

**VICTORIAN INQUIRY INTO THE HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE
BY RELIGIOUS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS**

Family and Community Development Committee



SUBMISSION BY: Mary Rutledge
21st September 2012

REQUESTS:

CONFIDENTIALITY:

I am **not seeking confidentiality** in relation to any details contained in my submission, including my full name, photos and my personal story

REQUEST TO PRESENT AT INQUIRY:

I wish to **present my personal story of clergy abuse at the Inquiry** in the form of a combined impact statement and presentation. This presentation will focus on my personal story and will detail the immediate and long-term effects of clergy abuse on me.

I have responded to only certain sections of the terms of reference and these include:

RESPONSES TO CHILD ABUSE.VICTIM EXPERIENCES

- Questions 10.1 to 10.6
- Questions 10.7 to 10.24 detailing my interactions with The Police, with the Catholic Church and with an organisation called Broken Rites. I have answered questions 10.7 to 10.24 **separately for each** of the above and given a clear heading for each.
- I have also commented on some “other organisation” issues and these are outlined within the context of the above questions.

****All appendices have been attached as separate documents as I had trouble adding them to this document – there are nine attachments, Appendices A to I****

- [Appendix A: My Personal Story](#)
[REDACTED]
- [Appendix C: Letter of Complaint to Broken Rites](#)
[REDACTED]
- [Appendix E: Report to Operation Paradox Sept 1997](#)
- [Appendix F: Outcome of Investigation Jan 1998.](#)
- [Appendix G: POLICE FOI SOCIT 2012](#)
- [Appendix H: The Catholic Church 2012](#)
[REDACTED]

10. RESPONSES TO CHILD ABUSE. VICTIM EXPERIENCES

Reporting the abuse

10.1 Could you tell anyone about what happened?

No, I did not report the abuse to anyone for the following reasons:

- I did not understand what had happened to me and did not know what it (the act) was even called
- I thought it was my fault
- I was extremely traumatised and in shock
- I lived in absolute fear of the Priest and feared for my life
- As a young girl of eight from a devout Catholic family, I did not even consider that I could tell anyone

10.2 Did you feel discouraged from reporting the abuse?

- I did not know I could report it

10.3 Who did you tell about what happened?

- I first told a counsellor what had happened to me 23 years after the abuse.
- The reason for me disclosing it then was because there was a pressing need to start dealing with my own abuse issues so that I would not go down the same path as one of my older brothers who had taken his life a year before.

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

- The abuse first occurred in 1970 and the first person I told was my counsellor when I was 31 in 1993. Twenty three years after the abuse.

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

I told three separate organisations and they were:

- 1) An organisation called **Broken Rites** (1995)
- 2) The **Police** and, (1997)
- 3) The **Catholic Church** -Melbourne Archdiocese (1997)

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

As a child

- I was petrified of saying anything to anyone.
- The priest made sure that I did not divulge the secret of what he had done to me and I lived in constant fear for my life and soul.
- I did not understand that it was NOT my fault and thought everyone saw me as evil.

As a teenager

- A combination of overwhelming fear, entrenched shame and guilt exacerbated by years of masking the emotional pain and torment with substance abuse.
- I began smoking cigarettes at 12, was drinking large quantities of straight Vodka and Gin at 13 years of age, and by 16 years of age, I begun what would eventually become several years of illicit substance abuse.

As an adult

- Ongoing substance abuse blocked out the memory
- Not having the personal resources or support to deal with the suicidal ideation that stemmed from remembering the abuse.
- Fear of dealing with the gravity of what had happened and whether I would be believed.
- Denial and disbelief that the abuse had actually occurred.
- Fear that I would be alienated from family.
- Concern about the shame and judgement that would be brought upon the family in the small country town.
- Guilt that disclosing the abuse would ostracize family members, in particular my mother (a parishioner of 30 plus years) from the local Catholic Parish and broader community.
- Concern for emotional welfare of family members who may not cope with the disclosure due to the possibility of their own clergy abuse issues. One of my brothers committed suicide in 1993. He along with two of my other brothers spent time being altar boys and loathed it, and would do anything to get out of it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10.12 continued:

- My only other contact with the organisation was to write a letter of complaint to Chris at Broken Rites outlining my concerns [REDACTED]
- At no point during any of the phone calls did I receive any information or advice on support services that may be available to me.

Appendix C: Letter of complaint to Broken Rites – I received a letter of apology (from Chris Mclsaacs from Broken Rites), but do not have a copy on hand.

[REDACTED]

Support

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

No, I was further traumatised by the manner in which I was treated and spoken to. The organisation strongly encouraged victims to speak directly to Broken Rites first (as outlined on their website) before speaking to anyone else.

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

No, I had my own counsellor in place, and needed more intensive support after my contact with Broken Rites. At no point was I offered referral for additional emotional support from Broken Rites. . . it seemed to be kept “in house”.

[REDACTED]

10.16 How adequate was the support that was offered?

It was not adequate at all and was in fact psychologically damaging.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

10.20 As a result of your complaint to the religious or other organisation what actions

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Response to the disclosure:

[2\) The Police - Contact made in 1997.](#)

10.7 What was the initial response from the organisation?

- I first reported the abuse to the Police in 1997 as part of Operation Paradox which was set up for people to report instances of child sexual assault.
- At the time there was a lot of media reports on child sexual assault and a wave of clergy abuse disclosures were beginning to emerge. My report was taken seriously by Operation Paradox and recorded.

Appendix E: I do not have a copy of the detailed Police statement. The result of FOI application in May 2012 revealed that my original statement is likely to have been destroyed due to “the amount of time that has passed” since the initial report was made. However, my FOI application was able to provide me with **an Information Report record of my initial contact with Operation Paradox in 1997.**

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

- My initial details were taken via the phone by an Officer with Operation Paradox on 10th September 1997.
- Followed up by a call from SOCA Moorabbin to make a time to make a police statement.
- A statement was taken and report sent to Castlemaine Police for further investigation.
- The Priest was still alive (but retired) at the time of this report and from what I understand was not questioned about my allegations of sexual abuse.

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

- After my initial phone call to Operation Paradox, I was contacted and a time was made to visit SOCA Moorabbin offices and make a full statement with a female police officer. The statement was sent to Castlemaine Police to investigate as I was living in Castlemaine at the time of the abuse in 1970.
- A second appointment was made once the Castlemaine Police investigation was completed and their report returned to SOCA Moorabbin.
- At this second meeting, I was informed that no further Police action would take place in relation to my report. I was informed by the Police Officer that she had the Castlemaine Police report in front of her, but said she did not want to show me the whole report or read it to me, but would just read out the concluding statement on the report.
- The Police officer told me that Castlemaine Police had spoken to some of the elder Catholic Church parishioners and asked them if they had any recall of any such incidents of abuse taking place. The parishioners said they were unable to recall any incidents of the sort. Hence, no further action required.

10.10 Were you encouraged or supported to report your abuse to the police? Did you do this? If not, why not?

- I was not encouraged to take the matter further as I was told my evidence could not be corroborated and would not proceed very far legally. I did not have the strength or inner resources at this point in my life to advocate for myself, so accepted this outcome without question.
- In my initial meeting with the Police Officer at SOCA, I sensed that perhaps I was not being taken seriously when I had difficulty recalling the finer details of the abuse and began to tell more of the story [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

10.10 cont'd:

- I did not feel comfortable saying anything other than what I'd already said as I started to question and doubt my own recollections. At this point, all I could do was cry. I recall just sitting on the couch sobbing and feeling like a naughty little girl telling lies as the Police Officer sat in a more lofty position at her desk.
- The Police officer also asked to remove some of the information I had given in the statement as she said I would feel embarrassed later on and question myself about "what was I thinking and why did I say that?." I agreed to have it removed, once again unable to advocate for myself.
- The information I gave that was removed was in relation to the ongoing toileting difficulties that I experienced as a child of eight at school due to the abuse occurring in a toilet cubicle. It was common knowledge amongst both teachers and students at the school that I had incontinence issues, with the Nuns annoyingly telling my mother that I had used up all of their supply of spare underwear, and that they could not keep doing it. It was a particularly harrowing time for me and I was teased mercilessly by other students.

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

- There were no consequences for the perpetrator as the investigation carried out by the Castlemaine Police determined that there was no need for further action, and that my "recollections of the incidence lack detail and in themselves are open to interpretation"

Appendix F Investigation conclusion-FOI Investigation record from Castlemaine CIB.

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)

Effects on me:

- The effect on me personally in disclosing and discussing the clergy abuse was profound in that firstly I had to step out of denial and accept that it was true, and secondly to relive the terror of the abuse was hideous as were the invasive suicidal thoughts that surfaced.
- I required more intensive counselling and support during this time in order to prevent me following through with my suicidal ideation and ending my life. My substance abuse continued and at various times increased as a means to block out what had happened.
- I was re-traumatised by the process of reporting the abuse, and feared I would not survive. It was terrifying to retell what happened at the hands of the priest and open myself up to scrutiny.

10.12 cont'd:

Effects on me:

- Then to have it documented in black and white, only to have nothing done about it or even be believed because of the supposition of one or two long term members from within the Catholic Parish at Castlemaine.
- The Castlemaine Police apparently questioned some of the Catholic parishioners and asked them if they recalled any incidents of sexual abuse by the priest and they said no. The Castlemaine Police report came back with a recommendation that “no further action was required”.
- The priest was still alive at the time of my police report in 1997 and living in a residence for retired Catholic Priests in Melbourne. He died about seven years later without being held accountable for any of his deviant behaviour whilst he was serving as a Catholic priest in Castlemaine.
- I am aware that I am not the only person abused by this priest as I recall sitting in the playground at school (in hiding) at lunchtimes watching him remove a boy from the schoolyard for being “naughty” and take him to the rectory close by. I knew what was happening, but I don't know the names of any of the boys and never said anything to anybody out of sheer terror. He did this same ritual every day, Monday to Friday for as long as I can remember.
- He was at the Castlemaine Catholic parish for thirty five years.

Effects on both me and my mother:

- My family did not know about the abuse at this stage or that I had reported it, apart from my mother who I had to tell when she wondered why I did not visit Castlemaine as much as I used to.
- My mother, a devout Catholic when told her of what Fr Halloran did to me, immediately went into a spiritual crisis, was extremely distressed and would dry retch at the thought of what I had told her. Disclosing this to my mother impacted on her until the day she died as she struggled to come to terms with what happened.
- I had assisted my mother several months earlier to move out of the family home in another part of town and into a public housing unit that was located (unfortunately for me) in the grounds of St Mary's Catholic Church. An ideal location for a woman of her age and faith; it was close to both the shops and her church. The church and schoolyard could be seen from her kitchen window and backyard.
- I found it extremely difficult and emotionally challenging to visit my mother at this property. Emblazoned across the front of the brick fence of the housing estate were the words “HALLORAN HOMES” in very large gold lettering. I could not avoid seeing this as it was located directly in front of my mother's unit.

- There were about a dozen units in the estate, however on the side of my mother's unit, which abutted a small dedication garden and courtyard were plaques giving thanks and recognition to "Fr Leo Halloran's years of dedication and service to St Mary's Parish!"
- I was also acutely aware that my case had not been investigated thoroughly by the local Police, or taken seriously and the local Catholic parishioners did not want to know what happened. My mother had mentioned my disclosure to some of her long term "friends" in the parish and they did not believe her saying that "Mary must have been imagining things".
- I continued to visit my mother at the property in Castlemaine up until her death . . . but it always came at a great cost to my mental and emotional health.

Support

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

- My statement about the clergy abuse was documented.

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

- No, as I already had my own counsellor in place.

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?

- n/a

Result

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

- No

10.18 What was the consequence for the perpetrator(s)?

- None, that I am aware of.

10.19 Were you offered an apology, compensation or other forms of assistance? If so, were there any conditions attached to accepting that compensation or assistance?

- No

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

- My statement was sent to Castlemaine Police for further investigation

10.21 How long did it take to achieve a result?

- About 4 months. Initial contact with the Police was in September 1997 and report back from Castlemaine Police was in January 1998.

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

- No, as I did not feel that I was taken seriously, and therefore the perpetrator was not questioned and held accountable for his actions before his death.

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

- n/a

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

- I felt completely despondent with the whole process and it further compounded my feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.
- I felt that I had been judged and that my claims were not important enough to pursue. I also felt that as I did not have anyone to corroborate my story, it would not be taken seriously. The perpetrator was still alive when I made the statement with the Police.
- I did not feel validated by the people that I thought I would (the Police, and previously Broken rites) and felt once again victimized.
- As mentioned earlier, visiting my mother in Castlemaine at the unit on church grounds was extremely detrimental to me. My mother missed out on me visiting more frequently as I could not tolerate more regular visits.

Appendix G: The Police – 2012



Response to the disclosure:

2) The Catholic Church – Melbourne Archdiocese – Contact made in 1997

10.7 What was the initial response from the organisation?

- I contacted the Catholic Church and after some confusion about which diocese my case would come under I was directed to the Melbourne Archdiocese and onto 'Towards Healing' program in 1997, the Catholic Church's newly formed response to clergy abuse.

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

- I am not aware of an investigation taking place by the Catholic Church in relation to my complaint.

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

- As part of the Towards Healing program I was given a time when a church appointed person would come and take a statement from me regarding the clergy abuse.
- This was conducted at my home by a woman who interviewed me for about two hours on the circumstances surrounding the abuse.

10.10 Were you encouraged or supported to report your abuse to the police? Did you do this? If not, why not?

- I don't recall if there was mention of going to the Police, however I had already commenced contact with the Police myself.
- I do recall the woman that interviewed me as being very compassionate, and took my story down with great care and concern that she got it right.

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

- None that I am aware of. I was not aware of any investigative processes in place by Towards Healing to address the incidence of clergy abuse in Catholic parishes.
- The focus of Towards Healing seemed to be more on acknowledging (in some cases) the clergy abuse, from a perspective of financial compensation.

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 was very apprehensive about dealing with the Catholic Church in any way and was extremely worried that I would not be believed. No family members knew at this stage that I had reported the abuse to the Catholic Church.

Support

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

- I was supported by the organisation to make a report about the clergy abuse, with the help of a woman who documented my story for me.
- No other support was offered that I recall.

The Catholic Church cont'd:

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

- No, as I already had my own counsellor in place.

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

- No apology was given. The only acknowledgement I received was having the woman visit my home to take down my story.

10.16 How adequate was the support that was offered?

- The woman that interviewed me was very compassionate and supportive. There was however no other follow up, and no contact made with me when I failed to meet with Mr Callaghan QC.

Result

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

- No

10.18 What was the consequence for the perpetrator(s)?

- No consequences as far as I am aware.

10.19 Were you offered an apology, compensation or other forms of assistance? If so, were there any conditions attached to accepting that compensation or assistance?

- I was not offered an apology, but was given the opportunity to meet with Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC to discuss my case further with a view to seeking compensation. From memory, the literature at the time spoke of amounts of money being offered commensurate with the level of abuse as determined [REDACTED]
- I was extremely fearful about being judged about level of the impact the abuse had on my life and of having a monetary amount decided upon by the subjective views and perceptions of just one (church appointed) person, [REDACTED]

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

- Not known

10.21 How long did it take to achieve a result?

- There was no result from my perspective other than me having my story documented.
- There has not been any action taken. There has not been a result for my complaint and the issue for me remains unresolved.

The Catholic Church cont'd:

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

- I thought having a female representative from the church visit me at home to document my story was a good idea, as I would not have been comfortable seeing a male or going into a Church building. Despite this I was still apprehensive about dealing with anyone affiliated with the church.
- Apart from receiving a copy of my statement in the mail and being provided with a phone number to make a time to see Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC, there was no follow up.
- I did call Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC and spoke to him about making an appointment; however I was so petrified of his deep male voice on the phone I did not go to the appointment. I was extremely fearful of going to see a "church appointed person" (as outlined in the Towards Healing brochure), and felt that I would be persecuted and admonished for even daring to accuse a priest of such a thing.

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

- I don't recall the amount of compensation offered back in 1997, but I do recall that any amount offered would be determined by only one person, (unless I misunderstood the process) and that would be through a face to face meeting [REDACTED]

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

- Once I realised that I could not follow through with seeing Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC because of my fear, I became more depressed and again felt violated by the Church. I resigned myself to the fact I would be jeopardising my life if I took on the monolithic Catholic Church.
- Not that any one person from Towards Healing did anything wrong per se, it was more that there was no follow up when I failed to follow through with the appointment with Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC. I did not receive any further phone contact or any correspondence by mail.
- I was alone in Melbourne without any supports apart from my counsellor, and therefore I felt the odds were stacked against me in any dealings I had with the Catholic Church. I was also dealing with my own relationship breakdown, the recent suicide of my brother and the subsequent breakdown of my parents 42 year marriage.
- My own fight for survival at the time (1997) did not afford me the luxury or the fortitude to take on the Catholic Church, so I had to set aside the idea of going into battle with the Catholic Church.