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PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS RESOURCE GROUP, VICTORIA

PO BOX 524 MENTONE, VIC 3119

first contact.

10 June, 1999

Sr Yvonne
Sisters of St Joseph
51 Sargood Street
ALTONA VIC 3018

Dear Mairead and Yvonne

Thank you for returning the Contact Report. The corrections have been made and I ask that you sign one of these copies of the report and send it back to me.

I have been in telephone contact with the Provincial of the Marianists in Dayton, Ohio and explained the situation to him. He was very understanding and co-operative and is now waiting for the written report and the copy of the Towards Healing book to reach him.

I did ask whether Bernard was still a Brother and he is, so I then asked was he in a position where he could do the same thing again and the Provincial said 'no' and that he would discuss this further with us when he received the written report.

Given that my telephone call came out of the blue, from Australia, and that he had no warning and no verification of who I was I thought that he was good and that he will be helpful.

Keep going Mairead, you are really wonderful and very brave to have come through this. We are there with you.

With best wishes,



Angela Ryan

Report of discussion with Mairead MacKinnon
18 May, 1999

Sister Yvonne RSJ introduced Mairead MacKinnon and explained that Mairead wished to bring forward a complaint of sexual abuse against Brother Bernard Hartmann, a Marianist who had been at St Paul's, North Altona.

Mairead MacKinnon (nee McLaughlin d.o.b. 6/8/1964) came from an Irish family who had very few family members here in Australia and thus they welcomed Brother Bernard into their house as a friend. Mairead's brother was at school at St Paul's, North Altona and was having some problems and hence the family came in contact with Br Bernard, whom Mairead believes was the school counsellor. Bernard became a family friend and a baby sitter for the children. Bernard would invite Mairead's brother, Brian, to the school/monastery to tutor him and would ask could he bring Mairead with him.

The allegations

Mairead believes she was about 8 or 8½ at the time. Brian would be sent off round the school and was left with Bernard.

She recalls having been shown photos of naked women and children and that Bernard used to say things that as a child she knew were "dirty things". He would point out the "sexy" bits and get her to describe them. Mairead spoke of how uncomfortable she felt and how terrified and confused she was. They had no pornography in their home and did not speak with such sexual innuendo and yet here was an authority figure, a 'religious' person, a trusted person who was doing all this.

Bernard wanted to take photos of her as a naked child and offered to give her 50 cents for each photo - she did not want the 50 cents, she was terrified - no photos were taken. Mairead was told not to tell her father or mother and that she would get into trouble if she did.

Mairead says that the abuse went on in different ways from about the age of 8½ until she was 11. It included.

- Fondling her
- Putting cream/vaseline on the back of a hairbrush and suggestion of putting this into her vagina. There was no penetration.
- Taking her into his bedroom at the Monastery and showing her the photos and pictures of naked women and children
- Having her undressed and groping her and having a pillow placed over her knees so that it looked alright if her brothers and sisters came into the room
- Taking them to the pictures and putting his leg against her thigh causing her to be terrified of what was going to happen
- Coming into her bedroom when she was in bed and sitting on the bed staring at her
- Sexual innuendo often
- As he touched her, Bernard telling Mairead that this is good for you, it will make you feel good.

It did not include actual physical penetration of Mairead by Bernard.

She said she remembered Br Bernard going for a holiday to Africa. During this time, a tick of some sort attached itself to his groin. He told me that it crawled into his penis and did I want to see it.

When did it stop? Why?

Mairead recalls two incidents

- One day when she was in her bedroom beginning to undress, Bernard came in and Mairead vividly recalls struggling to get her jeans back on and to do them up and she screamed for her brothers and sister to come.
- Some time later when her sister was about 9, Bernard sat Trish on his knee, Mairead speaks of rushing in, grabbing Trish and pulling her away and she recalls being in trouble at this time for being rude to Brother Bernard.

Disclosure

When Mairead was about 18 or 19 she told her mother and father and her boyfriend was present at the time. She says she did not speak up earlier because her brothers thought he was a great guy and her parents thought he was a good friend.

Mairead says that at this stage her father believes her and her mother does not want to face it. Her brothers and sister believe her and were disgusted when Bernard sent a Christmas card to the family about 3 years ago and that it was brought to Mairead's attention (as she remembers there was no address on the card). In fact, Mairead says that in retrospect her father remembers Bernard as talking about women teachers in a very sexual and suggestive way - in ways that were totally inappropriate. Her brother went to USA and tried to make contact - Mairead did say she was not sure how hard he tried.

The effect of these experiences

As she speaks of these experiences, Mairead is visibly upset and anxious. Throughout the time Mairead constantly returned to a number of themes

- i. Guilt - Mairead feels guilty that she did not say anything at the time. She has most vivid memories of one of the photos of two little girls (she says that they were younger than she was, perhaps 3 & 5) - she can see their faces in the black and white photo and as a young girl she knew that these were not ordinary photos of young children. She says they were very pretty little girls. She feels guilty that she let Bernard do all these things to her - that she did not stop him but she knows that she did stop him touching her younger sister.

This disclosure has come up now because Mairead's twins, her oldest children, are at the stage of first Reconciliation and Eucharist. As a result of her feelings of guilt Mairead does not go to Communion when she goes to Eucharist, explaining to the older children that she need to mind the younger ones. She knows she can not keep using this excuse and also she is very concerned about what will happen when she presents her children for First Communion in October. Mairead's feelings of guilt are very strong with her and can be triggered off by so many things, for example, when Mairead's girls were babies she could not put vaseline or barrier cream on them without real trauma and feelings of guilt and anxiety about whether she was touching her girls inappropriately.

Mairead summarised her guilt by saying that she had allowed children to be victims and done nothing to stop it.

- ii. Feeling terror, anxiety and threat.

All the time Bernard was around, Mairead says that she felt anxious that he would do something to her. She knew it was not right but he was an authority figure and was saying that it was alright. He kept telling her not to tell, she recalls being given the impression that no one would believe her. She used to dread it when she was made to go over to his place or when he was coming over to their home, especially when he was going to be the baby-sitter. Bernard used to threaten her that her mother and father would be upset if she told about the incidents. She said she was a very obedient child and so she always tried to please.

Description of Br Bernard Hartmann given by Mairead.

Dark hair and almost Asian looking eyes. Slim build. He had facial hair, a moustache and possibly a small goatee beard.

There was another Br Bernard at St Paul's at the same time but I don't remember his surname.

In conclusion

Mairead said that Bernard was never aggressive, he was gentle and artistic. He did make her feel that she was doing wrong if she said 'no' to him.

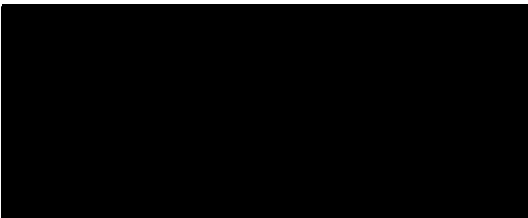
He made gifts for her, like necklaces, a pencil case and he gave them to her in front of her parents. He made a coat of arms in copper for the family and it still hangs in their home and still upsets her.

Desired outcomes

Mairead wishes

- i. To know that it is not still happening to other little girls
- ii. To find relief for herself from the guilt so that she can get her life together for her children.

She does not want matters to be public but does want to bring an end to the issues.



'7/6/99'