

## SUBMISSION

3/7/2012 [REDACTED]

Hello, Firstly this submission will be disjointed, sorry but one thing they were good at was disorientating us and I was very young.

When was I institutionalised? For me there was nothing but the home- st joseph's sebastapol ballarat, a catholic run orphanage, I knew nothing else. When was it? Well from the 2 pages of info I had to beg the church for- The day of my discharge I was (apparently in a perfect state of health and cleanliness) – a LIE. Date admitted: 9/5/1958 date discharged 20/5/1959 both written in the same handwriting on my release – impossible as my strongest memories are of being in the nursery. I was born on [REDACTED] 1953. Reason – recommended by Rev. Fr [REDACTED], who was he? And how dare he- no reason was given. Who signed my release? Blanked out- why?

Generally we cannot remember much under the age of 4 –convenient? Early memories are of being in a cot a lot and crying did no good, being bored. I was in the nursery and at some time probably about 4 I remember being looked after by young girls from the home, they dressed me and fussed about me – it was ok. Sort of a preschool mixed boys and girls – stories , often about families and mothers and fathers so one day I asked “ where is my mother and father?” answer “you have none , you are a child of god or the church “ – a LIE . I was very confused.

The nursery was controlled by what we called “black monsters” as that is what they were- frightening, hard, cruel and no sympathy or affection- fear – I would not look at their faces , just the black . An example of how they were - we were often naked and they would just stare at us, they would not dress us, give us cuddles and if there was no girl to dress me at night I would just have to wrap my pj top around me and try to put the trousers on, if they were back to front, too bad. Naked at night and lined up naked for long periods before baths and it was so cold, felt demeaning even though I was so young ‘ it was the way they looked at you and often they would say “you are so pretty “ and I would scream at them “girls are pretty, NOT boys”

The girls who looked after me always told me to be strong, they called the monsters THEM when we were alone though they politely called them sister if they were around. I got real cuddles and in secret they taught me to read – I asked them to read the same story over and over and began to recognise words so went on to other books. There was an emptiness inside me and a forever coldness that they could not remove from me and they explained how sad they were also.

I was moved a lot – farm holidays – torture, as you were always told you were a home child and you were to go back. One family I begged them to let me stay as I told them it was very bad at the orphanage. Strange as they treated me badly but anything was better than the

home – but anyway, back to the orphanage. Once stayed with my grandparents – my grandfather was kind and a nice uncle. I called my grandmother “mum” well actually anyone was allowed to be my mum as I had little idea what it meant. Strangely my “parents?” visited an argument – taken away, lived roughly and back to the orphanage. I cannot remember how old I was but younger when with grandparents, think there were others but vague- an older woman and man?

Life was sort of safe in the nursery, sad but the girls looked after me and no men? Or the monsters did not let them at us

Age 5 – told I had to move to the all-boys orphanage- the girls warned me that they could no longer protect me so they made me promise that ‘no matter what happens to me I was to stay alive’ – they knew what was going to happen as some had brothers in there and had talked to them.

Life was extremely violent there as the strongest boys ruled and gave out the punishment – there was one dominant boy and he did most of the punishment or directed others. For the first time in my life I recognised madness in many of the boys – their eyes were blank- they were not really there as something had pushed them to madness. There was talk of “you are going to be got at, at night ‘Men were there visiting, so called priests- they had no name given to them and were feared. So called priests would say things like ‘you know what happens to dobbers don’t you? ‘They gave severe beatings to boys so much so that some just disappeared and were never seen again. All punishments had to be watched. Some boys supposedly went to hospital after beatings but were not seen again – what happened to them? No-one asked as this was a place of pure survival- there were no friends here as everyone was made to turn on anyone else and witnessed ie the violence that would be committed.

I started to not sleep and would get up around 4 or 5 and just walk around the paddocks as it was a sort of dairy farm- winter or summer it made no difference to me though I was in shorts and so cold. I refused to go to their school as on the first day I was there a boy I sat next to told me he was going to bash me – I spent the remainder of my time in the orphanage just walking around as the monsters let me.

Bedwetting, severe punishment – I did not do this as every night I cried and cried till I was exhausted and finally sort of slept. The punisher showed me a row of trees and told me that that is where the bodies were buried, he mentioned it to me a few times and when there was either a suicide or death I cannot remember which he pointed to the unmarked grave. Suicide was a way out and was not uncommon and some boys were pushed into a river and drowned, some probably just jumped as they had lost hope – no one cared as it was a place of survival.

So called priests would arrive at night and tell the monsters to go away – they would have sweets and expected boys to do things in return , bribes saying that movie night would be banned unless ? Or you would be excluded, promises of favourite films if? Ways to make boys do sexual things with them- none of this interested me as I did not like eating and did not care about the movies. Some other boys did not want anything to do with this stuff either and we talked about what to do, who to tell and fear that dobbing meant severe punishment – even death. A few of us complained to a new young priest and he said he believed us but could do nothing , we probably mentioned it to some of the cooks or other workers but they would say “no , you are making this up “ probably wanted to keep their jobs. We asked boys who were leaving to tell or at least someone tell a visiting parent but fear of dobbing and the consequence stopped them from saying anything. Strange as when I finally left I also said nothing- it was the shame of having to say what happened.

It was often said to me “you are such a pretty boy” but I tried my best to never look at them or eat any sweets. One night it changed. I have little recollection of what happened as I was helpless but from then on I just wanted to die. I went around asking how do you die? A boy hung himself soon after and all I wanted to know was where can I get the rope and how do you tie the knot? I was 5. I often cried in the day then and was talked out of drowning myself as some boys said it would be hard to breathe and you die slowly. Who was it? A so called priest as I recognised his voice. He came in at night most likely in the dorm that had about 20-30 boys removed a blanket and touched my genital while I was asleep. I screamed and screamed, I do not know what happened after, and everything in my life went black. I refused to remember any names as the place horrified me; it was in the dark, a so called priest that’s all. Soon after I was told I had parents and was released to people I did not know – if I had not been released I would have died as I decided to starve to death as I did not want to eat- all inside of me had died .

Outside with a so called family – the final insult meeting people I was told did not exist, by then I believed in nothing. I was afraid of everyone, my ‘mother’ decided I could not go to school so she kept me with her, pretended I was her baby –eventually the welfare came and I had to go to school – I was 6 by then and much confusion as to what class to put me in- I could read but the girls could not teach me to write in the orphanage as I must have been too young. School, always the same – teachers would come up and ask me ‘what is the matter?’ I would just look at them.

Within a few days of being with my parents I went up to my mother and very quietly said to her ‘if you send me back there I will kill myself’ I only mentioned the orphanage to her one more time. When I was 14 I asked her why she sent me to the orphanage. She told me not to worry about it and that it was only for a little while. I did not reply as I just thought she was not going to explain it so that was that.

Girlfriends- they all said the same when I slept with them ‘you do not sleep’ or ‘you sleep with your eyes open’ –as I did and noticed when I woke that I did not need to open my eyes.

One made a point by asking me to tell her the colour of her eyes, we had been together for many months, and I took a guess and got it wrong. Then she asked me to tell her the colour of my eyes, again I had no idea. If a woman touched my genitals when I finally slept I would immediately wake screaming with my heart beating so fast so I have to warn them, please do not touch me if I am asleep.

I never married as I really trust no one and inside things were missing – I preferred to be alone a lot even though it is such a cold feeling.

I decided to be a teacher as I wanted to help people. I was good at school and would often help those who had trouble in class understanding things, I thought school was for learning. At uni I found it hard as I was so sad. I tried alcohol but did not like it much. Drugs – at first marijuana, later on ....

I wanted to stop all thoughts. I lasted 3 years teaching and was exhausted from little sleep and sadness. Even when I was at school I figured I would not last long – just a feeling inside. Long periods of no or little work- ended up in Asia for a year, addiction.

Back in Australia about 10 years where every cell in my body just wanted that dull feeling, sometimes I worked, maybe picking grapes or short times teaching- living wherever and not caring. It was hard to explain to people why I rarely worked so I would just say that I did not like work. Spending most times on communal farms – gardening- my grandfather's favourite hobby- I never saw him after I went back to the orphanage but he was a great influence – a quiet, gentle person.

By age 38 a friend suggested I buy some land and build a house. Started teaching again to finance it all. Found I could only work in short amounts so would last 2 years only at any school. Went to a doctor and said I was stressed, he gave me valium – it allowed me to work for the next 10 years- relaxed me. Finally taught at a distance education centre which lasted about 10 years as was able to decide on which days I worked.

At about 50 got very sad , began to cry which I stopped at age 10 when I decide there were no tears left inside me (had continued to cry myself to sleep) .Joined CLAN about 2003 after seeing a 4 corners show on them, also joined Vanish and accessed the 2 pages from the church about the orphanage, wrote to the senate enquiry on orphanages in 2004 , even spoke at the senate enquiry into past adoption practices as my assumption was that the church told me as a child that they owned me and have generally tried to get some justice. Attended the Victorian apology to orphans- possibly the only solution I can see is a financial compensation maybe paid in fortnightly instalments at say 3 times the amount of the pension. This would allow us to live in some degree of financial security- keep up the free counselling as well.

Anyway, strangely a doctor restricted the dose of valium I could get. Got worse and in about 2006 stopped work , fell apart-went to a doctor and for the first time told her why I was

sad, psychologists, psychiatrist, prescriptions –attempts to teach , worked as a postman and hurt my back. More sadness and sold farm. Pension. Now live in far east Victoria- always isolating myself, try not to be sad. Art classes at tafe , wood turning classes – just art now, grow food, be quiet as that was how I survived it. [REDACTED]

PS why not hold a royal commission into people who were held in care and finally sort out a fair compensation package. Also, if you are going to publish this letter anywhere could it be anonymous as I do not want people I know to look up my name on the internet and find this as it is personal