

Submission to Parliament of Victoria Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Religious and Other non-Government Organisations

My name is Lewis McCabe. I was born on the [REDACTED], 1961. The abuse I suffered, of a sexual nature, occurred at the Salvation Army Boys Home in Bayswater in 1978 when I was 16 years old. The perpetrator was [REDACTED]. I was too frightened and ashamed to complain about the abuse at the time. The facts are as set out below.

My case history in the Youth Division of the Social Welfare Department of Victoria recounts that an Order was made to admit me into the care of the Social Welfare Branch of the Victorian Government as a child 'in need of care and protection.' The Order was made in the Children's Court in Melbourne on the 19th of October 1977. I was described in the files as Ward No 1394. I was 16 years old. I received a 7 month YTC sentence served mainly at the Salvation Army Bayswater Boys Home. I was admitted to the Home on 23rd February, 1978 and released 4 months later towards the end of June 1978.

At the 'home' I witnessed systemic abuse by staff against the inmates. There was sexual, physical and psychological abuse perpetrated against many young persons in the home. The Home was a very dangerous and threatening place. Witnessing this abuse against inmates was traumatising.

In Bayswater I was punished by being put 'in the slot', as solitary confinement was called at the Home. I was also sexually abused. I was groomed by a senior member of the staff. He told me: 'You are no angel, but you could be Top Boy here.' He showed an interest in my poetry. He took me to the Bayswater Hotel and gave me money to buy alcohol. He treated me as though I was special and an adult. He allowed me to wear my own clothes at times when the other boys had to wear the uniform of the Boys Home. I thought that he cared about me. He had access to a caravan on the grounds of the home. One night after encouraging me to get drunk he sexually abused me. This person's signature on my file is as Chief/Senior Youth Officer. His name is [REDACTED].

This sexual abuse caused me to feel defiled and worthless. I did not know who to turn to. Although only 16 years old I felt I might be partly to blame for the abuse I suffered at his hands. It was only recently that I became aware of the way abusers 'groom' their targets and confuse them about their motives. I now know that a criminal offence occurred.

On reflection, although I had positive experiences while a ward of state in the Bayswater Boys Home the overall practices I experienced there were very, very damaging. I lost trust in authority figures, particularly in males in authority. The dominant lesson I learned there was that the vulnerable would be abused by those with power. Since then I am suspicious whenever someone tries to help me. I also find sexual relationships fraught given the abuse. I am afraid to be vulnerable with anybody. I find that I engage in self-destructive behaviour in general.

I am described in my ward's file at 16 as 'highly intelligent, friendly, hard-working'. However I am now 51 years old and have not reached my potential. Indeed I am an alcoholic, in ill health, live alone and continue suffering from the trauma brought on by my treatment in the Bayswater Boys Home. I experience panic attacks, anxiety and depression and am addicted to alcohol and other

substances. I was accepted into University as a mature age student, but was too broken in spirit to complete the degree. I earn my living as a painter and decorator.

My three siblings are all university qualified professionals, highly regarded in their fields. In my opinion if I had not been abused by staff at the Bayswater Boys Home I could have matured into an adult who reached their potential and was well balanced and at peace. It would be a great blessing to be able to forget the trauma I suffered there, but it continually intrudes; both in my waking hours and often disturbing my sleep.

I would not have survived except for the love and support of friends, family and my art work. However, although I have survived I am severely damaged. The experiences at the Salvation Army Boys Home destroyed my faith and trust in the future. I cannot imagine that I will recover.

I am making this submission in the hope that other children will not be abused and traumatised in the way that I was while in the care of the Salvation Army. Thank you for listening to me.

Yours sincerely



Lewis McCabe

19 September, 2012