

17.7.12

IAN O'MEARA

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
SPRING STREET
EAST MELBOURNE
VIC 3002.



I WISH TO MAKE A SUBMISSION INTO THE CURRENT INQUIRY INTO HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE BY RELIGIOUS AND OTHER NON GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS.

MY NAME IS IAN RICHARD O'MEARA AND I WAS BORN IN WARNAMISCOL VICTORIA ON THE [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 1961. MY MOTHER LEFT IN MID 1966 AND DUE TO MY FATHERS ILL HEALTH I WAS PLACED WITH RELATIVES OVER THE NEXT TWO AND A HALF YEARS.

I AM THE YOUNGEST OF MY FATHERS CHILDREN BY SEVEN YEARS, 4 BROTHERS, 4 SISTERS AND A HALF SISTER, 4 YEARS YOUNGER.

DUE TO ABUSE BY MY SISTER [REDACTED] HUSBAND, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], WHO HAD PUT ME IN HOSPITAL ON OCCASION MY FATHER DECIDED TO PUT ME IN ST AIDANS CHILDRENS HOME IN BENIDIGO.

I ARRIVED AT ST AIDANS IN DECEMBER 1967 AND LEFT IN DECEMBER 1971. DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS DEC - JAN 71-72 I SPENT TIME WITH MY MOTHER, WHO PUT ME INTO OAKLEIGH STATE SCHOOL FOR THE START OF GRADE 5

MY FATHER WAS VEHEMENTLY OPPOSED TO MY MOTHER HAVING ANYTHING TO DO WITH ME AND MY MOTHER WAS MADE TO TAKE ME TO ST AUGUSTINES BOYS HOME IN GEELONG.

I ARRIVED AS ST AUGUSTINES IN FEBRUARY 72,
I WAS MADE A STATE WARD IN SEPTEMBER 72 AND IT
WAS BACK DATED TO FEBRUARY. WARD N^o 91709

I WAS PLACED IN 4 DORM UNDER BROTHER [REDACTED]
AND HAD MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE "CUTS". I WAS
IN 4 DORM FOR A SHORT TIME (MONTHS) BEFORE BEING
TRANSFERRED TO A "COTTAGE". THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO
REPLICATE A "HOME" ENVIRONMENT AND WAS RUN BY
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. THEY HAD TWO
CHILDREN, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. WE ADDRESSED THEM
AS MUM AND DAD.

THESE PEOPLE KEPT A JOCKEY'S WHIP IN THE
WALK IN PANTRY AND WERE NOT AFRAID TO USE IT.
IT LEFT US WITH BLACK WELTS AS THICK AS YOUR
FINGER AND YOU COULD SEE THE ~~FOUNGE~~ TONGUE OF
THE WHIP ON OUR SKIN. SOMETIMES THESE
WOULD WEEP CLEAR FLUID AND WATER SCAB OVER.
MR [REDACTED] WAS MORE CONTROLLED BUT HURT
MORE. MRS [REDACTED] WOULD SOMETIMES JUST
"LOSE IT" AND SNOOT^N HIT YOU JUST ABOUT ANYWHERE.
MR [REDACTED] WAS ALSO FOND OF DISHING OUT
A "KICK IN THE BUM" AS HE CALLED IT. HE ONCE
KICKED ME HARD ENOUGH TO LIFT ME OFF THE
FLOOR, FOR "SULKING". HE ARRIVED HOME FOR LUNCH
TO FIND ME IN BED WITH A HIGH FEVER, VOMITING,
AND DIARRHEA. SO MUCH FOR SULKING. I RAN
AWAY EVENTUALLY, WAS CAUGHT AND BROUGHT BACK
I TOLD BROTHER [REDACTED], WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF
ST AUGUSTINES WHAT WAS GOING ON, BUT HE RANG
MRS [REDACTED] TO COME GET ME WHEN WE GOT
BACK TO THE HOUSE MR [REDACTED] WAS FURIOUS.
WE WALKED UP THE HALLWAY AND AS SOON AS WE
WERE OUT OF SIGHT OF THE BOYS, IN THE BEDROOM
A FLASH OF LIGHT, AND I WAS GETTING UP OFF

THE FLOOR. I RAN AWAY TWICE MORE BEFORE I WAS PUT INTO THE MAIN HOME. I WAS TRAPPED WITH THESE PEOPLE FOR 5 YEARS. WE LIVED IN REAR OF THE NEXT BELTING. YOU WOULD SOMETIMES PHYSICALLY CRINGE AS THEY WALKED PAST YOU. PUNISHMENT OFTEN SEEMED ARBITRARY OR REASONS TO PUNISH ACTIVELY SOUGHT. MRS [REDACTED] WOULD TIPTOE UP THE HALLWAY AND LISTEN IF ANY ONE WAS TALKING AFTER LIGHTS OUT. IF YOU ARE ACTIVELY LOOK FOR A REASON TO PUNISH, YOU WILL FIND ONE.

THESE PUNISHMENTS WERE NEVER METED OUT TO THEIR OWN TWO CHILDREN.

I LEFT St AUGUSTINES IN MID 1978.

I HAVE THREE DAUGHTERS.

I NEVER EVER KICKED THEM.

I NEVER EVER HIT THEM WITH A WHIP.

I KEPT IT ALL TO MYSELF.

I LOST IT.

I WENT TO SEE MY DOCTOR. I EXPLAINED YEARS OF SELF LOATHING, HATRED, BITTERNESS, DEPRESSION. I GOT A PSYCHOLOGIST AND TALKED A LOT. I FOUND SOME NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT THINGS. I DUMPED A LOT OF BAGGAGE. I LOOKED AT ALL OF IT CLOSELY AND NOW IT DOESN'T HAVE THE REAR IT USED TO. I UNDERSTAND I CAN HAVE A BAD DAY BUT IT DOESN'T RUN ME RAGGED. I HATED IT ALL SO MUCH BECAUSE I COULDN'T ACCEPT IT AND COULDN'T STOP FIGHTING EITHER. NOW IT JUST IS WHAT IT IS - A SAD EPISODE. I'VE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER, AND KNOWING SOMETHING IS WRONG AND UNDERSTANDING THAT IT HAS NO REAL POWER TO HARM IS A LONG WAY TOWARDS HEALING YOURSELF.

I HAVE THE LOVE AND RESPECT OF MY THREE DAUGHTERS. THEY, AT LEAST NOW, HAVE AN INKLING OF WHAT WE FACED AS BOYS. A LOT OF IT IS NEW TO THEM AND THEY ARE ANGRY AT OUR TREATMENT. I AM MUCH MORE CALM NOWADAYS AND HAVE STARTED TAKING THE LONG VIEW. I HAVE SENT A FORMAL CRIMINAL COMPLAINT TO THE GEELONG POLICE AND THEY HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR INTEREST. I HOPE I CAN GIVE [REDACTED] AND [REDACTED] THE PUBLIC RECOGNITION THAT THEY DESERVE. I'M PROUD I SURVIVED, I'VE COME A

LONG WAY

WITH REGARDS

Joe O'M

I'VE INCLUDED A COPY OF THE CHRISTIAN BROS REPORT INTO THEIR INVESTIGATION DURING 2011

A1

Summary of Allegations by Ian O'Meara Against Cottage Parents Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED] at St Augustines Boys Home, Geelong between 1972 and 1977.

Ian O'Meara was born on [REDACTED] 1961. He is the youngest of nine children, being seven years younger than the eighth child. He has four brothers, four sisters and a step sister.

When Ian was about four and a half years of age his mother abandoned the family for another man, [REDACTED]. Ian's father had been sick for sometime and when his wife left his health deteriorated and he suffered a nervous breakdown. He was unable to care for Ian's next two older sisters and they were taken to St Aidens, Bendigo. Ian remained with his father and was from time to time looked after by family members. Ian was physically mistreated by an aunty and by his much older brother in law. As the result of the mistreatment by his drunken brother-in-law Ian was hospitalized on two occasions. The second occasion was during the Christmas holidays of 1972. It was this incident that caused church authorities to stop Ian from having further holidays with his sister, [REDACTED].

In 1969 Ian's father voluntarily placed Ian in St Aidens, Bendigo. Ian's father didn't want Ian living with his mother. Ian spent Christmas 1971 with his mother at Oakleigh, Victoria and she enrolled him in the local primary school for grade five. When Ian's father, who was very sick in the Port Fairy Hospital, learned of this he arranged for Ian to go to St Augustines Boys Home, Geelong. Ian was admitted to St Augustines Boys Home in February 1972 and was subsequently made a ward of the state.

Ian was housed in 4 Dormitory at St Augustines until late 1972 when he was transferred to a cottage within the grounds of St Augustines. The cottage parents were Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED] who had two children. There were nine boys from St Augustines, including Ian, in the cottage. Although not demanded by the [REDACTED] a number of the cottage boys called them mum and dad. Ian did not like this because they were not his parents. Once Ian was placed in the cottage he had little contact with his mother. He blames Mrs [REDACTED] for this situation.

After a few days at the cottage Ian observed that Mrs. [REDACTED] was short tempered and back-handed boys for minor things. Over time Mrs. [REDACTED] was seen to be excessively heavy handed in her treatment of the boys. Ian alleges that he was beaten on a number of occasions by Mrs. [REDACTED] with an implement he described as a horse whip which was kept in the pantry. When a boy did something that upset Mrs. [REDACTED] she would throw a tantrum and flog a boy with the whip wherever she could land the blow. Ian was dealt with in this manner on one occasion for smoking. He alleged that boys were whipped for general misbehaviour and, on occasions, for unexplained reasons.

It is alleged that Mr. [REDACTED] also used the whip on boys, including Ian, but he was more controlled and landed heavy strikes between the buttocks and ankles. On some occasions when Ian was struck with the whip, welt marks were left on him.

Ian related an incident where he claimed that on the particular morning he was at the breakfast table, feeling sick and was quiet. Mrs. [REDACTED] accused him of sulking. Ian left the room and was walking to his room when he was kicked up the backside by Mr. [REDACTED] with such force that he was lifted off the floor. As a result Ian spent the day off school, in bed.

Ian felt that the discipline enforced by Mrs. [REDACTED] was unreasonable, and detailed an incident where he was prevented from going to an organised day at the Torquay Life Saving Club simply because he presumed that he would be attending without first asking for permission.

Ian ran away from the cottage on three occasions. One occasion was at the end of the Christmas holidays at the start of 1975. Ian returned after a short time, and a couple of days later went to see Brother Carey about his treatment at the cottage. Mrs. McNamara was contacted and came to get him and they returned to the cottage where he saw a rovable Mr. McNamara, who struck Ian a solid blow to the back of the head knocking him across a bed. Ian momentarily lost consciousness but did not receive medical treatment. When asked why he ran away from the cottage Ian explained, "I ran away because of Dorothy McNamara. I wanted out from under her and her husband." Ian said of his time at the cottage, "I reckon that would be about the closest thing to going to gaol."

Mr. [REDACTED] died on [REDACTED] 1975. Ian attended his father's funeral at Port Fairy and was accompanied by Mrs. [REDACTED] and Brother [REDACTED]. Ian alleges that he wanted to speak to his mother at the church door on his arrival but was prevented from doing so by Mrs. [REDACTED] who pushed him past his mother into the church. Ian was taken back to St Augustines as soon as the funeral was completed at the cemetery. Ian's version is in contrast to records which state, "Ian met his mother at the funeral but appears quite hostile towards her and rejecting of her."

On the third occasion when Ian ran away from the cottage he was brought back by the police. He told Brother Gerald Mitchell about his mistreatment by the [REDACTED]. Arrangements were made for Ian to leave the cottage and he was returned to St Augustines Boys Home where he was housed. Ian was formally discharged from St Augustines on 30/5/1978 but had nowhere to go. He was supported by Brother Hewitt and allowed to stay at St Augustines for some time. Ian explained, "This wasn't St Augustines Boys Home. It was my home. I didn't know any different."

Ian has not had any contact with any of the boys from the cottage or St Augustines since he left there in 1978 and no knowledge of where any of them are now.

Ian does not know [REDACTED] who had left St Augustines and the cottage before Ian arrived there. Ian claims that the description given by [REDACTED] of boys being whipped with an electric cord by the cottage parents, Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED], is the same as the treatment Ian and others received, except that in place of the electric cord an implement described by Ian as a horse whip was used.

An enquiry by assessors has ascertained that another inmate of the cottage alleges that he too was excessively punished by the [REDACTED] with a horse whip. There is no suggestion that Ian has conspired with [REDACTED] of this other ex-cottage resident to describe how boys were mistreated by the cottage parents.

The [REDACTED] have stated that they didn't have any horses and did not have a horse whip. While the use of a horse whip, or similar, was denied, Mr. [REDACTED] said, "All the kids knew that if they wanted a kick up the bum, then I'd give them one if they deserved it."

The letter written to the Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee by [REDACTED], together with the allegations of the ex-cottage inmate and the admission by Mr. [REDACTED] that he would kick a boy up the backside, supports Ian's allegations that he was mistreated on occasions, while a resident in the cottage at St Augustines Boys Home.

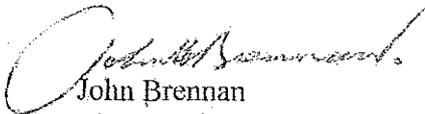
Conclusions

The assessors have reached the following conclusions:

- (a) That Ian was born on [REDACTED] 1961
- (b) That Ian was admitted to St. Augustines Boys Home, Geelong in February 1972
- (c) That in late 1972 Ian was transferred to a cottage within the grounds of St. Augustines, under the care of cottage parents, Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED]
- (d) That Ian's allegation that he was beaten by Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED] with an implement described as a horse whip, although denied by them, is supported by [REDACTED] and a former resident of the cottage, who both revealed that the [REDACTED] has a propensity to behave in the manner alleged
- (e) That Ian's allegation that he was kicked up the backside by Mr. [REDACTED] is supported by Mr. [REDACTED] admission that he would give a boy a kick up the 'bum' if the boy deserved it
- (f) That Ian's allegation that Mrs. [REDACTED] was responsible for Ian's lack of contact with his mother is supported by records, although it was also the wish of Ian's father that he not stay with his mother at any time
- (g) That after considering all the available information, assessors are of the opinion that Ian was on occasions, physically mistreated by Mr. and Mrs. [REDACTED] and his allegations are substantiated.

Recommendation

Assessors recommend that this matter proceed to facilitation.


John Brennan
(assessor)


Terry Mulgrew
(assessor)