

Letter retyped 26/9/13- no alterations

9th.November, 1997
Mr. Peter O'Callaghan, Q.C.
Suite 38, Level 25
Optus Building
367 Collins St.
Melbourne 3000

Dear Mr. O'Callaghan,

Re: My visit to your office on Friday, 7th. November, 1997

I have some very real concerns about the process that is in place for victims of sexual abuse.

Some of these concerns I expressed to you, and [REDACTED], on my arrival. While I accept that the Diocesan powers that be probably chose the venue as a symbol that they are taking these matters seriously it had the reverse effect on me. As a victim, whether you accept that or not, the venue and excessive decor turned me off as soon as I got out of the lift. It spoke of power, money, and opulence and had the effect of making me feel inferior. The common waiting room with no privacy also suggested that the selectors of the venue had no concept about the huge amount of courage it takes to get to the venue, if they had then a quiet space to prepare oneself would have been provided.

The first image of you sitting behind the desk and the view behind is another intimidating factor. The most disturbing action was that you leant back and to switch on your tape recorder without even introductions so I could speak my name into the tape like a criminal. I know this is common practice for you, but not a thing I would ever do to a person I was counselling and whose trust I wished to obtain.

Then there were the questions. I know you are a kindly person. You would not even realize the legalist way you ask questions. The questions you asked me on our first meeting when I stated that I was not there to make a complaint I found very distressing. They were more intrusive than my counsellor has asked after three sessions.

The cynic in me began to ask if the whole set up is to simply scare off people from costing the church a fortune.

I know you explained to me that the church would need to supply a certain level of accommodation to attract people such as yourself to the job. I would argue that just as missionaries leave their homeland comforts to live in sometimes very difficult living situations to be at one with the people the same philosophy should apply. I would expect that the first consideration in this situation would be to provide an environment conducive to the needs of the clients. Doctors act as honourees in hospitals in often difficult rooms not up to their private practice standards, why are lawyers different?

I have been fortunate to have a loving family and extended family, which if they knew what had occurred to me would probably be supportive. I am sure many of your clients are lone people who have suffered abuse with no joy in their lives. I cannot tell my family, and have never been able to do so, even though my sister once told me that my mother suspected the abuse was occurring, why couldn't I tell her she was right –Shame.

So I came to you with only my counsellor's knowledge and no one to turn to.

Your final comment when I complained I was distressed and would have to leave through a busy work area. "Oh I am used to paranoid people" whilst leading me out the back way. This led into a foyer full of people knocking off work. With tears running down my face I had to travel 25 levels with them. On reaching the ground floor I broke into uncontrollable sobs, which seem to come from the depths of my being. I retreated to the trees at the back of the building only to be sprung by a smoker. I then went to the car park and paid \$15 it cost me to park close to the building. I could not stop sobbing. After trying unsuccessfully to ring the counsellor for a debriefing I took half an hour to calm down enough to drive down to the check out. Because I had taken so long the ticket would not raise the barrier. I backed back to try again and hit the car behind me. The driver got out and remonstrated with me, setting off the sobs again.

As I stated to you I am not a wimp! If that interview was so distressing for me, what of your other clients.

I wish you to return the tape that I do not believe I had a chance to discuss sufficiently prior to its recording. I would never have given you permission for

an unknown third party to type it nor if you had given me an option for you to record it. The criticisms here are not meant to upset you, as you kept telling me, but I do not believe this is a Christian way to handle these matters.

I realize that people cannot go about accusing people without proof. Let's face it I will never be able to prove whether I was fourteen or fifteen when these events occurred. Nor even that it really happened except by questioning other people I believe suspected the situation and ask them to come forward in support of me. I can't even tell them anything. My age would suggest I should have been able to say "No".

It must often be the word of a tearful complainant against a powerful respected person. It is not easy to be articulate when it has taken 40 years to come forward. You ask what I wanted from you. In a word Compassion and empathy.

You, as a lawyer, cannot afford to give that as it may be taken as an acceptance of the claims made. My intellect says I should understand this, but my emotions won't let me.

Most people, I suppose, would come to you without a support person. Don't you think it would be worth making sure they are calm before leaving? It took me to XXXXXXXX to stop sobbing, so in fact that I did not have another accident in peak traffic was perhaps a sign that God, at least, was caring for me.

I realize that there needs to be legal involvement in the process. I would argue however that you should not be the first contact person. It needs someone with expert counselling skills. Then having established the story in a calm and gentle manner can perhaps accompany the person to talk with you.

I am determined not to give up on God. From my studies in Church History the Holy Spirit must be keeping the church together for, as sure as hell, it isn't due to some of our past popes and clergy. I have known many fine priests, so I guess I am not going to give up on the Church either. I am willing to approach the Archbishop, if you wish and tell him any of the above, if it will do anything to help others. You may show him this letter if you suppress my name. At least you have got me mad enough to do that. For someone who only wanted a bit of counselling from the fund, and to quietly get my life together you now have an activist, so maybe it is a positive thing. You do not have my permission to copy the tape. Please tell me when my representative or I can collect it.

Yours sincerely

9th. November, 1997

Mr. Peter O'Callaghan, Q.C.
Suite 38, Level 25
Optus Building
367 Collins St.,
Melbourne 3000

Dear Mr. O' Callaghan,

Re: My visit to your office on Friday, 7th, November, 1997

I have some very real concerns about the process that is in place for victims of sexual abuse. Some of these concerns I expressed to you ,and [REDACTED] on my arrival.

While I accept that the Diocesan powers that be probably chose the venue as a symbol that they were taking these matters seriously it had the reverse effect on me. As a victim, whether you accept that or not, the venue and excessive decor turned me off as I got out of the lift. It spoke of power, money, and opulence and had the effect of making me feel inferior. The common waiting room with no privacy also suggested that the selectors of the venue had no concept about the huge amount of courage it takes to get to the venue, if they had then a quiet space to prepare oneself would have been provided.

The first image of you sitting behind the desk and the view behind is another intimidating factor. The most disturbing action was that you leant back and to switch on your tape recorder without even introductions so I could speak my name into the tape like a criminal. I know this is common practice for you, but not a thing I would ever do to a person I was counseling and whose trust I wished to obtain.

Then there were the questions. I know you are a kindly person. You would not even realize the legalist way you ask questions. The questions you asked me on our first meeting, when I had stated that I was not there to make a complaint I found very distressing. They were more intrusive than my counselor has asked after three sessions.

The cynic in me began to ask if the whole set up is to simple scare off people from costing the church a fortune.

I know you explained to me that the church would need to supply a certain level of accommodation to attract people like yourself to the job. I would argue that just as missionaries leave their homeland comforts to live in sometimes very difficult living situations to be at one with the people the same philosophy should apply. I would expect that the first consideration in this situation would be to provide an environment conducive to the needs of the clients. Doctors act as honorees in hospitals in often difficult rooms not up to their private practice standards, why are lawyers different?

I have been fortunate to have a loving family and extended family, which if they knew what had occurred to me would probably be supportive. I am sure many of your clients are lone people who have suffered abuse with no joy in their lives. I cannot tell my family, and have never been able to do so, even though my sister once told me that my mother suspected the abuse was occurring; why couldn't I tell her she was right - Shame.

So I came to you with only my counselor's knowledge and no one to turn to.

Your final comment when I complained I was distressed and would have to leave through a busy work area. "Oh I am used to paranoid people" whilst leading me out the back way. This led into a foyer full of people knocking off work. With tears running down my face I had to travel 25 levels with them. On reaching the ground floor I broke out into uncontrollable sobs, which seem to come from the depths of my being. I retreated to the trees at the back of building only to be sprung by a smoker. I then went to the car park and paid the \$15 it cost me to park close to the building. I could not stop sobbing. After trying unsuccessfully to ring the counselor for a debriefing I took half an hour to calm down enough to drive down to the check out. Because I had taken so long the ticket would not raise the barrier. I backed back to try again and hit the car behind me. The driver got out and remonstrated with me, setting off the sobs again.

As I stated to you I am not a wimp! If that interview was so distressing for me, what of your other clients.

I wish you to return the tape that I do not believe I had a chance to discuss sufficiently prior to its recording. I would never have given permission for an unknown third party to type it nor if you had given me an option for you to record it. The criticisms here are not meant to upset you, as you kept telling me, but I do not believe this is a Christian way to handle these matters.

I realize that people cannot just go about accusing people without proof. Let's face it I will never be able to prove whether I was fourteen or fifteen when these events occurred. Nor even that it really happened except by questioning other people I believe suspected the situation and ask them to come forward in support of me. I

can't even tell them anything. My age would suggest I should have been able to say "No".

It must often be the word of a tearful complainant against a powerful respected person. It is not easy to be articulate when it has taken 40 years to come forward. You asked what I wanted from you. In a word Compassion and empathy. You, as a lawyer, cannot afford to give that as it may be taken as an acceptance of the claims made. My intellect says I should understand this, but my emotions won't let me..

Most people, I suppose, would come to you without a support person. Don't you think it would be worth making sure they are calm before leaving? It took me to xxxxxxxx to stop sobbing, so the fact that I did not have another accident in peak traffic was perhaps a sign that God, at least, was caring for me.

I realize that there needs to be legal involvement in this process. I would argue however that you should not be the first contact person. It needs someone with expert counseling skills. Then having established the story in a calm and gentle manner can perhaps accompany the person to talk with you.

I am determined not to give up on God. From my studies in Church History the Holy Spirit must be keeping the church together for, as sure a hell, it isn't due to some of our past Popes and clergy. I have known many fine priests, so I guess I am not going to give up on the church either. I am willing to approach the Archbishop, if you wish and tell him any of the above, if it will do anything to help others. You may show him this letter if you suppress my name . At least you have got me mad enough to do that. For someone who only wanted a bit of counseling from the fund, and to quietly get my life together you now have an activist, so maybe it is a positive thing.

You do not have my permission to copy the tape. Please tell me when my representative or I can collect it.

Yours sincerely