

Nuns pay woman in abuse row

TWO Catholic religious orders have paid almost \$2500 to a Chelsea woman who claims she was brutalised as a state ward.

Valda Newman yesterday said she was repeatedly beaten by some nuns during her 15 years in two homes.

Ms Newman said she was forced to peel potatoes and perform menial tasks during long periods in a cellar in an Abbotsford institution.

She said she received little education at the institution, which was run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

She has only recently started to learn to read and write.

"Some of the nuns would laugh at me because I had a funny walk and call me a disgrace and send me down the cellar to peel vegetables," Ms Newman said.

She said that for sev-

eral years while she was in a bay-side home run by the Daughters of Charity, she was forced to share a dormitory with mentally and physically disabled children.

"I was shifted as punishment for pulling down the veil of one of the Abbotsford nuns and punching her... she had bashed my sister and I was just sticking up for her," Ms Newman said.

"I wasn't retarded, but was sent there anyway. I got no education and wasn't allowed to see my other brothers or sisters (who were also in homes). I was made to strip and say over and over that I wouldn't hit a nun again... and kept hitting me until I dropped to the ground."

Ms Newman said her head was pushed into a pot of hot porridge by a nun when she refused to do her chores.

Ms Newman received some of the \$2500 payment from both orders on January 27 — the remainder covered her medical bills.

Her official records from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd show she was admitted as a ward at the order's Abbotsford home in February 1950. She was aged three.

In February 1956, the records show she was transferred to the bay-side home run by the Daughters of Charity.

According to the records, she also spent several stints in hospital with unidentified illnesses during her time as a ward.

Ms Newman, now 50, was transferred back to Abbotsford for five years during the 1960s.

The Good Shepherd Sisters declined to comment on the \$2500 payment yesterday and said it wasn't aware of any beatings in its institutions.



Beaten: Valda Newman claims she was abused while in state care.