

30 August 2012

**SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO THE HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE BY RELIGIOUS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS.**

**Parliament of Victoria, Joint Investigatory Committee, Family and Community Development**

In July a close friends brother, ██████ ended his life. ██████ wrote a suicide note indicating the pain and torment he had suffered as a result of sexual abuse from a Catholic Priest when he was just 12 years old.

The ██████ family and the community are suffering from the unnecessary loss of a fine man. ██████ was outgoing and jovial and he had a smile that could warm anyone's heart. As ██████, ██████ father, said at ██████ funeral, there is no doubt that ██████ would still be here if he wasn't sexually abused as a child.

It's encouraging that an Inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations, is being held. I would like to see it extended to a national level, not just within Victoria.

Innocent lives have been ruined and lost as a result of the sickening acts of men in trusted, powerful positions in the catholic community. Families have been shattered, and communities are disillusioned by the inaction of the government and the criminal justice system.

The Priest who abused ██████ was protected by other members of the clergy for 30 years. How can this be so? Why did it take so long to bring him to justice? If he was reported to the authorities after the first incident being known, would other children have been abused? The delay in justice is not acceptable.

Policies and protocols within organisations and government, should be clear and state that any abusive person, or any person who conceals abusive behaviour must be reported to the police and not dealt with internally.

Paedophiles who have abused children should be prosecuted. Individuals who have concealed abusive behaviour from authorities and protected those who abuse also need to be prosecuted.

The outcomes of this inquiry need to result in doors should be busted down, search warrants granted, evidence gathered and statements collected. There are still people hiding out there who have departed secretly from their history of abusive behaviour. Who knows the damage they may still be currently causing.

Our children need to be protected. There should be justice for all the children who have been abused. I hope the secrets of the Catholic church are exposed by the justice system and retribution is served for the families who mourn the loss of loved ones. No more dealing with these serious situations internally within religious organisations.

In memory of ██████

Rochelle Hicks