

Victorian Government Enquiry into childhood abuse in religious and non government institutions

Submission of [REDACTED] (formerly [REDACTED]) born [REDACTED] 1966

I consent to my submission being made public with my name removed. I can be contacted on

[REDACTED] if you wish to discuss any parts of this submission.

I was removed from my family home along with my [REDACTED] in infancy. We were placed in the Alexandra Babies' Home and Women's Refuge, Warawee Reception Centre and the Ballarat Children's Homes Orphanage and the Lady Northcote Children's Farm.

The Alexandra Babies Home and Women's Refuge

We were in the toddlers block there. I remember being in a long room, all the cots lined up. If you cried or were wet, there was a large lady who worked there she would come along and hit you on the head with her first.

You learned to be quiet there, but [REDACTED] I were never quiet and we would shout at them, you can't do that, but it only got us more beatings.

My first admission to the Ballarat Children's Home

At my first admission to the Ballarat Children's home, [REDACTED] I were there, [REDACTED] was still at the Babies home. At this stage, we were located in the Toddlers Block; I would often cry at night or wet the bed. There was a very big lady working there, she used to assault me. She would hit me for bed wetting. [REDACTED] were always trying to share a bed; we were always close as kids. We would be punished fore "being dirty" and we did not know what this meant. I can't remember in particular which staff member said this but it was lots of staff members who worked in toddlers block. We would be hit around the head, face, arms, or on the backs of leg. We were hit with the hands or a closed fist. Other times if they had the paddy whack bat. A square shaped plastic bat with dimples in it, there were a number of different bats, on orange, one blue, and one green about the place. They were about 1 and a half thick and plastic. This was used as a form of punishment in Toddlers block, or the staff members used their fists or hands. We also got this punishment administered for wetting the bed. Of if we cried and didn't stop. I saw this punishment administered to my twin. She saw me being beaten/. (We are estranged [REDACTED] is her surname.)

We were herded like cattle to have our bath, if we cried or did not move fast enough we would be hit. We would be slammed into big metal tubs.

There was a separate building called the toddler's block. It was a single floor. I don't recall how many dorms there were. I was in a big dorm with kids lined up along the sides.

As a punishment for bed wetting or crying, they would make me or [REDACTED] watch each other being beaten, it was a form of control, or even watching the little ones in the unit being beaten, I hated seeing them being hurt, I would often take a beating for them, there was an unsaid rule to protect the little children. You either went silent, violent or psychotic.

Lady Northcote Children's Farm

Then we went to the lady Northcote children's farm near Bacchus Marsh. I think we were in prep at the local special school – Northcote special school; it appears that they thought that we were retarded as we were disobedient.

[REDACTED] I went there initially and [REDACTED] came later. My older siblings, [REDACTED] were already at Lady Northcote.

I was assaulted after absconding with my sister and another little girl. We got as far as the sewerage farm on the premises. My sister fell in it and I got poop in my eye. We were taken back to the cottage and Mrs. [REDACTED] our staff member in that cottage, asked me to stop crying and I said I can't as I have something in my eye and she took me out the front of the building and ripped a branch off the tree and took me back onto the verandah on the front of the cottage and she hit and hit me with the stick- like a green whippy branch like a whip. She hit me with it along my back. I can't recall if she lifted my clothing but I still have scars on my back from this event. She was stopped by someone, perhaps if my memory is correct, her son stopped her, and he was quite nice. I think he would have been around 18-19. He was not little.

There were a lot of problems in her family as she was caught by a family member. Mrs. [REDACTED] would take me [REDACTED] to her family home in Ballarat. No problems while we were there. Mrs. [REDACTED] would hit me on other occasions. I was ill and vomited she would hit me for vomiting. This would have happened about three times. We ended up back in the Ballarat Children's home when we were in about prep or grade one. Just me [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], the older siblings did not come back to Ballarat.

Second Admission to Ballarat Children's home

Upon arrival my sister and I were held down and had our hair cut and then had kerosene poured on our heads, presumably for lice.

We were told; as we were screaming that we would never go home, that our parents had died in a car accident and were never coming back for us (this is not true as dad visited us a few weeks later.)

We were told ([REDACTED]) not to sleep in the same bed, that we were being lesbians for doing that (we didn't know what that was) we tried to push the beds together. We would be smashed around for doing this. [REDACTED] were all staff members who did this to us.

When you came through the big glass doors there were two cottages on either side. We were in one. I would constantly get into trouble for trying to sleep with or near my sister. The first time it happened my sister had climbed into my bed, [REDACTED] found us in the morning and [REDACTED] ripped into us, smacking us around the head with her hand, saying we had been dirty lesbian, we were told we were not ever to be caught doing that again. But we still kept trying. We tried this about every second night for 2-3 months, and we were beaten as I described, or grabbed by the hair and dragged to the floor by [REDACTED] usually.

Also during this time I always had the bed next to the door, at night when we were supposed to be asleep, the kids would play crocodile, jumping from bed to bed. But when the staff came they would beat me – they (usually [REDACTED]) would strike my sleeping form in the bed with a fist. This went on for the whole time I was there, sometimes I would try to sleep under my bed. or up top of the wardrobe.

We were constantly beaten and humiliated for bed wetting. [REDACTED] would rub our faces in the wet sheets, and hit us, with an open hand or a fist or grab me by the hair and drag me around. I would be made to strip the bed, and carry the wet sheets to the laundry in front of the other kids and I would be forced to remake the bed and then be told it was not good enough and have to remake it again. [REDACTED] would do this to us for bed wetting. Mrs [REDACTED] would punish for bed wetting, but not beat us for it. She would humiliate us and make us redo the bed but she would not beat us for bed wetting.

It was not me wetting the bed, it was my younger sister [REDACTED] who would get in with me, piss the bed and get out, and I took the brunt of this. The bed wetting issues went on until we were 10 -11.

[REDACTED] had bat ears and could hear a pin drop. But if you got caught going to the toilet and got caught on the toilet weeing, because you were not allowed to get out of bed after you were put there, if we got caught in the bathroom we would be forced to stand in the dark hallway all night long and not fall asleep.

There was a lady there for awhile, maybe [REDACTED] something like that. If you farted she would chase kids around and around, and spray fly spray down your throat to “clean you up”. She did this to me on two occasions. on the first occasion it happened in the TV eating area room of our cottage, watching televisions. Someone farted, (not me) she was not concerned to catch the kid who did it, and she grabbed any

kid. She grabbed me on that occasion and unloaded fly spray down my throat. The second time [REDACTED] farted, we were also in the TV common room as above. We laughed at her. She was a special needs kid. She chased me around with fly spray and cornered me under a table and she sprayed a lot of fly spray down my throat. After that she grabbed [REDACTED] and threw her through the front glass windows. The bigger girls grabbed [REDACTED] and bashed her. There was some sort of investigation into it. Then she wasn't there anymore.

I had trouble in the foot locker room, it was a little room with a pine door cupboard and metal footlockers along the window for shoes. [REDACTED] would grab me and take me into the foot locker and smash me until I was unconscious into the foot lockers. This happened a lot this affected me a great deal. Sister [REDACTED] covered this up. There was an episode where I was seriously injured, when Mrs. [REDACTED] smashed me into the footlocker. I couldn't walk after it, I was peeing and shitting myself, and got belted for that. Sister [REDACTED] would check me, but I was never sent to hospital, I remember it went on for days and I would get beaten over that time because I couldn't go to the toilet. This has caused spinal injuries to my neck of which I suffer from today.

I am very paranoid about people seeing my body, even doctors, because Mrs. [REDACTED] would stand at the door, while we were showering, and would masturbate herself and say weird stuff, and we would hear her moaning.

When I was around 10-11 I started fighting back, because she Ms [REDACTED] was starting to take girls into her bed, but I said no, I knew I wasn't going to be touched by a female.

A punishment for swearing or not obeying was to be taken into the bathroom and held down while they scrubbed my teeth with a toothbrush with soap on it. It would make my gums bleed and my nose would start to bleed, so I would be slapped around the head while crying and told to clean my mess up as I would vomit and cough up blood. I cannot clean my teeth without vomiting now, so I rarely brush my teeth, as I automatically gag and vomit.

We were lined up like sheep given lots of medicines by Sister [REDACTED] needles, pills, some given by spoons. I remember being in the pool once with the other kids and having a chemical with a gassy smell sprayed over us.

We were taken at some stage to Lakeside Psychiatric hospital. I remember being tied down, when I was there and having electric shock treatment administered. I think it was their attempt to control my behaviours.

In 1978-79 I was sent to holiday hosts in [REDACTED] The husband had an old wooden record player, he filled with chocolate frogs inside. He would give you some and then make you kiss and suck on his penis. I told the staff when I went back to the home, but they still kept sending me back there. After awhile on one of my stays there he then had sex with me up my bottom. It was so painful, but he would not stop, somehow after I managed to

ring [REDACTED] my [REDACTED] [REDACTED] holiday hosts in [REDACTED] Victoria who came all the way from there to pick me up and take me away from the man in Avoca. After that I started to go for holidays to the [REDACTED] with [REDACTED] it was safer there they were really good Christian people. They still kept sending other kids there to the man in [REDACTED] after this.

They would constantly send us back to be with our Dad, knowing what he had done to us, the last time he touched me I was 13, and I said I wanted to go back to the home.

We were moved over onto the boy's cottage at about 11. There we had Mrs. [REDACTED] who had been the boy's staff member. The day I got my period I went in and told her as we had been taught to do at sex ed which had done some time prior. She said I was discusting, and was bleeding because I had mucked with the boys. I had not, I was playing little house on the prairie with [REDACTED] in the hut which the big boys had built. She then brought in the boys and made me bend over and show them what happens when you muck around with girls, I was so embarrassed, so ashamed, I had done nothing wrong, just got my period.

Mrs. [REDACTED] and Mrs. [REDACTED] would say I was retarded and would bash me if I tried to do school work. Then I would still have to go to school after that. I was told all through my time in the home I was retarded and could not learn.

It got to a point when I stopped sleeping, and only slept in 20 to 45 minute increments. I would sleep up in the big pine trees at the homes; I made a base up the top of the tree to lie in.

There was a bat they used to hit us with, it was called the paddy whack bat, (it was a kids plastic bat) they would use it, generally unexpectedly; [REDACTED] or Mrs [REDACTED] would hit kids as they came around the corner into the passage way, I often got hit very hard in the face which would make my nose bleed, I started always checking before going around corners, I still do. When I left I pinched that bat, and a pillow, I only got rid of them about ten years ago.

When I was 10-11 I was taken to the Church of England, in [REDACTED], just off [REDACTED]. They had a minister there Father [REDACTED]. He was supposed to be helping me and the other kids prepare for communion. He lived in the house next door with his wife and daughter.

So the staff took me there each Sunday. At the start he would just talk to me about religion, but then he started taking me aside and getting me to talk about the homes and about the sexual abuse and beatings, he would say to me I could tell him more and that God loved me. Eventually he got me to go to his house, sometimes at different times. At his house, I would talk to him in the lounge room or kitchen. He never told anyone about the abuse stuff that I told him was happening to me.

He started touching me over my clothes, cuddling me. Then he would touch my front privates and one day, he put his penis inside my bottom and told me I was loved and a good girl. This was in one of the bedrooms in the house. He forced himself on me.

I started getting angry after that and questioned god and religion and everything. I was building up anger and avoided him, and he never tried it on me again. He had destroyed my belief in religion and people. I am still very skeptical about religion.

At thirteen the homes supervisor asked me if I wanted organ lessons. I said yes, so he brought over an organ and put it in the empty bedroom in the adjoining cottage which had no kids in it anymore. He had a young Uni or high school girl come to give me lessons, she was lovely and kind and I enjoyed learning the organ, next I wanted to play the piano. One day I was practicing as I was meant to do. And Mrs. [REDACTED] came rushing in and slammed the lid down on my hands screaming at me that I was retarded and could not play. I ran out screaming over to the 200A supervisor's house in tears and told him what had happened, my hands were badly hurt and I could not use them, mostly my left had for a long time.

Today:

They gave us smokes when we were 7,8,9 years we were allowed to smoke openly at 14 and a half when we got our allowance money and I still smoke now, and have chronic lung disease.

I still can't sleep through the night, and still can't brush my teeth.

I was an alcoholic at 18, but stopped drinking when I got pregnant.

I have weakness in my
Left hand from them being crushed.

I have black days where I just can't be around people, which makes it really hard to hold down regular work.

I have lots of trouble in my relationships with intimacy and trust and hate being touched. When I am touched I freeze and feel sick, I try to give my kids affection, but it was hard. I do not and never have trusted anyone with my kids, and I have always and always will check my kids constantly through the night so they are safe as they should be while sleeping.

I don't have friendships and don't trust people. I tried counselling but found it too hard. I can't stand yelling and screaming, I freeze and go numb,, but I also get really angry inside myself.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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