

From: POV eSubmission Form <committees@parliament.vic.gov.au>
To: fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au
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Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Mr George Gorman

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SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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Dear Honorable Members,

Part 1.

My background:

I was born in 1972.

I attended St James Gardenvale primary from preparatory to grade 4 and was a member of the Church boys choir continuously from grade 2 or 3 until year 9 (1980- 1987). We spent a lot of time at the presbytery (5 hours/week) and on several choir camps. There was a trip to Adelaide for a massive Catholic choir convention. Vatican II appeared to have bypassed St James and the whole mass was sung in Latin.

I was never aware of any sexual abuse in the choir or altar boys until I read the "Sunday Age" in 2002.

One of my friends problem behaviour suddenly made a lot of sense. He had been abused by Pickering.

He died a few years later.

I'd rung the presbytery in 2002 . I thought that as head chorister I had some responsibility to the younger boys to get them to come forward, get help.

The new priest didn't think that was such a good idea and wouldn't help me find any records of names from that era. One of the former choir adults I asked, asked me if it was to write a letter of support to Pickering!

There were months when every day I was angry with what had happened. Why wasn't Pickering arrested?

Recently I found that one of the youngest boys to start when I was Head Chorister was now dead. I was very upset at what I saw as another needless loss several years after the Sunday Age articles. How many more men are affected out there? Why doesn't the Church approach

them directly?

I have never seen any explanation from the Catholic Church as to their inability to manage paedophiles.

I am unsure if Pickering's whereabouts were reported to the Margate(UK) police. The people of Margate had a paedophile move in among them, unannounced, as the people of Gardenvale had. Did he reoffend there?

I believe there are many good priests working in the Catholic Church. However with no strong internal processes and a history of covering up issues, all of them are suspect. How can I trust my family to this organisation?

Part 2: Responses to specific Terms of Reference:

10.18 Consequences for the perpetrator:

In this case, Pickering left for England one day, he appeared to spend the rest of his life there. I never heard of any difficulties for him. The Victorian Police did not pursue him. He died late last decade.

I am very concerned for the example that this sets for justice in this state. Even the Sunday Age article of 2002 did not cause a reopening or create action on this case.

13.12

"Are new laws required?"

Absolutely. Similar to OHS laws where the CEO can go to jail if there is a work related injury.

13.13

Definitely in the case where priests are moved on from parish to parish, their "handler" should be severely punished.

17.2 "Victoria Police Guidelines..."

Part 1.

Recently it was advised to the public ("The Age" July23 2012) that Victoria Police did not pass a request to pursue Pickering onto their superiors because they thought it would not be approved based on expense reason, and also that one victim was reluctant to testify.

The previous Mar 24 2002 Sunday Age article "Sex predator: the priest who got away"covered this issue of extradition (without the reason given above)

Quote (2002)

"But despite detailed statements having been given to Victoria Police by two of Pickering's victims, it is unlikely he will ever be extradited to Melbourne to face charges.

One victim said police told him the case was not serious enough to justify the cost of extradition proceedings.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne said it was prepared to "fully cooperate" with any extradition.

But Victoria Police refused to say whether the Pickering case had been investigated and refused to comment on why there had been no attempt to extradite him."

I can reluctantly understand but not forgive the "no action" between 1993 and 2002, but why did the very visible and comprehensive "Sunday Age" article of 2002 get no visible

response/action from the Victoria Police? I would expect such an article to get the Police Minister asking "What's going on with this Pickering case?" , then the officer who hadn't passed on the case because he thought it would be rejected on cost grounds would quickly give it to his boss to make the budget decision. I find it strange that the file remained stubbornly with the investigating officer. In my experience, people want to delegate such a sensitive cost based decision up the hierarchy- not sit on it and take all the blame for inactivity later!

How come none of this happened? And if it didn't happen in such a visible case, how many other cases are sitting there gathering dust in the VP files? What review process do they have?

What will happen better next time?

The example it sets, of our will and ability to exercise justice for crimes committed in this State, is shocking. That people can escape terrible crimes by fleeing to a Commonwealth! nation.

Part 2.

Considering the extradition for Pickering was unsuccessful, what process was there for warning the police of the other country of the dangers posed by Pickering?

Who was responsible for informing the Police in the UK?

Is there a general procedure and department responsible?

Yours Sincerely,
George Gorman

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File1:

File2:

File3: