



Narratives frequently asked questions

For de-identification reasons the narratives DO NOT include the names and addresses of specific institutions.

However most of the narratives DO include the names of the organisations who were in charge of particular institutions and also include the state or territory where the institution was located.

What is a narrative?

A short, de-identified written account of what a person said during their private session with the Royal Commission. 'De-identified' means that all the real names have been changed and some details have been left out to protect the person's identity.

Why publish these narratives?

To give a voice to survivors and to inform the community about child sexual abuse in institutions.

Are real names used in the narratives?

No. The Royal Commission was required by law to remove real names from the narratives. We replaced all real names with made up names ('pseudonyms'), except for the names of public figures mentioned in a public context. For example a narrative might say, 'Anna and her brother Michael saw Julia Gillard on television'. Here 'Anna' and 'Michael' are pseudonyms but 'Julia Gillard' is a real name.

How were the pseudonyms for the narratives chosen?

The narrative writers chose pseudonyms that were appropriate to the person's age and background. Every narrative has a unique pseudonym. There weren't enough appropriate pseudonyms to give every person a single unique pseudonym, so some pseudonyms are made up of two names (a first and middle name), like 'Jane Kate' and 'John Michael'.

How many narratives were written?

About 4,000. That's about half of all the private sessions that the Royal Commission conducted.

Why weren't all the private sessions written as narratives?

We tried to represent faithfully as many survivors' accounts as we could, however the Royal Commission conducted so many private sessions that it was impossible to write every one as a narrative. Also, some sessions could not be written because people did not consent, or their stories were impossible to de-identify.

How did you choose which private sessions to write as narratives?

Of the stories that could be written, we chose the ones that would match the proportions that we saw across the whole of the private sessions, in terms of the institutions mentioned. For instance, across the whole of the private sessions there were many accounts about schools but few about childcare institutions, so we wrote many narratives about schools and few about childcare institutions.

Whether they were written as narratives or not, every account given in a private session informed the Royal Commission's work.

Why are the narratives labelled 'Pre-1990' and 'Post-1990'?

1990 marks a point of change to Australia's residential care institutions. By 1990 most of the old residential care institutions had been closed and replaced with 'contemporary' models of home-based and family-oriented care.

Are the narratives a true record of what people said?

The narratives are shortened versions of what people told us in private sessions. We quoted their words exactly and the only things we changed were people's names.

Narratives search tips

To use the word search, click on the magnifying glass icon at the top of the Narratives homepage, type a word into the box and then click on the magnifying glass icon inside the box or press enter.

The word search:

- DOES search the entire Royal Commission website, not just the narratives
- DOES search for any word that is three or more letters long
- IS NOT case sensitive
- DOES NOT search for phrases
- DOES NOT search for parts of words
- DOES NOT use Boolean Operators

Tips for using the word search

- Add the word **story** to the front of your search. For example, instead of searching for **Sharon** or **sport**, search for **story Sharon** or **story sport**. This way you can guide the search engine to look only for narratives and not for other kinds of material.
- Be accurate with spelling. Some of the pseudonyms have similar spellings. For example 'Megan' and 'Meghan' or 'Gary' and 'Garry'. If you're searching for a pseudonym, make sure it's the right one.

How do I find my narrative?

If you attended a private session, and gave consent for your account to be written, there is a chance that your narrative is on this site. Because of de-identification restrictions we cannot say whether your narrative was written. If it was written, we cannot say which one it is.

However, if it was written, you might be able to find the narrative yourself using the narratives search function or the 'magnifying glass' word search function on this site. This may take some time as you may have to read through many stories before you find your own.

How can I find narratives about a particular institution?

To find narratives about a particular place where abuse happened you can use the narratives search or the word search.

Institution Categories

There are 10 institution categories:

- **Armed Forces:** includes the Army, Navy and Air Force and associated cadet and training programs.
- **Childcare:** includes daycare centres and home-based childcare.
- **Foster, kinship and relative care:** includes arrangements that involve an institution outside the family, such as a government department; excludes arrangements made exclusively within the family.
- **Healthcare:** includes hospitals and healthcare practitioners.
- **Religious:** includes churches and religious personnel such as priests. For religious schools see 'School'; for religious children's homes see 'Residential care'.
- **Residential care:** includes non-government and government children's homes, orphanages and missions.
- **School:** includes primary schools and high schools. For universities and apprenticeships see 'Other'; for armed forces cadets see 'Armed Forces'.
- **Sport and recreation:** includes clubs, sports teams, hobby groups, dance classes and scouts.
- **Youth detention:** includes jails and other justice facilities.
- **Other institution type:** covers anything that doesn't fit into the other categories, including employment, apprenticeships, non-residential centres, youth refuges, university, and abuse by a member of the police force where the victim was not in custody.