



Clergy abuse inquiry submission

Maryke Elford

to:

fcdc

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From: Maryke Elford [REDACTED]

To: <fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au>

To whom it may concern

I write in response to your public inquiry in regards to clergy abuse and hereby submit details of my experience.

I was indecently assaulted by our Catholic priest as a teenager (he would have been in his 60's) but did not find the courage to come forward until 1993, some 11 years later. This priest was my disabled mother's best friend and had a key to our house. In the first instance, a report was made to the Community Policing Squad, Blackburn. At this stage I had requested that the complaint remain on file in the event that another victim may come forward. I did not understand the role of the police at the time, and was unaware that they would haul the priest in for questioning. The priest in fact confessed to the allegations made by me and was immediately charged with 'indecent assault', with a court appearance pending.

The events that followed threw me into a tailspin. I had to escape the suburb I lived in and virtually remained in hiding for some time due to the harrassment and hideous bullying I received at the hands of die hard parishoners and family members who did not want our family priest dragged through the court system. Even though the priest had confessed to both the police and my mother, the harrassment was relentless. I was called a liar, wicked and evil with one woman actually blaming me for being attractive saying "Look at you with your long blonde hair and great figure...no wonder he couldn't control himself" I felt totally lost and alone with my only support being my police case manager and members of 'Broken Rites'. The persecution I felt, unfortunately forced me to drop the charges against the priest in order to lessen the stress for my ailing Mother and also due to the fact that I was not emotionally strong enough at the time to see it through - a decision I have regretted to this day! I am now aware of other victims.

At some point in 1993, a member of Broken Rites had organised for the then Vicar General, Gerald Cudmore to meet with me to discuss how the church was going to assist me with the problems I was facing due to the misconduct by the priest. I was ushered into a large room at the Diocese in East Melbourne (just off Hoddle Street from what I remember) where there was a huge polished timber table with the Church's Solicitor sitting at one end with a tape recorder running. I was still a vulnerable girl in my 20's at the time and found the whole ordeal totally terrifying and intimidating. The conversation was recorded and to be honest, the content of the meeting is a blur to me - my recollections are sketchy at best. Nor do I remember the

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outcome, other than receiving a letter from Cudmore saying that the incident was unfortunate but no help or assistance was ever offered.

The priest in question continued to preside over the same parish until his death many years later. I do not believe there was ever any disciplinary action taken and in fact he was able to open a second primary school in the parish and named it after himself - that alone makes me feel ill!

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me (all relevant details following)

Sincerely

Maryke Kendall

Priest:

Parish:

[Redacted]

My details: Maryke Kendall nee Elford

[Redacted]