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Subject: Submission to Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations by Michael Cox

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

Parliament of Victoria

I live in NSW and have recently become aware of your Inquiry and that the closing date for submissions has passed. I have been advised that late submissions may be considered by your committee.

I would like to advise the Inquiry of sexual abuse of young male students that occurred at the monastery of the [REDACTED] in Melbourne's suburbs, and the response of the Order to this abuse. I recognise that this may be outside of the scope of your Inquiry as the victims of this abuse would have been 16 years and older.

I was a seminarian at this monastery during 1969 and suffered repeated sexual abuse from the priest who was then [REDACTED]. I was abused by [REDACTED] (as he was then known) over a three year period, when I was aged 16 to 18 years. I had previously spent two years (1967,68) at the [REDACTED] where abuse also occurred. [REDACTED] apparently committed suicide around 2003 when allegations were raised by another former seminarian. I have been in contact in recent years with others who were similarly abused by Father [REDACTED]. Apparently Father [REDACTED] was sent by his Order to Africa and given charge of young men in a theological college following his sojourn in Melbourne.

In the early 1990s I made a formal complaint to the [REDACTED] (head of the Order in Australasia). The response I received was a phone call from a Father [REDACTED] advising me that Father [REDACTED] had admitted to the allegations and that the Order had been aware of his conduct. He was still practising as a priest. Some time later I received a second phone call advising me that Father [REDACTED] had been 'laicised', ie stood down from the priesthood, on a 'stipend'. I heard nothing more from the Order, my complaint was not referred to the police, there was no inquiry, there was no victim support offered, no attempt to contact and support other victims, no information to indicate that future seminarians would be protected.

I am unaware that there has been any investigation into sexual abuse within the [REDACTED] in Australia, and how reports of that abuse were dealt with. I am aware that my experience was not an isolated case but I believe part of a pattern of gross misconduct within the Order.

I realise submissions to the Inquiry have closed, but would be happy to provide further information if required.

Yours sincerely

Michael Cox

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