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August 28th, 2012.

*Family and Community Development Committee,
Parliament House,
Spring Street,
EAST MELBOURNE Vic. 3002.*

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

*SUBMISSION: BY MRS. EILEEN PIPER, MOTHER OF VICTIM OF SEXUAL
ABUSE OF STEPHANIE PIPER. (06-07-1991 - 19-01-1994)*

*My name is EILEEN PIPER, 87 years of age, widowed, living alone at ██████████
██████████, mother of two children, a son, ██████████ and daughter,
Stephanie who died by suicide at the age of 33 on January 19th, 1994.*

*Stephanie was a victim of sexual abuse by a Catholic Priest, Fr. Gerard Mulvale, a
member of the Pallottine Order, assistant priest in the Parish of St Christopher's in the
suburb of Syndal, Victoria. The senior priest in the parish was Fr John Flynn, Parish
Priest.*

*Stephanie attended St Christopher's Primary School from the years 1966 – 1972 and
at the age of 15, became a member of the Parish Youth/Music Group supervised by Fr
Gerard Mulvale of which both boys and girls from the parish were members. Over the
next two years Stephanie began to show signs something was troubling her, she grew
quiet, withdrawn, troubled for reasons we could not understand. She indicated she
didn't want to go to group practises any more but as parents we felt that it was good
for her and encouraged her to continue. Her mood changes continued. The first
symptoms of depression were born. She was naturally a very shy and timid person. We
also considered her mixed feelings growing up about her adoption; still intent on*

encouraging her to stay involved with her church music friends. Unable to conceive naturally after ten years of marriage, we adopted Stephanie from St Vincent's Maternity Hospital in Melbourne giving our name to her when she was a tiny three days old baby. Her brother, [REDACTED] was adopted from St Vincent's Hospital, three years previously.

After leaving primary school Stephanie commenced her Secondary School education at Sacre Coeur College in Burke Road, East Malvern. The year was 1973. From day one early signs of discomfort surfaced, she became disruptive in class refused to take part in external sporting events, anxieties grew both within the school grounds and home life where previously she was a normal, though very shy teenager, It was an afternoon in year 10 we were summoned to attend a meeting at Sacre Coeur headed by the Principal and other Senior Staff Members who advised us to seek a psychiatric assessment of Stephanie's health. We attended to that immediately. We came away from that meeting in shock. The Psychiatrist's findings were prophetically sad.

She potentially could ruin our lives and eventually could end up in Fairlea Women's Prison a diagnosis that both shocked us which we refused to believe. We made the decision to take the pressure of school away from her if only temporarily, re-acclimatising her to a comfortable happy home environment, encouraging her to resume guitar lessons, to continue with her wood carving hobby, train her bull-terrier dog she loved, she settled down in every way, her temperament mellowed, she began to smile and laugh again, she helped willingly around the home and with the caring help of a loyal family friend attended White Horse Technical College in Box Hill night classes studying a computer accounting course where she graduated with honours and was recommended for a position in the office of a Mount Waverley firm. After a few short weeks, it suddenly became too much for her, she resigned and since that day was never in employment again. The nightmares recurred, her mood changes deepened, I heard her crying in bed at night, she was losing weight, wanted to stay in bed all day long and without our knowledge began harming herself which I realise only now were the first signs of her attempts at suicide.

Her more determined attempt at suicide occurred in February 1993 when we were alerted by a late night phone call from her doctor she was in her car, parked at the Mount Waverley Railway Station, overdosed, rescued and taken by ambulance to Monash Psychiatric Hospital in Clayton where she was admitted and treated for 10 days only as I was unable to cope with hospital visits each day at the same time nursing my terminally ill husband which was unfortunate as the hospital had gained

Complete trust of Stephanie, the Mulvale history, and were confident they could help her.

Soon after her arrival home from hospital approximately at 5 p.m., encouraged by her doctor at Monash Hospital, she uttered these words, " Anyway mum I'm not a virgin, I want to tell you because it will help you to understand me." Stephanie again began to enjoy the security of her home life and on the morning of 19th of January 1994 she was at her brightest, minutes after midnight, she gassed herself in her car and died.

Year 1993 came and went, on the surface her fears subsided, she settled into her studies, she was helpful in the home, underneath this surface, her fears were still evident by fitting locks to inside doors in the event Fr Mulvale broke in to our house in our absence which I belatedly learned had happened before. She scared him off with the help of her bull-terrier dog.

I will now detail Stephanie's descriptions on what happened on 4 occasions she highlighted:

- 1. The first description was of the day Fr Mulvale took Stephanie and [REDACTED] – victim, now deceased, for a drive to Emerald Lake. He stopped the car, went to the boot of his car to get a bottle of drink which Stephanie suspiciously thought to be Coca Cola. He continued to drive to a secluded area in the bush where he tied Stephanie's hands together behind her back and put her in the boot of his car, then bundled [REDACTED] sitting in the passenger front seat of the car during which time she was becoming distressed and couldn't breathe. She heard [REDACTED] crying when he returned to the car, then he pulled Stephanie by her hair from the boot of the car, dragged her down a forsaken bush track and proceeded to rape her. Stephanie was a virgin. It was a severe agonising experience for her. She remembered fainting but could not remember returning home.*
- 2. This rape was performed in a locked room at the Box Hill house where Mulvale and other student priests lived. He had a lady friend staying there and it was she who befriended Stephanie after choir practice one Thursday night to accompany her there for a coffee. Her name is [REDACTED]. What took place that night I find too heart-breaking, too heart-wrenching to describe but if questioned in the future I will not withhold the description of pain, torture, humiliation, Stephanie endured and most likely never recovered from. It is the same [REDACTED] that wrote a letter to Stephanie, which she gave me to read asking her did her doctor receive the used condoms she sent him?*

3. *The phone rang at home one afternoon, two friends of Stephanie's invited her to go to the Edithvale Beach for the day with Gerald Mulvale in his car. She was reserved in her answer but with my persuasion, she joined them, first stop Mountain View Hotel for a slab of beer. The next thing we knew was answering a phone call from Fr Flynn informing us Stephanie was being held in a Police Station near the beach where her father went to bring her home. She described what happened later next afternoon by telling us, on the way driving home, Mulvale began to fondle her groin area. She rebelled by leaning against the passenger front door when he suddenly slammed on the brakes, pulled her out into a street in no-man's-land, braking again outside my home, banged at the front door, threw Stephanie's shoes on to the doormat, lashing out Stephanie had behaved badly. Stephanie had no mobile phone, hailed a passing car for help but had only driven a kilometre when the driver turned his car away from our home direction, she panicked, opened the door and managed to regain her feet that took her to a Milk Bar where the Police were informed.*
4. *A Christmas celebration at a Restaurant in the hills for the Music-Group, hosted by Fr Mulvale. He picked Stephanie up from home around 6 o'clock time. Stephanie recalled after driving away from our place in Glen Waverley he suddenly remembered he had forgotten the wine and drove back to Box Hill to get it. Stephanie realised very quickly his mood had changed. He locked the door and proceeded to molest her. Owing to the restaurant arrangement to meet up with the others she managed to influence him to move on, on arrival at the restaurant, she quickly observed the others were not there. She begged him to take her home, which he did, again, via Box Hill, insisting she stay the night there. After several attempts convincing him she had to go home he complied and at 4 a.m. I witnessed his unsteady driving, Stephanie alighting from the car breathing a sigh of relief she was safely home. I had sat up all night for her as it was unusual for Stephanie not to reassure me all was well.*

All these details were described to me the night Stephanie returned from Monash Hospital, the years of her sexual abuse unfolded. It was at this precise time Stephanie pleaded with me not to upset her dying father, under extreme duress, I kept my promise whilst Stephanie found the courage to contact the police having being rejected by the Church when she approached them to help her. They didn't believe her.

Intense investigation continued during this time until Fr Mulvale's arrest in Perth, Western Australia. In one frenzied moment she demonstrated her need to have him face the consequences of her sexual abuse. In hindsight, the impending trial proved too much for her.

Innocently I made a big mistake confronting Fr Flynn on one of his weekly visits while dispensing communion to my husband, asking him where Fr Gerald Mulvale was working at the present time as he had been transferred inter-state. He said he did not know where he was. He didn't even think he was a member of the Pallottine Order any more, HE LIED, regrettably I related to him he had raped Stephanie. In 1993 he was located in residence with his Pallottine Order Priests in Western Australia. It was there the Victorian Police, Knox City Rape Squad charged him, escorted him back to Melbourne to face trial where he was convicted and sentenced to jail for approximately 18 months for sexual abuse of two other victims in the parish. Sadly due to Stephanie's pre-trial death, her evidence, legally, could not be heard or even considered. He has since returned to Western Australia, has been defrocked from the priesthood, changed his name to Gerard SHAW, returned to university and did a thesis and is now working in an Aboriginal Settlement in Western Australia.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

My on- going fear is that sexually abused victims, like Stephanie, who have been treated so inhumanely will die as she did saying , “What’s the use, no one will believe me.”

In summing up, I strongly believe the Catholic Church must step down from their Canon Law safety net. We – They – en masse are all of God’s children. Why should religious be exempt from the responsibility of not abiding by the law when the laity is expected to. ONE LAW FOR ALL.

My beautiful brother, Monsignor Kevin Toomey (deceased in 1999), once said to me when I was struggling to find money for legal expenses, ”Eil, put your hands in your pocket you’ll never beat them .”

Stephanie was our pride and joy, below the surface laid her deep beauty which I still honour and cherish today.

NOTE: I am willing to have my submission as verbal evidence to the Committee

Yours respectfully,

[REDACTED]

Eileen Piper