

2nd. December, 1997
Archbishop Pell,
Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne
East Melbourne. 3004

Your Grace,

I am writing to you to make you aware of my concerns with the process of the Independent Commissioner's Office.

During the month of October I made an appointment with a counselor, Mr. Shane Wall. I had met him through supervision in the past and knew he had dealt with abuse issues. I have noted a pattern of behavior within myself that makes it difficult for me to handle authority figures. You may argue that many people have that problem, but I believe that my particular reactions stem from experience in my early teenage years. After two sessions Shane Wall, suggested that I should approach the Independent Commissioner. I did not want to do so as I did not want to lay a formal complaint, although I would do so if other cases were known. I guess the power of the abuser is that each child believes they are the only victim, and are therefore evil for allowing this to happen. Mr. Wall said he would contact the Independent Commissioner and check if I could have counseling without lodging a formal complaint against the perpetrator. He did this and was told that I could have counseling, but that Mr. O'Callaghan would like to meet me informally.

I agreed to this and attended on 7th. November. My concerns are found in the attached letter I wrote to Mr. O'Callaghan. At the end of the conversation Mr. O'Callaghan did repeatedly suggest I could follow a legal course. Like many people in my position I have the belief that although I was only 14/15 when these events began to occur and the other party was 31/32 that I should have been able to say "NO". We are reluctant to take on the controlling figure. I stated I only wished counseling. Mr. O'Callaghan assured me this was possible and he would approve it. He said he would contact Mr. Wall on the following Monday, 10th. November. It is now 2nd. December and NO contact has been made.

I was so distressed after the interview, especially with the taping of the conversation and the legalist language that I wrote the enclosed letter. I know I am not the only person to be similarly distressed by the process. Mr. O'Callaghan himself told me so. I was told "seldom people ask for compensation although they are quite genuine" I believe that the process causes the reopening of old wounds and disempowers people yet again.

On behalf of other victims, who suffered in much more awful ways than myself, I would want you to review this unprofessional procedure. I have worked for seventeen years as a counselor and would never dream of putting people through such an awful experience. One of my main objections was the asking of very

personal questions which I fail to see have relevance to approval for counseling. Such questions as [REDACTED] I believe are inappropriate for an investigator to be asking.

When no reply came to my letter Shane Wall rang the office again (I could not do so) and spoke with [REDACTED]. A letter arrived which did nothing to answer my specifically stated issue of the taping other than to offer me a copy, which I had stated very clearly that I had not given permission for the tape to be copied. Mr. O'Callaghan wanted to meet with me again. I do not wish to do so. He had missed the issues I needed addressed

1. To return the tape
2. To contact Shane Wall as promised.

I rang [REDACTED] and tried to explain that it is not the personalities I am complaining about, but the process and asked that if I could not have the tape then could I at least have a letter assuring me that it have been destroyed. She promised me that this would be done. Now, on 2nd. December I receive yet another letter, but no proof that the tape has been destroyed, again promising me that I will hear from Mr. O'Callaghan by letter. Shane Wall has still not received approval for counseling. He does not wish to charge me until this matter is settled so apart from phone support I have not seen him since 10th. November.

I don't believe that there is an understanding of what the revelation of long held secrets causes. I have virtually been powerless to work effectively since this started. My clients need me to be able to give them my best. I am a regular churchgoer and have never held the past against the Church, but since 7th. November I can't pray or attend Mass as I feel betrayed by the Church I have had as my rock throughout my life.

I appreciate that you have many matters to deal with, but you promised, on your installation, that this would be a priority.

I am sending this letter through Shane Wall to protect my name. Mr. O'Callaghan will certainly know who is protesting, so it is not anonymous letter. You will see that I gave him permission to discuss the letter with you, but to withhold my name. I don't want my name passed around the church of Melbourne. I am not attacking the Church, although I now understand why people have become angry enough to do so.

I would appreciate if you would contact the Independent Commissioner and asking him to speed up approval for counseling, at least, and destruction of the tape. Mr. O'Callaghan told me he would keep the tape, so if I, at a later date, wanted to go for compensation I could. To me it feels like blackmail. That may be emotive, but it is how I feel. My aim is just to get counseling to give me the strength to go and

confront the person myself. I stated that to Mr. Wall and to Mr. O'Callaghan and have already drafted out what I would say to him.

I have not intention of causing any scandal for the Church -Too many people I know have turned away from the church over these type of revelations. I don't want to cause people to give up their trust in the God and his Church.

I hope that you may , through the office of the Independant Commissioner, apologise to those who have had to endure this process and take steps to offer cousselling to those who have chosen not to go further and make formal complaints . I suspect that this was due to the method of approach . I guess that ,like me, they hoped for peace of mind when they came forward rather than being made feel more inferior still.

If you ring the office of the Independant Commissioner and the line is busy or [REDACTED] it at you are greeted with "Merry Christmas , this is the office of the Independant Commissioner-[REDACTED] speaking". I gather [REDACTED] is in the common office area. Where is the confidentiality, empathy and privacy - I rest my case.

Yours faithfully,