

INQUIRY INTO THE HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE BY RELIGIOUS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

GROUP SUBMISSION

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INTRODUCTION

The content of this submission has been compiled from the stories of 12 victims. The information has not been separated out and attached to any one particular victim. Rather, it has been consolidated so as to create one generic document.

The remaining 32 victims (signatories) who, due to the severe trauma, were unable to speak about their experiences and/or unable to put together a submission of their own, have either given their support or added their names to this submission as they fully support its content which also reflects their experiences.

The men who did speak about their experiences and contribute to this group submission, have endured subsequent stress and trauma.

They would like the Committee to know this and to appreciate the strength and energy it takes to put together a submission for this Inquiry.

The fact that there is an Inquiry into the crimes and cover-up of the Catholic Church means an enormous amount to these men and their families.

A lot hangs on the outcomes of this Inquiry.

This submission includes lists of the types of physical and sexual assaults and crimes that were committed, the names of the perpetrators and the impacts of these crimes on the victims and their families.

The submission also addresses the questions from the Committee's Submission Guide 10.1–10.6.

There is also a section on the victims' experiences with the Towards Healing Process.

The intended use of the term 'victim' is that it includes the term 'survivor'.

SCHOOLS ATTENDED

The content of this submission includes experiences of victims who attended the following schools:

- St Alipius Primary Catholic School, Ballarat
- St Patrick's Catholic Secondary College, Ballarat
- St Paul's Technical College, Ballarat
- Christian Brothers College, Warrnambool
- St Thomas Moore College, Forrest Hill
- St Joseph's Boys Home, Surry Hills
- St Joseph's Technical College, Abbotsford
- St Joseph's Orphanage, Ballarat

Dates during which the physical and sex offences were committed: 1965–1983

PHYSICAL ASSAULTS

The victims also reported physical assaults by Christian Brothers, priests and the nuns.

The age range of the children when they were physically assaulted: between 5 and 16 years.

The physical assaults included:

- Bashing with closed fists
- Bashing with hard objects, including a wheel brace
- Punching with closed fists to many parts of the body, but the head, the neck and the buttocks in particular
- Kicking with heavy shoes and boots to all parts of the body
- Being picked by the ears and being moved around in this way
- Choking
- Putting the head in the toilet and forcing the child to stay there until the toilet finished flushing
- Being hit on the head, face and other parts of the body with a ball-peen hammer (one victim had his facial bones fractured in this way)
- Whipping with a cat-o'-nine-tails across the buttocks, back, legs and arms and hands
- Whipping with a 'fan belt' to all parts of the body
- Whipping with a 'Gat' – a thick, wide piece of rubber
- Beaten across the bare knuckles with the side of either a metal or timber ruler, often until there was bleeding
- Many of the assaults caused, bleeding, bruises, welts, and severe pain
- Some boys were locked up in a very small storage room/cupboard
- One victim was put into a mental asylum for two weeks because he tried to tell people about clergy sex crimes and would try and fight off the offender

- Victims were forced to watch other boys getting beaten and bashed
- Some victims had their life threatened
- One victim was strapped regularly on the buttocks, and he never knew why this was happening
- Bashing by the nuns in primary school and washing out of the mouth
- Beating with a cane walking stick until the Christian Brother had no strength left in his arms
- Same Christian Brother walked around the class room with his walking stick and the boys never knew when and if he was going to hit them
- Strapping purposefully above the hand in order to make the wrist swollen
- Whacking the buttocks with a "T" Square which had screws protruding from it
- Physically and then sexually assaulted after the victim pushed the Christian Brother's hand away from his genitals
- Some boys were violently thrown up against a brick wall
- Some boys were thrown through doors

Victims described much this treatment as torture.

Victims reported that if they were physically bashed and assaulted, and not sexually assaulted, there was a sense of relief, as the fear of the sexual assault, which often followed the physical assaults, was so great. They described themselves as being 'frozen with fear'.

SEXUAL ASSAULTS AND RAPES

The age range of the children when these sexual assaults and rapes occurred: between 5-14 years.

Those allegedly responsible for the sexual assaults and rapes were:

- Father Ridsdale
- Brother Best
- Brother Dowlan
- Brother Farrell

The sexual assaults included:

- Penile oral rape of the child
- Penile anal rape of the child
- Digital anal rape of the child
- Forced masturbation by the child of the offender
- Masturbation of the child by the offender
- Fondling of genitalia both through and under clothing

OTHER TYPES OF ABUSE

- Mental and emotional abuse
- False accusations leading to detentions
- Threatened expulsion
- Giving of alcohol to the child followed by sexual abuse
- Threats to kill the child unless they 'kept their mouth shut'
- Constantly being told that:
'You are never going to amount to anything'
'You are evil'
'You are hopeless'
'This is all your fault'

IMPACTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL CRIMES

1. GENERAL / HEALTH

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Suicide (of fellow students and family members)
- Attempted suicide
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicidal tendencies
- Aggression
- Anger
- Violent tendencies
- Feeling of being 'out of control'
- Problems with authority figures
- Feelings of isolation
- Sexual dysfunction
- Sexual promiscuity with multiple stressful consequences
- Negative impacts on own sexuality
- Inappropriate sexual relationships
- Confused sexuality, eg. charged with indecent exposure at age 12 or 13 years
- Addiction to pornography (especially as growing up)
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of self esteem
- Fear
- Problems with socialising
- Shyness
- Fear of damnation or going to hell
- Difficulty with dental hygiene
- Bed-wetting for many years after the assaults
- Severe stuttering – developed after the assaults
- Self-harm, eg. burning self with cigarette butts
- A feeling of not fitting in anywhere
- Feeling of tremendous guilt
- The abuse dictates adult lives
- Lack of trust
- Insomnia/lack of sleep
- Constant intrusive memories of the abuse throughout life

2. FAMILY

- Difficulties in forming relationships
- Inability to form relationships
- Difficulties in maintaining relationships
- Lack of trust
- Feelings of isolation
- Family rejection
- Inability to show affection (marked impact on children and partner)
- Feelings of guilt, eg. if child sits on victim's knee
- Inability to touch or show affection to children
- Emotionally vulnerable
- Feeling emotionally 'dead'
- Emotionally dysfunctional
- Family breakdowns (families of origin and own subsequent families)
- Constant reminders of the assaults especially when victims have their own children and/or are around nieces and nephews or children of friends
- Hate and other negative feelings towards parents for not being protected
- One victim's parents, now in their eighties, are very Christian and come from very Christian families and lived a very religious life. They were very disappointed that the faith and trust they had in the Catholic Church was broken. The whole of this person's family supports this cause being pursued and are glad that more is being done to expose their exploits.

3. OTHER IMPACTS

- Problems with alcohol
- Problems with drugs
- In trouble with the police
- Severe alcohol abuse from a young age
- Charged with being drunk and disorderly 20 times before turning 18 years
- Living big lies in life
- Constant fear – toilet doors were removed

4. EDUCATION

- Inability to learn at school due to fear.
- Tendency to try and over-achieve to compensate for the crimes.
- Distrust of authority, eg. inability to believe the teacher because they were in a position of authority.
- Many victims worked even harder with home work to prevent being 'punished' (sexually assaulted or raped) – this, in turn, attracted bullying from some fellow students (the victims were in a double bind).
- Development of literacy problems due to early inability to concentrate and study.
- All victims felt that they could never 'better themselves'.
- One victim is one of seven children, three of whom were sexually raped and/or assaulted. These three victims were unable to continue on to tertiary education. The remaining four children all did well at a tertiary level.
- Many missed opportunities with furthering their education.
- Life-long effects from being told 'you are worthless' and 'you will never come to anything'.
- Avoidance of sport and anything that involved having to change clothes.

5. CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Inability to work for someone else as they were an authority figure.
- The majority of the victims have only been able to work for themselves.
- Some cannot work at all.
- One victim was a 'workaholic', working from 5am to 1am or 2am, to try and block out the trauma.
- One victim would end up belting his bosses.
- Quite a few of the victims had very successful businesses and worked very very hard. All of these businesses ended up 'crashing' when the men's traumatic pasts 'caught up with them'. Many are unable to work to this day.
- All experienced a terrible loss of confidence in their work lives.
- A feeling of being worthless because of the inability to work.

REPORTING THE ABUSE

This section answers the Submission Guide Questions 10.1 – 10.6

10.1

Could the victim tell anyone about the abuse?

The majority of victims were unable to tell anyone about the abuse at the time.

The minority did try to tell someone, but often with dire consequences such as being beaten.

10.2

Did the victim feel discouraged from reporting?

The majority of victims felt very afraid and terrified of telling or reporting the crimes.

Some were very fearful of what people would think of them.

Some were terrified, but despite this, did try to tell someone.

10.3 and 10.4

Who did the victim tell and when?

- **Mother when aged 18 years and police when aged 25 years**
- **Told another Christian Brother and was beaten up as a result**
- **Mother, the day it happened, then nothing said for decades**
 - Police in 1997
 - Towards Healing in 2000 and multiple letters to the Catholic Church
- **Mother in mid 20's (about 1995)**
- **Mother same day and Form Master next day. Nothing happened.**
- **Parents asked me same year of the abuse, and I said no.**
 - Told my mate in my late 20s (early 1990s).
 - Told Centacare who took my contact report for Towards Healing in 2006

- **Mother three to four years later**
 - Told several times over the last eight years. Also told him of the many number of suicides in Ballarat but he never acted on these reports.
- **Mother day after the assault**
 - Mother was a staunch Catholic and did not believe me.
 - I told the Form Master the next day and he told me: 'He's a pervert, just try to keep away from him.' Nothing else was done.
- **Mother on the day, then nothing for decades**
 - But in the end I was never understood
 - Police in 1997
 - Letter to the church in 2004
- **Mother on the day it happened**
 - My widowed mother and I had a meeting with the Form Master at St Patrick's College, Ballarat. He did not take any notes in this meeting and nothing came from that meeting.
 - Brother was moved to another Catholic College at the end of that year (1974).
- **Mother and father within couple of days after being raped by Brother Best. Nothing happened after this.**
- **Told Brother (Form 3 and 4 Dorm Master at St Patrick's) about who was sexually assaulting other kids in the dormitory. I was punished by being brutally beaten.**
 - Told in 1974, the day it happened. I was at St Patrick's Boarding School in Ballarat. There were two other Brothers there at the same time. I was locked up in the linen press as punishment, and left until the morning.
 - Told (policeman) about a week later. Nothing happened.
 - Told Father Monivae College, about St Patrick's in 1975. I got moved out of the dormitory, but nothing else happened.

- Brother was sent to Fiji and (policeman) acted on it, but nothing eventuated.
- Confronted Brother at Monivae about him sexually assaulting a child in the laundry. I got bashed up and nothing happened.
- Spoke with (a live-in teacher at the school) who was going to tell Father about another alleged offender, Brother who used to take kids down to the pig farm. Nothing happened.
- Told at Cobden Technical School about the sex crimes at both St Patrick's and Monivae College. Nothing happened that I know of.
- Told a priest in the army in Townsville in 1977 about the sex crimes at St Patrick's and Monivae. Nothing happened.
- Told (policeman investigating Brother) about all the sex crimes over the years. This was listened to and eventually there were charges laid against Brother Dowlan.
- Told Father, Parish Priest in Sebastopol in Ballarat, about the crimes and suggested he go and tell the Bishop. Nothing happened.

10.5

Did you tell the religious body or other organisation about the abuse?

See 10.3 and 10.4 above

10.6

If you delayed in telling or reporting, what prevented you from disclosing earlier?

- I was constantly told it was all my fault – fear.
- Terrified as I had already been beaten up for telling.
- Had already told my mother and nothing ever happened.
- Due to the horrific stigma attached to the sex crimes, I tried to 'put it behind me'. The fear was crippling.
- Ongoing fear and the associated stigma.
- Fear and terror.
- A big fear that I would not be believed – not just at the time but throughout my life.

RESPONSE TO DISCLOSURE

This section relates to the Towards Healing Process

Not all the victims went through the Towards Healing Process (TH). Some victims said they decided not to go through this process because they did not trust the Catholic Church. Some men, who did go through the TH process, could not discuss their experiences because they were so traumatising. They did not have the wherewithal to think about the process again, let alone discuss it. Of those who did go through TH and who were able to discuss their experiences, the following is noted. These comments are from different victims and some victims have provided more than one comment.

“With the very first phone call to TH I felt as though I was a problem to be dealt with. The feeling I had was ‘how dare I ring up’.”

“My first dealings were with wanted me to have a round table discussion with the TH people. I was unable to do that at the time as I was depressed and suicidal. I was only just moving from denial to anger about the sex crimes. I was having counselling at the time, which, initially, was being paid for by TH. Mr kept pressuring me about having this meeting. I explained to him that I was very concerned that if I did, my anger would get the better of me, and I might hit the Christian Brother sitting opposite me and/or I might kill myself. I was very distressed, depressed and thinking that the world would be better off without me. I explained all of this to Mr Next I know he calls me and tells me TH is withdrawing their support. That is, they will not pay for any more counselling. I believe Mr knew exactly what he was doing and that if I had suicided, I would be one less for TH to worry about. Although Mr was working with and for the Christian Brothers and TH and following their policies, as a, he should have acted in accordance with the codes and ethical guidelines of the Psychologists’ Registration Board. That is, he had a duty of care to look after me and my welfare. He did not do this. Also, if he was acting as a, he would be obliged to be neutral and not take the side of either party. He certainly took the side of the Church and the Christian Brothers at this time. I believe that Mr should be reported to the registration board.”

“It, the TH process, put my relationship under immense strain, and increased my suicidal feelings.”

“I was so close to getting a car and driving it through the gates of St Pat’s school and smashing into the school and killing myself – this would have been a direct result of the way handled my TH case. I was like a stifled voice and no-one would listen to me. I believe was manipulating the system to have one less person to worry about because ‘he’d be dead’.”

“..... said: ‘You can go to the police if you want to, but if you don’t want to, that’s fine. There is no need to. That’s up to you.’”

“I was told by Towards Healing to use the Towards Healing program because nothing else was available.”

“I did receive an apology but I think it was hollow. This whole process is a business process for the Christian Brothers.”

“The counselling support I received was adequate, until it was cut off by them.”

“At the time I went through the TH process, Brother Dowlan was already in prison. In relation to his crimes against me, he got off scot free.”

“I was offered money and counselling. They did not admit liability and I was barred from making any further claims.”

“The whole process took about 12 months.”

“For others I have heard it can take up to a couple of years – this is very stressful and traumatic for the victims.”

“At the time, I was sort of satisfied with the response. I am not now. It was a big ask (fight) to get what I did. We spent what felt like five minutes discussing the case and the criminal assaults and rapes. The rest was lawyers fighting over the amount of money. In comparison, it’s nothing compared to the costs the Catholic Church spent defending Dowlan.”

“As I have learnt more about the goings on of the Catholic Church and the depth of their abuse, blatant lies and secrecy, I feel they spent more time with the Towards Healing process protecting themselves than compensating me. I feel ripped off.”

“I was still fighting for a limited amount of compensation days after the meeting. I believe they may have had a scale that they worked to regarding the level of sexual assault, which is very ignorant of the trauma caused the life that followed. In a way I was compelled to take whatever they offered because of my pending legal bill.”

“The result of my claim was that the needs of the Catholic Church were met – not mine. I had my solicitor and my sister present at the meeting. That is, three versus the whole church – a lose/win. I wanted a win/lose. The rules of the process were the Church. The players were the Church, bar three of us. What other corporate organisation gets to work with so much conflict and possible bias!!!!”

“I was given token counselling – they paid me off – it felt like it was to shut me up.”

“When I first called them, they organised a meeting with a man who took statements from men. I was required to go to Melbourne, once to see a psychiatrist and another two times for the compensation arrangements. These meetings felt demeaning. There was no empathy, no concern for me, no ongoing counselling or support offered.”
“I was given 10 counselling sessions. But it was always on my mind that he (the counsellor) was being paid by them, or he was working for them.”

“Part of their agreement was to sign off a release (Deed of Release). They gave me money but did not accept responsibility.”

“The small amount of money they gave me also had conditions of no further liability from the Catholic Church. My psychiatric health at that time meant that I wasn’t really in a fit state to sign a legal document and I didn’t get legal advice when signing it.”

“The whole process took one or two years.”

“The TH process made things worse for me. The only support I had was through Wayne at Broken Rites, who helped me through the two meetings. I wouldn’t have managed it without his help.”

“The trivial amount they gave me made me feel like a prostitute.”

“At the hearing, a church representative told me and my brother that the offender was already in jail and that there was no need for further action to be taken. In retrospect, this advice further protected the offender and failed to provide impartial information which may have offered my brother another form of redress. My brother was told that he could be compensated, they provided him with a sum, he was then told to accept or reject this payment. My brother rejected their pitiful first offer and negotiations continued until he felt he would need to accept what was to be their final offer. The irony for me was that this compensation process took the majority of the session with little emphasis on an apology or ensuring that my brother would fare well in to the future. I came away feeling insulted and humiliated by the process and seriously questioned the impact this had on my brother. The disclosure by my brother to the panel afforded him little in feeling good about himself and being appropriately compensated for the trauma that has and will continue to plague his life. The process offered no restorative function either to my brother as the boy or the adult. The hearing on that day did nothing to restore my brother’s sense of self worth; his faith or mine in the Catholic church with its system of cover-ups, secrecies, protection of wealth and abusive members on innocent children.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

This group of victims lists *their needs and concerns* in relation to the *broad-ranging and life-long consequences of the sex crimes* on their:

- Mental and psychological health
- Physical health
- Education
- Employment and career
- Family life
- Ability to earn an income

The needs of this group include:

- Ongoing counselling and/or therapy
- Ongoing medical and other treatment
- Housing
- All other daily living expenses, eg. cars, utility bills, food, clothing, holidays, travel, insurance and so on
- Opportunities for further education and training

Other needs of this group include:

- Admission by the Catholic Church that these things were happening and were held in secrecy

This group strongly recommends:

- Lump sum damages for pain and suffering, *and*
- For the Committee to make an interim finding that a scheme be put in place as soon as possible to set up a Church Related Injury Fund (CRI) to help survivors now. Such a scheme would address the ongoing concerns and needs of victims and survivors (see list above). This scheme should be run by the state and funded entirely by the Catholic church.

It is noted that all the needs of clergy offenders, including holidays and legal fees for criminal trials and prosecutions, are fully met by the Catholic Church.

- That the Deeds of Release that were signed by the victims as part of their compensation payments be retracted, such that the victims are able to sue either the Catholic Church or the Religious Order involved.
- That there been legislative reform of the Catholic Church Property Trust Acts to enable survivors to sue the church.

All signatories, whether identified or not, want justice.

SIGNATORIES

Those people who want to maintain confidentiality, have used either their first name or a designated number.

GS – Group Submission

PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS SUBMISSION

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Phil Nagle	GS14
Anne Murray	GS15
Anne Harrison	GS16
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GS4	
GS5	
GS6	Brian Lane
GS7	Also on behalf of my son who took his own life aged 19 years
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GS9	Annette Lane
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