

4 June 2013

Family & Community Development Committee
Parliament House
Spring St.
East Melbourne 3002
Vic

To whom it may concern

My name is Janelle Morris & I reside at the above address. At the age of seven due to my mother being hospital & my father working away my sister & self were placed in the care of the Sisters of Nazareth Mill St Ballarat. During my stay I suffered horrific physical & emotional abuse at the hands of the nuns.

- Force feeding
- Force feed vomit
- Head bashing into walls and other girls heads
- Made to stand in hot tubs of water for bed wetting
- Locked under stairwell for hours in the dark.
- Made to stand out in the sun room all night which was freezing in winter.
- Beatings with straps, canes & large black board ruler daily

- Not allowed to speak of family
- Threatened to have my toe cut off
- Cruel - dragged out of bed & beaten on a regular basis, etc.
- Severe emotional abuse - they were doing the work of God - helping me I was so evil - they were helping me get to heaven.
- They destroyed my faith in God - I want to believe but I have doubts.
- Because I came from a family situation without violence I had something to compare with.
- So many girls in our group committed suicide.
- I was grounded and I knew I would return home. I had something to look forward to where others didn't.

The reason I am making the submission is I hope children will now be listened to and not dismissed. Priests and nuns entrusted with children need to be held accountable.

Yours Faithfully



The Committee is seeking information from victims relating to:
The causes and effects of criminal abuse within religious and other non-government organisations.

10 Reporting the abuse

10.1 Could you tell anyone about what happened?

As a child I couldn't tell anyone because it was about the nuns. There was an image that the nuns were always correct & the children were making up stories.

10.2 Did you feel discouraged from reporting the abuse?

Yes, because no one took it seriously

10.3 Who did you tell about what happened?

I told my mother & my sister
Mums response was there's nothing wrong with a bit of discipline.

10.4 How long after the abuse occurred did you tell someone?

I attempted to tell as a 7yo but I was also confused and thought that I might be doing something wrong but I couldn't work out what.

10.5 Did you tell the religious body or other organisation about the abuse?

No, they all seemed to be a part of it.

10.6 If you delayed in telling or reporting what prevented you from disclosing earlier?

I didn't feel I would be believed.

Response to the disclosure

10.7 What was the initial response from the organisation?

"You know when you're a child you can blow things out of proportion, things are never as bad as you think

10.8 Was there was an investigation of the abuse, how was it conducted?

No.

10.9 What meetings or other interactions did you have with the organisation?

I was made an offer of \$12,000
& signed off.

10.10 Were you encouraged or supported to report your abuse to the police?

No.

Did you do this? If not, why not?

Haven't as yet, SOCIT are to take my
statement

10.11 What were the consequences for the perpetrators(s)?

Nothing whatsoever.

10.12 What were the effects of the response to the disclosure on the victim and other individuals? (eg. Family members, other members of the organisation)

I have trust issues
I was reluctant to let my children out of my sight
I am hypervigilant of people's reactions
to children. I can sense if they're genuine.
Support I detect dishonesty.

10.13 Were you supported by the organisation? If so, how?

Not initially but agreed to pay
for my counselling without accepting any
responsibility

10.14 Did you receive counselling or psychological help? If so, who provided it?

Yes, Dr Trevor Cowan.

10.15 Did you receive an apology or an acknowledgment of the abuse you had suffered?

No.

10.16 How adequate was the support that was offered?

Very poor.

Made to feel like I had the problem.

Nothing genuine - how can we get her to shut her mouth.

Result

10.17 Did the religious or other organisation accept responsibility for what happened?

No.

10.18 What was the consequence for the perpetrator?

None.

10.19 Were you offered an apology, compensation or other forms of assistance?

Minimal.

10.20 As a result of your complaint to the religious or other organisation what actions were taken by them?

Denial

10.21 How long did it take to achieve a result?

still waiting

10.22 Were you satisfied with the process in dealing with the complaint and/or the result?

Not at all

10.23 What was your view of the effectiveness and adequacy of any compensation, either offered or received?

pathetic

10.24 What were the effects of the result on you and other individuals? (eg family members and supporters)

I'm an extremely deep thinker, I analyse everything. I have to test, I fail to take people at their word.

I'm hypervigilant particularly with my family

11 Responses to reports of child abuse-religious and other organisations Current policies, protocols and frameworks

11.1 What policies, protocols, frameworks and/or charters are currently in place in Victorian religious and secular non government organisations to address child abuse within those organisations?

I don't think anything shift the problem somewhere else & put other children at risk

11.2 What is the nature of the policy?

11.2.2 Is it publicly available? (If so, how)?

11.2.3 Is it time limited?

11.3 Who is responsible for the policy?

11.4 How are the alleged and proven offenders dealt with?

Moved from parish to parish
Protected by the best legal representation

Accountability mechanisms

11.5 What accountability mechanisms apply to the organisation's policy?
Is it open to outside scrutiny or review?

I don't think there is any policy
It's not about the victim, it's how do we protect
our own. No consideration is shown for the victim.

11.5 Is there an appeal process or dispute resolution process for victims or offenders?

Doubt it, if so it's hidden.

Support for Victims

11.6 What supports are available to victims and other family members or significant others?

None

11.8 Can victims seek independent support?

Under the proviso that things are
kept quiet, "don't rock the boat"

11.9 What is the role of the counsellors in religious and other organisations?

To assist the church

Compensation and reparation

11.10 Do systems for addressing abuse within the organisation allow for monetary or other forms of compensation?

Yes, very minimal to blindfold & prevent
the truth from being exposed.

11.11 How is the compensation system/procedure run?

We felt the lawyers were working on behalf of the church, they were well paid.

Is it independent from the operations of the organisations?

Not really.

Is it overseen by a panel?

Yes.

The committee is seeking copies of documents used by religious and other organisations in responding to child abuse.

12 Investigation reports of child abuse

12.1 What processes for internal investigation exist in religious and other organisations?

None

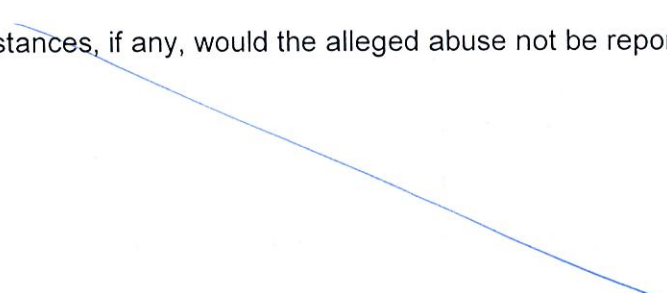
12.2 Have allegations of child abuse been reported to police when the organisation is made aware of them?

No.

12.3 What processes are in place for reporting cases of alleged child abuse to the police?

None

12.4 In what circumstances, if any, would the alleged abuse not be reported?



13 Law and Legal Process Religious Law and Practice

13.1 In what ways are religious laws and procedures used to address abuse within the organisation?

Do they have any laws?

13.2 Have internal systems of investigation discouraged reporting of criminal acts to the police?

You are discouraged as you are made to look like you have the problem. They play it down, you have it wrong.

13.3 Have internal systems of redress discouraged or prevented civil legal action being taken by victims?

Yes.

13.4 Under what circumstances is it appropriate for religious organisations to apply internal sanctions to offenders, such as expulsion or laicisation (defrocking)?

There is no circumstance.

13.5 Have the legal structures used by religious bodies to manage their affairs and their assets acted to discourage or prevent civil legal action being taken by victims against offenders?

Definitely

Mandatory Reporting

13.6 Should Mandatory Reporting of cases of alleged criminal abuse be extended to ministers of religion?

Yes.

13.7 To what extent should the reporting of suspicions of abuse be circumscribed by law, customs and ethical codes of religion? (for example, should the sacrament of the Catholic confessional remain sacrosanct in these circumstances?)

They believe they are a law unto themselves
They will determine right from wrong according to what suits/benefits them.

13.8 What consequences may flow from the extension of Mandatory Reporting to ministers of religion?

Offenders will be driven underground.

13.9 What procedures do religious and other organisations have in place to ensure the suitability of employing people in the organisation who work with children?

None.

13.10 Are these in addition to those required to be undertaken by state law?



13.11 How is the Working with Children Act 2005 applied in the context of ministers of religion?

Unknown

Potential New Laws

13.12 Are new laws required to more effectively address the institutional abuse of children?

Yes.

13.13 Should officials in religious and other organisations be held criminally responsible for the actions of offenders of child abuse in their employ or for whom they have responsibility?

Yes.

14 Responding to Offenders and Alleged Offenders

14.1 Are there formal or informal practices or guidelines for the personnel accused, suspected or convicted of criminal or other abuse?

"lets protect them"

14.2 How should cases be dealt with when there is suspected abuse but in sufficient evidence?

Victim & offender should be given the same rights & treated equally.

14.3 How do religious and other organisations protect victims when alleged offenders have not been charged or convicted of a criminal offence?

They don't. they never protect the victim its all about the offender

15 Data Privacy and Public Interest

15.1 Does the organisation maintain comprehensive records data on the incidence and prevalence of abuse against children in the organisation?

No.

If so are such records publicly available?

Records were destroyed.

Do organisations share information regarding proven or suspected cases of abuse to other agencies even in cases where it is not compelled to do so? (For example schools, DHS?)

No, notify own authority

What confidentiality/privacy considerations flow from this?

15.2 Do religious organisations inform that laity and other members of the religious or wider community about abuses committed by its members? **No**.

Should it do so? **No**.

It should go through correct channels

Victim & suspected offender sh be treated equally
& offered same assistance

15.3 How can the wider community be informed about child abuse/child protection issues or suspicions?

People sh be reminded to be vigilant with their children.

I don't want a witch hunt.

I believe in fair play.

16 Prevention

16.1 Are there education or prevention programs/policies with regard to the abuse of children and other vulnerable people in religious and other organisations?

No.

16.1.1 What type of program?

1 off or ongoing?

16.1.2 Who is responsible for developing the programs?

16.1.3 Are these programs internally/externally run or both?

16.1.4 Who attends the education programs?

Is it compulsory?

16.2 For organisations responsible for the accreditation of ministers of religion, do the curricula include training regarding sexual and other forms of abuse (for example at seminaries?)

Unknown

16.3 Have these programs been evaluated?

Unknown

To what extent have they been successful in addressing or raising awareness of these forms of criminal abuse?

Unknown

16.4 Does the organisation's framework or policy have provisions or guidelines for proactively encouraging/facilitating the reporting of criminal (or other) abuse of children by people within the organisation?

No

Are new laws required to more effectively address the institutional abuse of children?

Yes

17 Relationships with External Bodies and Organisations Victoria Police

17.1 Do any formal/written protocols exist between religious/non government organisations and Victoria police?

Not that I'm aware of

17.2 Are Victoria police guidelines and procedures for investigating child abuse consistently applied across religious or other organisations?

There seems to be a protective shield around Catholic organisations
Catholics are within all organisations

Are there any guidelines specific to the investigation of ministers of religion?

If there are they are hidden & shallow.

17.3 Does Victoria police have liaison officers that are dedicated to working with religious organisations on cases of criminal abuse and if not should there be?

Unknown, yes there should be

17.4 Do religious and other organisations have any formal protocols within DHS
If not, what form should they take?

Not that I know of.
It requires independent people/body that
is open enough to take in all sides

Other Organisations

17.5 Are there formal or informal protocols or relationships between religious and other organisations and non government bodies, eg CASA?

Unsure, if so policies will benefit church

If not, what form should they take?

17.6 Are there relationships or liaisons between religious and other organisations and victims advocacy groups?

Only if it will benefit the church

17.7 Do the organisations network with religious and other organisations to address abuse? (eg. interfaith bodies)?

Unknown
Couldn't see the point

I do/do not want to present verbal evidence to the Committee