayman had told him Yeshiva's spiritual leader, Rabbi Pinchas Feldman, was aware he was behaving inappropriately with at least one student.

Among those still due to give evidence are Yeshivah's Rabbi Glick, Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Telsner, Nechama Bendet and Don Wolf, and Yeshiva Sydney's Rabbi Pinchas Feldman and Rabbi Yossi Feldman.

Full coverage in this week's *AJN*.

JOSHUA LEVI

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