

Maree Phelan,
[REDACTED]

SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE.

I write this submission as a committed Catholic and friend of many years standing of parents of 2 boys cruelly abused by Br. Farrell whilst he was teaching at St. Alipius Primary School Ballarat East late 60's early 70's My husband and I have been part of a very few who have continued to support these people, many of their 'good Catholic' friends have failed to appreciate the dreadful complexity of the actions of a few Religious, whom we put so much trust in and have been anything but supportive.

I submit the paragraph below the details of which is taken from an statement made by one of the boys sent to Fr. Michael McGirr who stood in court supporting Farrell.

Sadly it was not until some 25 years later that the abuse came to light through one of the boys recognising the perpetrator on a Melbourne Street and physically attacking him, then only then did the other boy 'come out'. That amazingly brave family brought charges against this ex Christian Brother, and that some 15 years ago was unique. Among a litany of 'horror stories' along the way it was learnt that the Christian Brothers had used psychologist Ronald Conway (who has been a consulting psychologist to the Catholic Church since the early sixties and was part of the psychological screening of clergy) to counsel this man. The perpetrator had informed the principal of the Christian Brothers Order in our City of his abuse of one boy, not both of them, and the Principal had done nothing to tell these parents that this was occurring ie abuse continued even after the perpetrator had seen Ronald Conway and the Christian Brothers Principal had been alerted. I relate this story to emphasise a minute part of the hurt these people have suffered. As practising committed Catholics they had entrusted their 2 boys into the care of the Brothers and were failed dismally, initially by one Brother then by some of the hierarchy of the Church.

I tell this brief outline of a very sad and protracted 20+ years these parents have endured. Both boarded at Catholic Schools in Ballarat in their youth, both had direct relatives as members of Religious Communities and both contributed so very much to the running of Parish Life [REDACTED] whilst they were growing up while their 2 boys and daughter were at Primary School [REDACTED].

These 2 boys, and their sister, have witnessed the downward spiral of their father into depression, fortunately with the support of his amazing wife and their 3 children he is now able to take part in life, his courage and that of his wife has been an inspiration.

These parents along with so many others have been failed by the leaders of our Church, there are many of us practising Catholics and along with local priests and religious who feel abject sorrow at this failure and we look forward to a future that will see some real hearing of these tragedies and some positive ways that may help so many people recover, even in a small way.

I wish the Committee well in its difficult and complex enquiry and thank the members for undertaking this difficult inquiry.

[REDACTED]

Family and Community Development Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
Melbourne 3000

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The following submissions are presented by members of an informal support group for victims and the families of those who have experienced abuse by Catholic clergy and religious in the Ballarat Diocese. Each submission should be read as reflecting the views of the individual, but taken together, we hope that the Committee will understand the range of views of just one cross-section of people affected by criminal abuse within their community.

The group was formed with the support of the Bereavement Team attached to St Columba's Catholic parish in Ballarat North. The original intent of the group was to organize a Day of Recognition and Remembrance for clerical assault victims. However, following several informal discussions and meetings between some of the participants, it was decided to extend the support being offered to include the possibility of compiling a publication of the writings of victims and family members. This option is being pursued.

The announcement of the Parliamentary Enquiry to which this submission is addressed offers an opportunity to draw to the attention of Committee members some of the stories of the victims.

Important features of the group should be stressed:

- It is wholly an initiative of a small group of lay people and in no way officially attached to any clerical supervision or oversight. While individual priests and women religious have offered support, the initiative remains firmly under the control of the lay people involved.
- A number of these members of the laity continue to attend Mass and consider themselves to be practicing Catholics.
- Each member of the group understands that the perpetrators of abuse constitute a small proportion of Catholic clergy, and have publically declared their support for those priests who have retained their integrity and whose reputations are being tarnished by the scandals which have emerged over the last few years. This however, does not diminish the need to confront a situation in the Church which has protected systemic abuse by others.
- Each member brings specific knowledge and skills to the group, but is aware that they lack the professional expertise to deal with traumatized victims and family members. However, they are of the view that as concerned parishioners, they have an obligation to respond to members of their community suffering deep distress.

Together with supporting lay parishioners the group consists of:

- Three victims and their families;

- One widow of a victim.
- A mother whose son was abused, and who is now himself married to the sister of a victim.
- Another mother of an abused son lives outside Ballarat, but is in contact with members of the group.
- One man whose brother was also abused, has made the contact with the group, and is submitting his own account of the events. This man is also supporting other male victims in Ballarat.

Instances of abuse and neglect by church authorities brought to the attention of the group go back over fifty years.

To their knowledge, no other such support group exists in Ballarat. Members acknowledge the support they continue to receive from a non-Catholic congregation in Ballarat, which initially provided support to three families who joined their congregation after leaving the Catholic Church due to their treatment by Church authorities. They also acknowledge the professional and personal support of Kevin Carson (local policeman) who has worked tirelessly on cases in Ballarat for over ten years.

The group members welcome the opportunity to make these written submissions to the Parliamentary Committee. It is able to provide further documentation by way of detailed individual stories if required.

It is our firm hope that public hearings, preferably in Ballarat, will be held to ensure that the personal perspectives of the on-going painful impact of clerical abuse can be aired publically, so that the injustice and pain suffered will be recognized and appropriate apologies and compensation will be forthcoming..