

From: [REDACTED]
To: <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Date: 24/10/2012 04:21 PM
Subject: Submission for the Inquiry into Child Abuse by Religious

"Name and Address to be withheld" please.

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

Again thank you for your time today over the phone and with your sensitivity regarding my inquiry to provide a late submission to the inquiry. Being in Sydney, we have not heard about the inquiry in our day to day media. So I am sorry for missing the deadline date. So thank you again for accepting this submission.

My story is regarding Farther Jack Ayres of the Salesian Order based at Rupertswood, Sunbury, January 1968.

I was incredibly lucky on both occasions in the story I recount.

The physical attack with obvious intent together with a foiled second attempt are spelt out in my 2009 letter to the Salesian Order. I tell of the number of people I have told the story to that resulted in absolutely no action whatsoever from my parents, uncles in the religious orders, church officials, school priests and subsequent counsellors.

I sincerely and deeply believe I learnt to mistrust people from those days and still have social difficulties to this day. As a small boy from the age of 11, I cannot count the number of times I have been asked into a priest's private room and or bedroom since those schooling days at St Pats in East Melbourne, and later at Xavier College. The constant innuendo and questioning over my sexual preferences by priests and religious brothers slowly built a pattern in me of 'oh no here we go again' where trust of these figures became zero.

I respectfully request that this one incident be accepted into the inquiry. I am available for any interview necessary.

However I would prefer to have my name suppressed as I am self-employed and work in a broad spectrum of industries. I hasten to add though it does not matter one bit to me having my story exposed to the public as this dam event happened. However I must respect those who employ me given any possible media attention that may reflect upon them as they would not share the same interest as I have.

I am available any time for further details. My details are below.

Sincerely
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>
Date: 24/10/2012 04:36 PM
Subject: additional comment

Sorry [REDACTED]

I meant to add in the second part in my email:

I was amazed at the response from the Salesian Order now that I look back to the response saying that "he is likely to react in an irrational way" if asked for an apology. Also the comment: "and 2 others".

Further "he, (Ayres), can be occasionally found wandering around town, (*in Samoa where he is supposed to be a virtual prisoner*), muttering to himself and filthy dirty, with a long grey beard."

Could you add these comments into my submission?

Thanks Ingrid,
Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

16th February 2009.

“Strictly Private & Confidential
& only to attention of Fr. Maloney”

Fr. Frank Moloney
Provincial
Salesian Province Centre
PO Box 264
Ascot Vale. Vic. 3032.

Re: Fr. John Ayres.

Dear Father Maloney,

It has taken me a long time to come to write this letter to the Catholic Church and indeed finding considerable courage to do so, but I have come to a point in my life where I cannot let my story be unheard or unrecorded by those in authority today.

While for some, the actions taken by Fr John Ayres at the time of my encounter with him, might be considered as trivial or lacking depth where, from my research, others have unfortunately experienced worse as the result of his personal and selfish sexual pursuits. However, the experience for me was deleterious and to this day etched in my memory.

Some years ago Fr Ayres was featured in an article in The Age newspaper. This triggered in me a call to action and I telephoned the investigating officer at the Victorian Police who was mentioned in the article. Through a confidential discussion, I decided not to pursue a course of seeking a charge of assault against Father Ayres as it would require considerable time & fortitude. The detective was attempting to arrange a group action against Fr Ayres and wanted me to join as result of my story.

My purpose in writing to you is not only to have my experience recorded against Fr Ayres as a practicing priest but to obtain from you and or Fr Ayres, a written apology for the incident that I have carried with me throughout my life. Financially, I am not about to tally up the hours of counselling that I had as a result of the assault or to instigate a third party legal assessment of what monetary value could be placed against the angst and indeed the loss of trust that eventuated between me, my religious belief, & those in religious authority. To try to recount the effect on my school days together with the ripple effect thereafter is almost impossible. It was the start for me of mistrust and disillusionment – a life long effect. It begs the question of what compensation is appropriate for that?

So I write to you to tell you of my experience, with what happened in 1968, and I hasten to add that I do not need to say here, ‘with the best of my recollection’ as it is in my memory as if it was yesterday.

Here is my story:

I was raised in a strong practicing Catholic family in the south eastern suburbs of Melbourne. As a family, we would go to Sunday Mass together, confession on Saturdays and strictly adhere to all the various occasions & festivities during the religious year. In the late 1960’s, I served as an altar boy at St Kevin’s Parish Ormond, serving under Bishop [REDACTED] and Fr [REDACTED], and Fr [REDACTED]. My mother’s brother, [REDACTED] was a priest at the [REDACTED] parish called [REDACTED], and later was the Parish Priest of [REDACTED]. My father’s brother, [REDACTED] was a [REDACTED]. So from both sides of our parents, we maintained an active, happy, and involved religious life. A vocation into the religious life was often talked about.

My uncle, [REDACTED], had a close friend in the Salesian Order by the name of [REDACTED] who held a teaching position in Adelaide. He would be over on occasions to see Uncle [REDACTED] and our family became very good friends of Fr [REDACTED] as we called him, right through to when he was later appointed to a position in Rome. Mum & Dad continued to remain in contact throughout the years.

In late 1967, I had just turned the age of 12 years and in the school holidays that year, Fr [REDACTED] was over from Adelaide and together with Uncle [REDACTED] visited our family home. It was at this visit that Fr [REDACTED] suggested to me and my brother [REDACTED], who was 15, that it would be a great experience to spend some time over the holidays in January 1968 at Rupertswood in Sunbury, to help out on the farm there. Quite a treat I recall and both [REDACTED] and I were very excited to go.

I still have my 1968 personal diary to recall from.

We arrived at Rupertswood on Sunday 14th January 1968, in the afternoon having been driven there by our mother. [REDACTED] and I were met by a Brother who seemed to be in charge of the farm and school grounds during the holiday period. For reasons unknown, which felt odd to me at the time, Fr. [REDACTED] was not staying there which we had expected him to do so.

We were introduced to three student borders who continued to stay through the New Year period at the college and I remember they complained a lot of not being able to go home and the fact that they had to work through their holiday break.

So there were five of us sleeping in the huge dormitory.

On day one, Monday 15th January 1968, we worked in the dairy very early in the morning, worked cleaning around the dairy and later feeding the pigs their swill. Later we helped out at the cheese making facility not far away. For all of this, we were treated to riding horses by the Brother in Charge later in the afternoon. A first for me to ride a horse. I noted this in my diary.

It was after lunch and I was standing near the dairy shed, just next to holding area of the Brother in Charge's own prized horse, when I was approached by Fr John Ayres. He introduced himself, and asked me lots of questions and I was enthusiastically engaged in the subject of sport, particularly running and weightlifting. I had recently been given for my birthday some small hand weights from my parents to build up my arms and strength as I was small in stature.

Fr Ayres said, "I have some weight lifting equipment in my room, would you like to have a try and I will teach you some exercises?" I remember so clearly how excited I was at this prospect. I told [REDACTED] of the invitation. Fr Ayres said to come up to his room/office after dinner that evening. I did so.

I knocked on his door and was invited in by Fr Ayres. He closed the door behind me and moved to take up a position standing behind his desk. He was wearing a white short sleeved shirt and black trousers. I was wearing a horizontal navy blue and white striped tee shirt (my favourite), and jeans.

After some cheery discussion about nothing in particular, Fr Ayres said "You have a terrific suntan – show me your suntan" I said no.

He said "go on you have a great suntan and I want to compare it to mine!" He took off his shirt and moved around his desk towards me. I stood there and froze. I remember his very prominent physique and black hairy chest. This was chilling as no one had acted in this manner to me before.

To my left was the weightlifting equipment consisting of one barbell. I recall thinking was that all he had?

He moved towards me and took hold of the bottom of my tee shirt and pulled it up and took it off me. I was sort of withdrawing from this as I did not like this happening, and I had said no. I was standing there bare chested with him looking and smiling at me. I felt incredibly scared and humiliated.

He then said "Let's see how strong you are" and launched at me pushing me to the ground and now he was kneeling astride over the top of me holding down my arms. I was petrified. He was laughing and grunting. I remember fighting back trying to get up off the ground but he would not let me. Then he grabbed me around the trunk of my body pulling me into a hug and lifting me up, turning me around with my back to him and pulling me physically touching his bare chest. I was off the ground struggling.

Against my verbal protests, he dragged me over to a large chair and sat down pulling me toward him and forcing me to sit upon him. I was telling him to stop and I said "Let me go". He did not. He commenced sliding his hands up and down my front of my chest and down my back under my belt area. He grabbed both arms while I was struggling to break free. I was now yelling loudly for him to stop. He grabbed both my chest muscles with both of his hands squeezing them until both chest muscles hurt. The grip hurt a lot. I yelled from the pain. I recall thinking he has eight hands as they were moving so fast all over me. I was now yelling and crying and saying stop and let me go. This continued for a time until I just screamed and gave all my strength to jump out of his grip. I ran to my tee shirt, pick it up and ran out of his room crying and ran down some stairs putting my tee shirt back on, and I ran and ran and ended up in the dormitory where my brother and two of the three borders were. I tearfully told the story and [REDACTED] was furious.

The border that was standing in between my brother and the other border said the words, "You're lucky. He was about to get his cock out". That description didn't really make much sense to me at the time being ignorant of the intent he was referring to, but I was very sure that it had been a bad experience and one I was very fearful of. At no time did Fr Ayres mention the subject of weightlifting, exercising, or made any connection to our conversation that we had earlier that day. My bed was next [REDACTED] that night.

Nothing more was said of it until the next day, the Tuesday 16th January, while we were at the dairy working, when the boarder who was there on the previous night, asked how I was feeling after that experience.

That day, we fed the Friesian cows and rode on a tractor to do so – I noted that in my diary. One of the Friesian cows had caused a great fuss with the Brother in Charge and some other man as the cow was not able to stand up any more and they had to get rid of it using the tractor to lift it. We watched this sad end to the cow.

Fr Ayres approached me soon after that and said to come back to his room and do some real weightlifting this time. I remember going to [REDACTED] and saying that he had asked me to do so and [REDACTED] said absolutely do not go. I returned to Fr Ayres and said no thanks. Then he asked would I like to go shooting with him. Shooting was something I had never ever dreamed of doing nor done before, even the thought and excitement of that prospect easily convinced [REDACTED] and I that things would be okay and what an opportunity.

So early on my last day at Rupertswood, Wednesday the 17th January after breakfast, Fr Ayres and I went off on foot across the paddocks together with a .22 rifle, which he carried. After a while we were well into the bush overlooking a gully and large granite rocks. Fr Ayres was teaching me to aim the gun and now had moved around the back of me whilst I was holding the gun. He then embraced me 'assisting me' to aim the rifle. He was very close to me and I felt his body at my back and I remember thinking is this going to be another episode?

Right at that minute we both heard people walking in the bush nearby who were seemingly also out hunting that morning. They were only a few yards away. We could see them – one was wearing a red & black checked jacket. Fr Ayres looked incredibly concerned and I recall his worried look. I remember thinking 'oh he is concerned that we might get shot by them?' I did not see any gun being carried by them. He said "let's head back". I was so disappointed at the short time we had 'out shooting'. It seemed like we were out for less than an hour from start to finish. I remember the feeling so vividly of disappointment as we returned to the college.

Do you know how many shots were fired from that gun that morning Fr Maloney? Two.

Whilst in the bush, Fr Ayres fired a first shot at a rabbit and missed. Then I was handed the gun as to our left we saw a fox. I skimmed the bullet off the middle of the fox's back and it ran off.

It is my belief when I now look back, that here was another spoilt opportunity for Fr Ayres, another occasion where I had been incredibly lucky for I do not think the morning was to be spent 'out shooting' with him.

██████████ and I were picked up by our mother later that morning and the only person from the college that saw us off was the Brother in Charge. He rode a small red motorcycle a lot of the time.

After arriving home and maybe a day or two later, I told mum of the incident with Fr Ayres. Her reply was this: "Oh don't worry ██████████ he's just sick". I asked her to complain about it. I asked her to tell Dad. Nothing more was said.

I told this story to my Uncle ██████████ asking to say something to Fr ██████████. Nothing happened. I told ██████████ at St Patrick's College East Melbourne, where I was at school. He asked me to his room one lunchtime and asked me to retell him the story. He sat next to me stroking my bare arm and hand. His hand was most of the time on my knee. He gave me a holy picture card for my efforts. 'Another one' I thought at the time that likes touching the skin of small boys.

I even told the nephew of Father Ayres who was coincidentally at St Patricks College. He was much older than me. He said, and I remember it well, as we were in the school yard just after the start of the new school year in 1968. When I told him of the experience at Rupertswood and Fr Ayres, he just smiled and said "That's our Uncle Jack!" and laughed.

In later years, when I had an opportunity, I told the eminent ██████████. I told Monsenior ██████████. I told a number of priests and brothers at Xavier College, where I later went to school as St Patricks had closed down at the end of 1968. Nothing was ever done. I have had numerous counselling sessions over the years where this experience has risen to the surface.

I am now in my 53rd year and have had enough of the memory, enough of the 'what ifs', and had enough of the mistrust that His Holiness has just last year apologised for. But does that connect to me? No. Does that erase the memory? No.

So in reflection, was there intent of Fr Ayres to commit another act of a selfish sexual atrocity on another small boy, namely me? – I say yes. Was there a physical assault of me by Fr Ayres? – I say yes. Did it completely stuff my life? – no. But what I will say is that it cemented in me the start of mistrust of authoritative religious figures, a mistrust that manifested itself into a difficulty to make & trust friends socially, and introduced me to a life away and outside of the Catholic Church life in which I had grown up & enjoyed. The mistrust manifested itself into many aspects of my life that I wish had not happened. I have always been and continue to be a strict law abiding person, a good parent to my adult children with whom I have shared this story, have dealt respectfully with a broken marriage and subsequent relationships, and despite all, never taken illicit or non prescription drugs. I have been very lucky.

But for not one minute have I ever forgotten the sinister method of his manipulation, his physical pain he aggressively inflicted upon me, and what I now understand was his pursuit of his own selfish desires despite the deleterious effect it may have had on others. Some priest. Some adherence to his vows. Why I ask did he remain ordained and be allowed to continue with this façade, of a holy, and respected catholic priest?

Where to from here?

I respectfully request a formal apology in writing from the Order and/or Fr Ayres if he is alive or capable. Samoa or not. Compensation? I would like that to be considered by whom it may concern and be confidentially assessed via precedent with this individual's behaviour.

I shall continue to treat this matter confidential and I would respectfully ask the same from you and in your position within the Order and the Church. I would like this memory to end.

Your kind, sensitive, and respectful attention would be graciously appreciated.

I shall look forward to your reply,

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

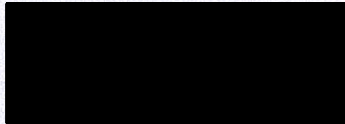
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Thursday, 19 February 2009



Dear [REDACTED]

It was with great pain and sorrow that I read your letter of 16 February, which arrived this morning. I only arrived back in Australia last night, after meetings in Thailand. However, I am anxious to respond to you – as best I can – immediately.

Let me say from the outset that you have all my support and affection as you suffer from the memories of John Ayers' violence against you when you were a young boy of 12 years of age. Not only am I outraged by what happened, but even further outraged by the fact that your closeness to the Salesians, via Fr [REDACTED] and Fr [REDACTED] was used and abused by someone who can only be called an evil man. When your Mother assessed the situation as "He's just sick," she was surely right. But that sort of sickness must **never** be tolerated in a Priest and a Religious.

I believe every word that you have written. I can only thank God that you had the strength of mind and even of body to get away from him when you were in danger of an even more serious attack. The naivety of the Salesians (and Priests and Religious in general) at that time was unbelievable. Jack Ayers, in my opinion, has always lived on the edge between holiness and insanity! But what a pretended holiness! He has got away with so much in the past because he wrote pious books and poetry, and generally romanced his way through life.

Of course, those days have come to an end. It was some time ago that evidence began to emerge that he was more than a nervous type of man, but a real danger to young people. It was at that stage – I gather – that he was withdrawn from all contact with young people, and sent to live in the Salesian community in Alafua, Samoa. There he has no contact with any young people. Initially he was a confessor to the Salesians, but he has gradually become more and more insane, and is now entirely restricted to life in a home. My predecessor, Fr Ian Murdoch (whom we have just lost with cancer) insisted that he be a virtual "prisoner" in that home, run by the Nazareth Sisters. They do what they can, but he can occasionally be found wandering around town, muttering to himself and filthy dirty, with a long grey beard. He is now a wreck of a man ... but not wreck enough to my mind, considering all the irreparable harm that he has done!

Maybe I sound too hard on the man, but someone in my position these days is seeing too much of this. I became a Salesian because of my love for Don Bosco, and my desire to love and serve young people the way he did. Our task is to make God known, not to make Satan

known! All my Salesian confreres must now suffer the heavy burden of the sins perpetrated by a few men who were a total denial of all that we stand for. This necessarily generates anger, and I am sorry to have shared some of that anger with you. As Provincial, handling these matters makes me almost share the guilt of men who called themselves Salesians but behaved in the exact opposite way. As I have said to other people, it is not only the victims of Jack Ayers (and 2 others) who suffer, it is all of us who have been betrayed.

█ you ask for an apology from me and/or Jack Ayers (I refuse to call him "Father"). You have my sincerest apology, and I give it in the name of the several hundred Salesians who have loved and served Don Bosco in Australia and the Pacific since 1923. I wish I could extract something like that from Jack Ayers, but that would be impossible. He is very unstable and likely to react in a completely irrational way if an apology was demanded of him. I have no doubt that - in his present state of mind and soul - he would deny everything and claim to be as pure as fresh snow! You and I (and others) know that this is not the case. Be sure, however, that what you have shared with me will stay with me.

You also raise the matter of compensation. I would be happy to discuss that with you. You ask the obvious question - what sort of compensation can cover all that you have been through? I agree. There is no just "compensation" for such anxiety and suffering. Nevertheless, if you would like to proceed with some form of compensation, we would need to move this sharing beyond just the two of us. Neither of us has the experience or the knowledge of how to handle such matters. I would be happy to establish some such process, and assure you that everything would be kept confidential. However, think and pray about that issue, as I will also.

█ if there is anything further I can do or say, then please to not hesitate to contact me. You will find my direct line and my email in the letterhead to this letter. My mobile phone number is █ Know that you are always in my thoughts and prayers.

Most Sincerely,

█
Francis J. Moloney, SDB