

STATEMENT

Name: Mairead Mary Ashcroft

Address: [REDACTED]

Occupation: Home Duties
[REDACTED]

COPY

STATES:

1. My full name is Mairead Mary ASHCROFT. I am 38 years old and was born on the 6th of the 8th, 1964.
2. I have come down to the Sunshine Police Station today to report that from the age of 8 through to 11 Brother Bernard HARTMAN sexually assaulted me. Since 1999 this has been in the forefront of my mind since my own children have reached the age that I was when I started being sexually assaulted. Seeing this made it all very real what happened to me and initially I only wanted to know where Brother Bernard was but I found out I wasn't the only victim. This made me wonder if he is still active, abusing other children because as far as I know to this day no criminal charges have been pressed, so he has gotten away with this and possibly still is for all I know.
3. It all started around the beginning of 1973 when my eldest brother, Brian was at St Paul's College, North Altona. I was living at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with my mum, Margaret, my dad, Sean and my two brothers Brian (11) and Sean (5). My sister Patricia wasn't born yet, she was born on the July 25th 1973. I remember Brian was in Form 1 and was having trouble at school and trouble at home and this was because my father was violent towards us but especially Brian. While at this school Brian came into contact with Brother Bernard HARTMAN. Brother Bernard started coming over to our house because of his involvement with Brian and I think he was the school counsellor so he was also coming over for that as Brian had told him of the problems he was having with our father.

4. When Brother Bernard came over to discuss the violence within our home, Brother Bernard and my parents just laughed it off. My parents were saying that Brian was lying and although he lied quite a lot he wasn't lying about this. Pretty much straight away Brother Bernard became good friends with my parents and as my family had immigrated from Ireland and had no family network here my parents used Brother Bernard to baby sit us when they weren't home. He didn't start baby sitting us until a few months later.
5. I remember Brother Bernard would invite Brian and myself to St Paul's College as he was going to be tutoring Brian. I remember next to the college was a monastery where all the Brother's used to live and that's where we were to meet him. Brother Bernard would take us both to his bedroom. Brian and I would only ever go to Brother Bernard's bedroom on the weekend. I can't remember which day but it was definitely the weekend sometime as I remember the school always being closed. At the very beginning Brian and I would go over to Brother Bernard's every weekend but after about 4 weeks we would go only every second or third weekend. I don't know how long this lasted, all I know is that it was less than a year.
6. I remember on occasions when Brian and I would go to Brother Bernard's room he would send Brian off on errands, for example to go to the science room or give another Brother a message or send him to the maths room to get a book. I think that Brother Bernard also gave Brian keys and would ask him to get things for him so that they could study. Sometimes when Brian would do these errands he would be gone for what I think was about half an hour but it could've been more or less, so Brother Bernard and I would be left alone. I remember that I would usually be sitting on his bed because his room was only very small. When Brian would come back from doing his errand, Brother Bernard would tutor him and I would draw and do art things as Brother Bernard was into art activities. After Brian had finished being tutored we would leave.
7. I remember sometime before my sister Patricia was born on the 25th of July, 1973, Brian and I went to Brother Bernard's room for the first time. Brian was sent on an errand to do or get something and when he left Brother

Bernard picked up a book or magazine from his desk, revealing some photographs underneath. He then showed me a group of black & white photographs of two little girls completely naked. I can't remember the exact number of photographs I was shown but I do know that there was a group of them. I remember that when Brian and I first arrived in his room these photographs weren't visible. When I was shown these photographs I don't remember Brother Bernard actually get them from anywhere, rather they were already on his desk but covered by something so Brian and I couldn't see them when we first arrived. I remember thinking that they were rude photographs and that I shouldn't be looking at them. I remember the first photograph quite well as it was just sitting on the desk in front of me. I saw two dark curly haired girls completely naked. Both girls were standing and weren't in any particular pose, they were just standing there showing the front of their bodies. There wasn't anything in the background. They would've been younger than me, maybe four or five and they looked like sisters. I remember not wanting to look at the other pictures. Whilst looking at the photographs Brother Bernard said to me something along the lines of, aren't they beautiful. He then offered to take some photographs of me naked and offered me 50 cents per photo. I said "no" as I knew it was wrong. He then told me not to tell my parents about it as it would make my dad angry and given how violent my dad was towards us we didn't want to make him angry.

8. There were other times when I would be alone with Brother Bernard whilst Brian was running an errand for him where Brother Bernard would show me pictures of semi naked women like those you see in lingerie adds. He would ask me to point to the sexy bits and discuss with me what he thought were the sexy bits of a women and what he thought I would look like when I grew up. This happened lots of times.
9. I also remember that any time that I was alone with Brother Bernard he would constantly talk to me about sexual things to do with his body, my body and anyone else's body. He would talk about adult relationships and how women had to be loving partners to their husbands and he would talk about a man's sexual drive and although I don't remember exactly what he said the impression I got was that a man's sex drive is insatiable. He talked about

women's sexual urges and generally just chatted about things along those lines. He also used to talk about feeling tingly. At the time I didn't know what he meant but looking back on it and the look that he had on his face whilst saying that he felt tingly I now know that he would've been horny as hell.

10. I remember when I was 9 nearly 10 years old I was at home and everybody else at had gone to bed. We had moved from our old home in Carthy Street in 1974 and were now living at [REDACTED] Brother Bernard was babysitting us on this occasion and I remember I was going to go to bed but Brother Bernard wanted me to stay up and asked me to go and get my pillow and a jar of vaseline. He made me kneel on the floor of the loungeroom with my legs spread apart. On the floor he had art work, pens and paper, which made me think that we were going to be drawing. I started drawing and he made me put my pillow over my lap and he then rubbed vaseline over my genital area with his fingers. He then put his finger inside my vagina and wiggled his finger around inside my vagina telling me that it felt good and that it was good for me. This would go on for a little while then he would stop, then he would start up again. This lasted like that for about 15 minutes. At the time I felt really confused because it felt good but made me feel terrified at the same time because I knew it was wrong and I didn't know how to stop it. I was thinking that I couldn't tell my parents because I was too scared of getting into trouble.

11. After he did this to me he continued to touch me over my clothes. He never put his finger inside my vagina again but he would touch my vagina over my clothes. He would touch my vagina like it was an accident, say like when you brush past someone and you make contact with them. When he touched me over my clothes he would only touch me very quickly and then move away. I perceived what he was doing as very threatening. He would also come into my bedroom and rub my body all over my clothes like he was trying to give me a massage. It wasn't a nice massage, it just creeped me out. He did this quite a lot and I cannot remember every single time he did this. He would never do any of this in front of anyone, it was always just the two of us. This all happened at home as we didn't go to Brother Bernard's room any more. When we lived at Carthy Street we were able to walk to where he lived

because it was only three blocks away. Once we moved to Queen Street, which is about 7 km away we no longer went back to his place.

12. There was another instance where I was in my bedroom and Brother Bernard was again baby sitting us. I remember him getting my hairbrush and some vaseline and smearing the vaseline on the back of the handle of the brush. I was terrified as to what he was going to do with the brush but he didn't do anything. He didn't say or do anything but I felt very threatened by what he did. After he had smeared the vaseline on the brush he just left.
13. I remember another time when Brother Bernard came back from Africa he gave me back lots of gifts he had bought over there. He gave me mostly jewellery made of glass beads that I never wore. He gave me these gifts in front of my family, which I had to put on to show that I was thankful. I had to be seen to do the right thing. This wasn't the first time he gave me gifts, he was always giving me gifts and I saw these gifts as a sign of his power over me and everytime he gave me a gift I felt hopeless, like this was never going to end. I also remember Brother Bernard telling me that when he was in Africa a tick climbed in his penis and did I want to see it. I was just disgusted and told him no. I don't remember exactly what he said but he spoke quite graphically about it, which is what made me feel disgusted.
14. Some of what I have said I can't remember the exact time it took place and in what order, however, what I can say for sure, is that it occurred from when I was aged between 8 and 11.
15. Brother Bernard continued baby sitting Brian, Sean, Patricia and myself and during this time would have close physical contact with me, not necessarily of a sexual nature. If I was watching television he would always sit next to me and make sure that his arm or leg was touching me. He would make sure he was close to me so he could have physical contact with me. It was never open contact like when someone say puts their arm around you, it was touching where no one could see what he was doing. Everytime he touched me it sent a chill through my body, it was like my throat was closed over and I was too scared to move away because I didn't know how to explain it to anyone.

16. The last time anything happened was when I was about 11 years old and I remember that Brother Bernard was looking after us again. Everyone had gone to bed and I was in my room with the door shut. I had taken my jeans off which were down around my ankles. I had also taken my top off but was wearing a singlet underneath so I still had that on. Brother Bernard came into my room quietly and when I saw him I quickly pulled my jeans back up and held them around my waist because I didn't have time to do them up by the buttons. I then called out for Brian and tried to walk out of my room but Brother Bernard was in the doorway. I didn't want to pass him because the doorway was only quite narrow and to get out I would've had to brush past him which I didn't want to do. After I called out for Brian, Brother Bernard walked out of my room and into the hallway. Brian then came out into the hallway just out of his bedroom door and asked me what I wanted. I said to him nothing as calling out to Brian had served its purpose.
17. This was the last time that Brother Bernard ever tried anything. I didn't see Brother Bernard for about 7 years after that. He didn't come round and baby sit anymore as Brian and I were older then and we used to baby sit Sean and Patricia ourselves.
18. When Patricia was 9 years old he popped into our house out of the blue and was welcomed in by my parents. During the course of his stay he asked Patricia if she would sit on his knee on the couch in the loungeroom. She did sit on his knee and Brother Bernard said to her that she has grown up and you've grown into a beautiful girl. I also remember that he had presents that day for all of us like earrings, which he'd made himself by firing glass and metal together.
19. When Patricia was sitting on his knee I went over and grabbed her by her arm and pulled her off his knee and took her out of the house. I told my parents that I was taking her to a park across the road and the entire time that Brother Bernard was at our house I kept Patricia close to me. Since this time I have not seen Brother Bernard.

20. When I was 19 years old I remember I was at home at the dining room table with my mum, dad, and boyfriend at the time, Mike WALSH. I told them that I didn't want Brother Bernard near Patricia because when I was a child he used to touch me and I was scared that he would do it to her. I'm not sure what made me come out and say this, all I remember is that it was difficult to do. That was the end of that conversation and I didn't speak to anyone else about this until 1999 when I told Sister Yvonne from St Mary's Help of Christian School in Sargood Street, Altona.
21. I remember Yvonne telling me that there were two Brother Bernard HARTMAN's which I thought was strange. I don't know if this is correct or not. After speaking with Sister Yvonne I was recommended to contact 'Towards Healing' which is an organisation set up to deal with all accusations of misconduct within the Catholic Church. I spoke with Sister Angela RYAN, a representative from 'Towards Healing' in May 1999 and told her what Brother Bernard HARTMAN did to me when I was aged between 8 and 11.
22. Sometime during May, 1999 after the report written by Sister Angela RYAN about what Brother Bernard had done to me, Sister Yvonne suggested that I shouldn't tell anyone about what had happened as it may stir up problems in other people's lives that they are not ready to deal with.
23. Angela investigated my accusation by speaking with Brother Joseph KAMIS – Provincial, Society of Mary, Province of Cincinnati, USA. The reason she spoke to him is that he is the head of this particular order of the Catholic Church, which Brother Bernard is a member of. Angela typed a report, which detailed my allegations and sent this to Brother Joseph KAMIS. Angela asked in this report that counselling be paid for myself by the Society of Mary Marianists. The counselling was approved and I was sent to Doctor Shane WALL, a registered psychologist – [REDACTED] As a result of my sessions with Dr WALL I decided to write a letter to Brother Bernard HARTMAN detailing the effects he had on my life and a copy to Brother Joseph KAMIS and an accompanying letter to him thanking him for his co-operation to that date.

24. In reply to these letters I received a letter of acknowledgment from Brother Bernard HARTMAN admitting that he was the cause of my hurt by his actions many years ago.

25. I asked Sister Angela to find out where Brother Bernard HARTMAN is and she said that he is still a Brother with the Society of Mary in the USA but I don't know if that is true or not.

26. I sent one final letter via fax through Dr Shane WALL to Brother Joseph KAMIS to let him know that I was not satisfied with the outcome and asked him to respond within two weeks. Brother Joseph KAMIS did not respond so Dr Shane WALL contacted him via phone. Brother Joseph KAMIS told him that as far as he was concerned this had been dealt with and didn't want anything more to do with this.

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(Mairead Mary Ashcroft)

Statement taken and signature witnessed by me
at 12:25 p.m. on the 6th of January, 2003 at Sunshine.

J.G CHARLESWORTH
Senior Constable 30008

I hereby acknowledge that this statement is true and correct and I make it in the belief that a person making a false statement in the circumstances is liable to the penalties of perjury.

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(Mairead Mary Ashcroft)

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J.G CHARLESWORTH

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