

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations

Melbourne — 18 February

Members

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Ms G. Crozier

Ms B. Halfpenny

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Witness

Mr A. C. Walker.

The CHAIR — Good afternoon, everyone. In accordance with the guidelines for the hearings, I remind members of the public gallery that they cannot participate in any way in the committee's proceedings. Only officers of the Family and Community Development Committee secretariat are to approach committee members. Members of the media are also requested to observe the media guidelines. I ask you all to now turn off your mobile phones while the proceedings are under way.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome and thank Mr Charlie Walker for his willingness to appear before this hearing. All evidence taken by this committee is taken under the provisions of the Parliamentary Committees Act 2003, attracts parliamentary privilege and is protected from judicial review. Any comments made outside the precincts of the hearings are not protected by parliamentary privilege. This hearing today is being recorded, and you will be provided with a proof version of the transcript.

Following your presentation this afternoon, Charlie, the committee members will ask questions relating to your submission. I note that you have just given committee members a copy of your book. Thank you very much for that and the evidence provided to us today. Can I remind you that the evidence that we are hearing today relates to the terms of reference under which this inquiry is being conducted. Thank you again for being before us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Mr WALKER — I was just saying to my friend here Mark Ballinger that sometimes it is a bit hard to hear, so if he repeats something back to me, then I can understand it.

The CHAIR — Absolutely; that is fine, Charlie.

Mr WALKER — Are we ready to go?

The CHAIR — Yes, please start.

Mr WALKER — My name is Alan Walker. I was born in either 1935 or 1936. At nine days old I was taken to Broadmeadows Babies Home and abandoned. At Broadmeadows there were a lot of experiences done on the babies. There were over 500 babies died through herpes, whooping cough and so forth. I was one of the lucky ones; I survived. I had those diseases. I was then transferred, at 3 years old — I should have been transferred earlier — to St Anthony's in Kew, but I was kept back because I was too sick. That is the start of my story of Charlie the Ratbag Orphan. That is what I am known as. I will have to read from the book because I have lost a lot of memory.

'Sleep': I will just give a bit of an idea. I do not know what time of day it was, but we were all asleep. However, my sleep was short when I was woken up after being carried down a fire ladder from a two-story balcony and placed on the ground next to other kids who were lying on the ground as well. A few minutes later someone in a uniform wiped the blood off my face and bandaged up my head, and someone else put a needle in my arm. The next memory I have is the time I was in the double-decker bus, and when we came to the station I was helped into the train because there was a big gap between the platform and the train.

Then I was back at Surrey Hills standing alongside this grandfather's clock with these two blokes in uniform. A nun came along and began to talk with them. One of the blokes gave me a bag of lollies and his white cap. I think they were actually American sailors. The cap was shaped like a ship. They both gave me a hug and told me they would come back to visit me. As they were leaving I grabbed hold of the leg of one of the uniformed men and began to bawl and would not let go my hold of him. Eventually the nun managed to take me away from him. Although I never did see these two men again, what upset me even more was the nun took the lollies and the white cap off me. Each night I cried myself to sleep, and some of the other kids called me a sook, which led to depression.

'Learning to write': Another one of my earlier memories occurred when I was at Surrey Hills. This nun tried to teach us how to hold our pencils properly. She caught me holding the pencil the wrong way, and she hit me on the knuckles, making them bleed. One cold, frosty morning the same nun caught me holding the pencil incorrectly again. Once again she hit me across the sore knuckles, but this time the pain made me scream at her, and she grabbed me by the hair, dragged me outside the classroom and put me in a dark basement.

At times when rethinking about the accident it seems like it was three days that I was locked up. I really do not know how long I spent there, but I do remember feeling that things were crawling all over me. I think they were

ants, but I am not sure. It was dark. A rat did bite me, leaving me with a scar on my left thumb. I was not given any food or water, nor was I even given any medical treatment.

The next one is: when I was released the nun would not let me play with the other kids, and I was forced to sit for a while on the bitumen in the corner of the back garden, on the back fence there. I was happy for I made friends with thousands of — I am starting to shake a bit here reading this one — —

The CHAIR — Charlie, take your time.

Mr WALKER — I made friends with thousands of black and red ants. I even caught flies and bugs and fed them to the ants. Unfortunately a nun saw me doing this and called in one of the workmen, who killed my pet ants. It did upset me that he killed my pet ants, and I expressed my anger by kicking him in the shins. He grabbed me and placed me in a bag headfirst, making me scream because he told me that he would toss me in the river. Some of the other kids came over to see what was happening. When the other kids arrived the workman let me out of the bag. Whenever I look back and reflect about this incident I believe I was traumatised. It even felt worse than the time the nun placed me in the dark space with the rats.

The next one is ‘Don’t touch’. I was about eight years old when one of the nuns would do the rounds of the dormitory. If she saw any of the boys with his hands under the blankets, she would pull the blankets off the kid to see where he had them. If they were between his legs, a boy was in real trouble. She would make the kid stand alongside his bed. She warned us not to have them below the blankets; otherwise a big dickie bird would come along during the night and snap it off. This puzzled and worried me, so one day I asked another kid what that nun meant. That kid pulled out his penis and pointed to it — he called it another name, of course — and told me that if the dickie bird did not like you, he would bite it off.

After this I could not sleep well for a long time and made sure that my arms were above the blankets when the nun was around. When she was not, my arms were under the blankets to protect myself from this big dickie bird, also known as Snappy Tom, and each morning I would check if the big dickie bird had snapped it off. That was really bad. You know, ‘It’s still here’, and I was happy. That put the fear of God into us.

The next one is ‘Save the babies’ with Archbishop Mannix of Melbourne. They organised a baby show, ‘Save the babies! Gala day and inspection’. They used to come and visit us, and that caused — a lot of those babies were not vaccinated, and a lot of them were orphans. I was an orphan myself, and because of no protection from any diseases, people from all walks of life came in with the babies and left behind diseases like whooping cough, diphtheria and all those diseases. Plus it caused the deaths of 500 babies and toddlers who died at that home. A lot of them are buried at a cemetery next to the army barracks on Camp Road, and also some are buried at Preston. There is a photo of their memorial which the nuns put up. It says, ‘The plate above was erected by the Sisters of St Joseph in 1996 in memory of those laid to rest from St Joseph’s Babies Home during the time from 1901 to 1942’. A lot of babies died there, and I was one of the lucky ones.

‘Naughty boys were fed to the rats’, on page 14. I was locked up in this basement where the rats bit me on my thumb, which you cannot see from there, but I have still got the scar where the rats actually bit it off. That really upset me. I just don’t know; it is hard to say what I felt like, but it was really bad getting bitten by rats. It is no good, and I hate rats. I do not know why I call myself Charlie the Ratbag. I don’t know. I still hate rats, anyway.

We are going on to St Augustine’s Orphanage in Geelong. In 1945 I was in grade 3, and my teacher was Brother Robinson. There were about 30 boys in my class. Each morning we would learn tables and be drilled in spelling. We did a lot of praying and were taught our religion. Brother Robinson used to teach us little ditties like *Ten Little Nigger Boys*, and we read lots of poems. The one I liked the best was about the *Grasshopper Green*. We learnt lots of songs, especially the American Negro songs. After school we would play sport.

Anyway, on the third day of Highton I started to get very itchy while in class. I put my hands under the desk and bent down to scratch my legs when all of a sudden this heavy wooden duster hit my head, and immediately I saw stars. Brother Robinson came up to me and yelled out in front of all of the other kids that if he ever saw me rubbing myself again or saw my hands under the desk again, he would punish me. He then walked back to the desk, rolled up his sleeves and raised his big leather strap and hit the top of the desk hard. He told all of us that if we did not behave ourselves, it would not be the desks that he would hit, but it would be our little hands. All of us were truly frightened, and the other kids stared at me.

Later on when we were allowed out of class to play in the big yard the kids did not want to play with me. This tall kid from my class cornered me and grabbed my jumper and shook me so hard that I started to cry, but he warned me not to play with myself again in class, or else he would pick on me again. Denying that it was not playing with myself, I told him I was so itchy I was scratching myself to ease the pain.

Whenever he saw me scratching my legs he told another kid by the name of John Inglis, and Inglis told the other kids in grade 3 why I was scratching myself. However, Brother Robinson saw me scratching myself, and bringing me up to the front of the class he gave me three on each hand. Unfortunately it was on a regular basis. By September the scratches on my legs and the rest of my body got worse, and during the term holidays I was admitted to the infirmary. This matron told me to get undressed, and while naked she began to examine me. She asked me a lot of questions and then began to treat me. She wanted to know how long the big boils on my arms and legs had been there and how I got all the scars that were on my backside. She found that I had lots of warts, lumps on the back of my head and was underweight.

When she treated my boils she would light up a candle and heat up a slab of chocolate and pour the melted chocolate over the boils. In no time the boils were cured; she made sure that I was healed of my boils.

She could not do much about the warts, so I decided to bite them off. Four weeks later I was discharged, but it was not long after that I got chickenpox and was back in the infirmary again. Two weeks later I was back in class and once again found myself scratching myself until I ended up on the floor. Although Brother Robinson came up to me and ordered me to get back at my desk, he told John Inglis to get a damp cloth, which he did. Most of the kids looked to see what Brother Robinson was going to do, but to our surprise he put the damp cloth over the scratched areas, and the pain went away. Thankfully I was never given the strap by him again. This matron told him what my complaint was and let him know that it was a medical complaint. I continued to have the itchiness till I turned eleven years old.

Brother Miles: it was about this time that I got in serious trouble with Brother Miles. Normally I got on well with him, for he never strapped me or bashed me. Only once do I remember getting the strap from Brother Miles. It happened like this: one cold, frosty night I was at the end of the line waiting to take a shower, fully naked and shivering. Brother Miles was punishing a kid when the kid decided to run away from him. Suddenly I heard the brother ordering me to stop the kid. 'Stop him', the brother yelled. Because the kid was running so fast I stepped outside and allowed him to pass by. Brother Miles chased after the kid and swung his strap at the kid's legs, but the kid was too fast for him. He turned around and began to whack me for disobeying him. He hit me across my backside — of course it really hurt too — but he only got one in. I called him a mongrel and then bolted out of the shower room, with Brother Miles chasing after me. I ran out into the veranda and climbed up on the bannister.

When the brother approached me I yelled at him, 'If you come and hit me, I'll jump'. I looked down from the two-storey ledge and saw that if I did jump, I would land on the bitumen path below because the lawn was too far away. He stopped and ordered me to climb down. I did so once he moved away. I went to the end of the line, had my shower, dried myself, got dressed into my pyjamas and went straight to bed.

Later on Brother Miles called me and asked me if I would like to clean his room out. I told him I would be prepared to do so, especially when he said that he would pay me a shilling each time I did the job. The first time I was cleaning the room out he asked me if I was serious about jumping off the veranda. I replied, 'If you came near me to save me or to hit me, I would have jumped. I wouldn't have cared if I'd killed myself'. I was happy that he gave me the job, and it was the second time that I was cleaning his room when I saw these biscuits in a biscuit tin and decided to have a few. When I put my hand in the tin, a mouse bit me. Blood started to pour out and then went all over the biscuits. I was not allowed to clean out brother's room again.

I have got 'Accident at Clifton Springs camp', and this is a pretty bad one, by me. When I was at St Augustine's there was a number of my friends and other boys who were involved in accidents or died. Some died — sorry, I will forget that one; it is not important.

Accident at Clifton Springs — my best mate, Ray Carman. In 1949 my best friend, Ray Carman, and I went with many other boys to the orphanage holiday camp at Clifton Springs. The camp consisted of a number of ex-army huts and other buildings. Looking back on it these days, one would say that the facilities were basic.

On the first night we were there, before we went to bed down for the night, Brother Robinson warned us that no-one was to get out of bed until one of the brothers called us to get up. I woke up the next morning by hearing all these kids screaming as they had a pillow fight. It was about 5.00 a.m. and I was determined not to join them, fearing what may happen if I disobeyed brother's direction. The kid who was sleeping in the stretcher next to me tipped mine over, and I ended up falling down to the floor. I picked up my pillow and immediately began to hit the boy who upturned me over the head with it. The pillow split open and feathers went everywhere, just as Brother Robinson entered the hut.

Brother ordered all the boys to get out of bed and had us lined up in columns. It was a cold morning, although it was summertime. He made us all stand there until 8 o'clock in our pyjamas, not allowed to go to breakfast and then issued with picks and shovels. I was given a pick. All of us, 18 in number, were marched down to the end of the property. A section was marked out, and we were told to dig a long trench and get it ready to be used as a disposal tip for the sewerage and rubbish.

We were split up in pairs. One of us had to dig and the other shovelled the dirt out. Luckily the soil was soft. The boy who was working with me was my best friend, Ray Carman. As I raised the pick, I noticed Ray was too close to me and warned him to stand back. Without realising it, Ray came close to me again, but this time he stood behind me. I raised the pick above my head, swung it back and felt a thump. Realising that I had hit something or someone, I turned around and saw Ray lying on the ground, blood pouring out from the wound on his head. Immediately I stooped down and held Ray's head up in my lap and tried to stop the bleeding. As I did, I was bawling and saying, 'What have I done? What have I done?'

One of the other kids ran to fetch Brother Robinson. When he arrived I knew I was in deep trouble. Brother Robinson dragged me away and started to hit me with his bare hands. I curled up in a ball-like position and held my arms around my head to protect myself from being struck on the head. He picked me up, held me over his head, threw me to the ground and started to kick me. He picked me up like this, and threw me to the ground and just get kept kicking his boots into me: kick, kick, kick.

Ray Carman was taken to the hospital, and I was left lying on the ground in pain. Melisi and Inglis carried me back to the hut, looked after me for three days and made sure my meals and drinks were brought to me. They kept me up to date with news, especially about the kids who went rabbit hunting, for they knew I was a keen rabbit catcher. At no stage was I given any medical treatment.

Ever since that accident I have had constant flashbacks, especially about the injuries I inflicted on Ray, and wondered what happened to him, for he never returned to St Augustine's, and we never got news about his condition and whereabouts. This kid, who I hit across the head with a pick by accident, I asked Katrina from MacKillop Family Services to find him. I even reported it to the homicide squad; I said, 'I think I killed him'. There was no trace of him, but just two years ago Katrina from MacKillop Family Services found him. He was buried at You Yangs cemetery, and he lived to age 50 and had four young kids. So it was great. I was happy. That really released me, that he survived after what — all those years it was on my mind.

Archbishop Mannix: talk about him; he was as corrupt as they come, would you believe it? I know he used to run the SP bookmaking with John Wren and all these people. I do not know if you are Catholics or what you are, but I do not like him. Do you know what he said to me one day when we hissed and booed him? Something happened — I will just read that section out.

I remember it was springtime and our class was being prepared for confirmation. A man dressed up in what appeared to me to be clothes worn by a clown came into the grade 6 classroom with Brother O'Shea. Brother O'Shea was superior of the home, of course. The man was carrying a hook-like stick, which I learnt later was a — I cannot pronounce the word right now.

Mrs COOTE — Crosier.

Mr WALKER — Yes, crosier. Brother O'Shea introduced the man as Archbishop Mannix, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne. After asking us many questions, the archbishop told us about the dangers of drinking alcohol to excess and also of dangers we as Catholics might face when we leave St Augustine's. I turned to Harris and said, 'That means that we won't be able to keep on drinking the wine that the priest uses for holy communion'. Harris told me to shut up. When the archbishop asked us if we were ready to take the pledge, all of us put our hands up and we promised not to drink alcohol until we were 21.

Then Archbishop Mannix explained the dangers we will face if we do not have proper relationships with girls as we grow up. He encouraged us to be very careful. Then he asked, 'Any questions?'. Inglis was the first to shoot up his hand. He had the habit of being the first whenever there was talk about the opposite sex. Our teacher told Inglis to reveal who he was and then ask the question. Inglis gave the archbishop his name and then said, 'That means we cannot have sex before we are 21'. The archbishop replied, 'Do you know the commandments?'. Inglis did not know the commandments and sat down dumbfounded. He was not able to give a funny reply.

Another boy put his hand up, and before he was told to give out his name and ask a question he went to the front of the class and, as he pointed at the rest of us, said, 'You'll finish up in hell if you have sex'. This caused an uproar, and a heated argument began. Kids belted their desks and our teacher and Brother O'Shea did not know how to handle the situation. Some boys began an ink war, and I was hit on the back of the neck by a dead fly that had been dipped in ink and fired with a shanghai. Ink went all over my neck and into my hand as I tried to wipe it off. I yelled out, 'You mongrel!'. Everybody quietened down suddenly, and Brother O'Shea and the archbishop came to my desk. The archbishop rubbed my head and asked me, 'What's your name, little boy?'. I said, 'Mousey'. 'Well, little boy, you have a foul mouth on you'. Fancy saying that to me, that I had a foul mouth.

The CHAIR — Charlie, can I just stop you there for a second, just to thank you very much. I know you have a few more chapters. Can you hear me? I am just wondering, Mark, if you would not mind just asking Charlie. I know he has a few more chapters that he wants to speak to us about, but the committee is keen to ask him a couple of questions.

Mr WALKER — I want to have some more serious things with you. This is only the start of it. There is one where this kid was really intelligent; another one about the sex abuse. A politician knew and my missus was dying of cancer, all involved, and he wrote this to get rid of us out of our home while my wife was dying of cancer.

The CHAIR — Charlie, is this in your book?

Mr WALKER — Yes, it is in the book.

The CHAIR — Could you perhaps refer to the chapter?

Mr WALKER — You can ask me questions, if you like, and I will then repeat. I do really want to let you know about the sex abuse of a five-year-old blonde girl and what happened, because when I reported it to the police our family got into a lot of trouble.

The CHAIR — Charlie, if you would like to tell us about that incident, and then we will — —

Mr WALKER — You can go through the book yourself. I would like you to ask me about Craig Langdon, the politician, and the sex abuse of that five-year-old girl and the ministry of housing, because I reported it to the police, and what happened to our family was it was evicted. We were put down in a drugs-stuffed area — excuse the language; it was fucked, full of drugs, sex perverts, everything — and forced to live there, and two of my kids got onto drugs through Langdon, by blinking well writing all these letters to the authorities to get rid of us out of our home — we were there for a number of years — because all I did was protest and ring the police about this five-year-old girl because the foster parents across the road let her run with this 28-year-old bloke next door to us.

The CHAIR — Charlie, can you tell me what happened then when you went to the police?

Mr WALKER — The police took the kids away, but what actually happened in the meanwhile, because these people knew — they had some relation in the ministry of housing — they gave them a new six-bedroom home, and they were not even foster parents. They just grabbed some kids from Anglicare. They lost a lot of kids. I remember one time where I was standing outside their place, and she said to me, 'Oh, look at these black bastards. They're only Aborigines. We treat them like shit because they're black. Why can't they give us white people, Anglo-Saxon kids?'. That is what they said to me. I said, 'What? They're human beings.' And then that is when my missus one morning — she suffered from cancer — she was up early and she said, 'Would you like a cup of coffee?'. It was a Sunday morning; I still remember the morning. It was nice and sunny. She said,

‘There’s a five-year-old girl running up and down next door, naked’. I said, ‘Where did she come from?’
‘Across the road.’

Anyway I heard a scream; I had to get up on a chair because the window was facing their backyard, and there is this bloke. He had this kid in a swimming pool trying to shag her, and I yelled out, so he grabbed the kid and ran into his home. I went across to the foster parents with my eldest daughter — she was about 14 at the time — and she told her what was going on, and she said, ‘Your daughter’s nothing but a slut,’ and pushed us all the way out to the footpath. That is when I decided to ring, I think it was, Sergeant Matthews from the Heidelberg police to come and remove those kids. I reported that, and Sergeant Matthews said to me, ‘Listen, if you see any kids in that place, give us a ring’. And because we had seen — because we were there, they could not have kids while we were living across the road.

So what happened was we had the police raids, about 30 or 40 police raids. We had customs raids; we had detectives from Preston saying we were hiding criminals in the house. They would drag my daughters out of bed at 5 o’clock in the morning when they raided us — all of this sort of stuff. And would you believe it, Craig Langdon got involved because he was friends and ended up a politician. So what happened was he started writing letters to the council to get rid of us, saying all this sort of stuff, and they were saying we threw live rats in next door, that we were peeping Toms and all this sort of stuff just to get rid of us. Because my missus had cancer, the police came in one day with the ministry of housing and ordered my sick wife — she was dying, would you believe it, of cancer in the bedroom — and Gerald Macmillan, the leader of the ministry of housing, said, ‘Right; out! Get out’.

The CHAIR — Charlie, I am sorry. I know that that you have — —

Mr WALKER — Yes, but can I just finish this?

The CHAIR — Finish that point if you can because I know Mrs Coote has a question.

Mr WALKER — What actually happened then was she walked out the house, and she went up to the country to live, to die up there, but it was so great. I went up there one day, and there was blood everywhere, so I had to go and bring her back to hospital to be here. She eventually died. She left me four young kids on my own with nobody to help me whatsoever. I did not ask for help. I did finish up with black eyes. I had to protect my four young daughters. The ministry of housing, because I kicked up and complained, then put us down to a drugster area to live, and we are still there. Two of my kids did not want a live there, so they got into drugs, and my daughter told me what it was like. It was incredible. We have had people hold us up; we have had people put knives to our throats demanding money, all in the drug area. We do not want to live there still, and one of my daughters is homeless. They even lied to take her baby away from her. That is another story.

The CHAIR — Charlie, can I just — thank you. I know this is distressing, and you have done a very good job in telling us about your experiences in St Augustine’s and elsewhere, but I know Mrs Coote has a question for you and Ms Halfpenny has a question for you, so just two more questions to you if that is okay.

Mr WALKER — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — Charlie, thank you very much indeed. I commend you for your book because I think that is going to be a really important history into the future. I hope you have given a copy to the state library because I think it is really something that needs to be kept. Mark is saying that, yes, you have given a copy to the state library. I think that is a very important record.

My question is, with all this time you had in the Catholic organisations, did you ever hear of anybody being sexually abused or attacked by any of the priests?

Mr WALKER — About the orphanage, you mean?

Mrs COOTE — Yes.

Mr WALKER — In my time, no. Although I was bashed a lot and ill-treated, one thing I can say about St Augustine’s orphanage — some people might get upset about what I am saying — is at least they fed me, they gave me a warm bed to sleep in, they gave me hot showers and education if I wanted to be educated. There

is good and bad in everything. There is good and bad. But in my period it was all right, although I was bashed. I did not hear — I did suspect it once but I do not want say that because I am not 100 per cent sure.

I might be able to ask you this question to see if it is a sex assault. One day was sick and I went up to the dormitory. I was not supposed to be up there during the daytime after school and this person — I will not mention his name — he came along with a handful of parcels, and he came up to me and he stood there and looked at me. He said, ‘Can you put your hands in my pocket and get the keys out?’. ‘Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.’ Oh, my God. I said, ‘I am sorry; I am sorry’ and I kept saying it, then he walked off. So I do not know if that was a sex assault or not. I cannot say it is, but besides that they looked after me. Where would I be today?

Mrs COOTE — Well, they obviously taught you to read and write really well because it is a great book. Was that a priest that had the parcels? Was that a priest that asked you to put your hands in his pockets?

Mr WALKER — No, it was a brother.

Mrs COOTE — A Christian Brother. Right, thank you. You cannot remember his name? Because he might have perhaps — —

Mr WALKER — I knew his name.

Mrs COOTE — You knew his name. Maybe we could speak to you about that at some stage.

Mr WALKER — You see, I am not sure if he meant it or not.

Mrs COOTE — Okay.

Mr WALKER — So really I cannot say if it was a form of sex — actually I spoke to Senator Claire Moore about it. Do you know her?

Mrs COOTE — I do not know her. No, I do not.

Mr WALKER — Senator Claire Moore in Queensland.

Mrs COOTE — Clover? Who? Oh, yes, I do know Claire Moore. I do know Claire Moore very well.

Mr WALKER — I know her pretty well. She even shouted me breakfast one day up there.

Mrs COOTE — She is a good woman.

Mr WALKER — Yes.

Mrs COOTE — Thank you very much indeed. I really appreciate it, and again congratulations on the book. It is going to be, I think, a very important document into the future. Thank you.

Mr WALKER — I do want to say about that book that I did give the state library a number of books.

Mrs COOTE — I am glad.

Mr WALKER — And also the Canberra.

Mrs COOTE — Good.

Mr WALKER — And also we are part of history — I spoke about in the old history report — and also is there is the — —

Mrs COOTE — Good, that is really important.

Mr WALKER — It is all being done.

Mrs COOTE — Thank you.

The CHAIR — Thank you, Charlie. We have just got one last question for you, if that is okay, from Ms Halfpenny.

Ms HALFPENNY — Thanks, Charlie. We have heard a lot of stories, and really terrible stories, about people's experiences in orphanages and other organisations.

Mr WALKER — Yes.

Ms HALFPENNY — Do you think your experiences — like the bashings and physical assaults and things like that — affected you in later life, because one of the other things is about redress and some sort of scheme to support people in later life?

Mr WALKER — I would put it this way: in one way I got used to it. The worst thing that was on my mind most of my adult life was I thought I killed that kid — that keeps flashing up — and the rats of the nuns. And of course I was sent out in the country somewhere; I do not know where I was. It was in wartime, bombs were going off. I do not know where I was and I was taken back to St Joseph's. And I say, besides that, my upbringing in St Augustine's really did not affect me because you have got 300 kids in an orphanage fighting. You have got to join gangs. You cut your wrist and become blood brothers for protection. That is all it was — protection — in those places.

You had a lot of Turana kids and state ward kids coming in, and they taught us all about sex and that sort of stuff. Those kids knew more than probably you or I. They did. And a lot of the kids, I know for a fact — and I am not going to mention this kid's name — said that it was sex abuse, which I know damn well it was not, because with everything me and him did between us, like robbing the lolly shop and all that sort of stuff and getting and drinking the priest's wine, he would have told me. He got a lot of money out of it. It was all made up. So you have to take that into consideration too.

Before you can accuse somebody, you have to make sure that it is right. I can get up and say this and that and so forth. It is the truth. That is why you people have to question how truthful it is or not. Like I said, St Augustine's gave me a bed, it gave me warm showers, it educated me and it did feed me. At least I can thank them for that. Although, when I was 15, I was thrown out and sold to a horse trainer. I was a little bit upset that they did not get much for me; I was worth a lot more than that.

Ms HALFPENNY — And did they follow up with you after they moved you on at 15? Did they check on you and see where you were and what had happened?

Mr WALKER — No, they never checked on us at all. I was interfered with once I was out of there, but they never, ever checked to see where we were. This George Hanlon used to get kids from St Augustine's and use them as slaves. Then he would piss them off — excuse the language but that is what he would do. Then he would get more kids out of there. He used St Augustine's to get his slaves. We were slaves to him.

The CHAIR — Charlie, thank you again for providing your book to the committee.

Mr WALKER — Yes, all those books are for you people, personal books.

The CHAIR — Thank you very much.

Mr WALKER — Do not give them to the government; they are for you. I would like you to read them.

The CHAIR — No, we will not. We are going to keep these.

Mr WALKER — If you have any more questions, you have my email: ratbagorphan@gmail.com.

The CHAIR — Thank you for those details. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much indeed for coming before us this afternoon and sharing your story. It has been important. We appreciate your time. Your evidence has been most helpful. Thank you, Charlie.

Mr WALKER — Can I just ask one more question? I have been trying to talk to the ministry of housing about proper housing for my daughter, who is badly on drugs. She has waited for years to be in a better place

than we are. I have also asked about my granddaughter, who was stolen by the human services department in 2004. They got up in court and told a pack of lies, which we can prove. It is in there anyway; you can read it.

The CHAIR — We might talk to the secretary.

Mr WALKER — I know you are busy; you have a lot of people there.

The CHAIR — Thank you again. It has been very helpful.

Mr WALKER — That is all right. I hope I did not make a fool out of myself.

The CHAIR — Not at all, and thank you, Mark. That now concludes the public hearings for today, so I would ask members of the public gallery to leave the gallery. We are now proceeding to in camera hearings.

Witness withdrew.