

**SUBMISSION TO
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE**

***INQUIRY INTO THE HANDLING OF
CHILD ABUSE BY RELIGIOUS AND
OTHER ORGANISATIONS***

By

**Nicky Davis
Survivor and Victims' Advocate**

September 2012

INDEX

Covering Letter	Pages 3-4
Timeline	Pages 5-8
My story	Pages 9-13
Answers to Questions in the Submission Guide	Pages 14-31
Conclusion	Page 32
Recommendations	Page 33

Covering Letter

My name is Nicky Davis. I am a survivor of years of sexual abuse by a Catholic religious, currently known as Brother Vince Crawford CP, a member of the Passionist Order, and one of the founders of the internationally renowned Passionist Family Group Movement PFGM.

I personally congratulate the Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu and the Victorian Government for choosing to put child protection above the protection of powerful organisations and announce an inquiry into the handling of child abuse by religious and other organisations.

I applaud the Family and Community Development Committee's efforts, and those of its Executive and staff, to ensure the truth is revealed within the restrictions of the Terms of Reference and in the all too brief timeframe allocated to undertake such an enormous and important job.

I do, however, call on the Committee to recommend this inquiry be handed over to a body with powers greater than those available to a Parliamentary Committee.

Having experienced the deceit and determination to hide the truth of most catholic church officials first hand as a survivor, and of this and other religious organisations as an activist for victims rights and child protection, I am well aware of the need for the strongest possible powers to compel full compliance, not just the superficial and cynical appearance of co-operation.

In this submission I detail the coverup of my abuse, which is deliberate and ongoing, and which continues to harm me.

I also detail my denial of justice by the Passionist Order and the PFGM and their employees and members, which is consistent with the denial of justice experienced by millions of other victims of the catholic church and other religions throughout the world.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak to the Committee in person if it would like further details of my personal case, or of my work on behalf of all victims, particularly my personal meetings with Australian Catholic Church leaders, which are very revealing of their real intentions towards survivors, and quite at odds with their publicly expressed views.

My contact details are:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Nicky Davis".

Nicky Davis

Timeline

Year	Event	Responsible	Notes
1972/3	Passionist Order take over running of Terrey Hills parish	Father Peter McGrath CP, parish priest, supervisor	Brother Brendan general helper, always around
1973/4	Creation of Passionist Family Group Movement	Father Peter McGrath CP, founder	Brother Brendan second in command, constantly in family homes, at social functions and on weekend retreats
1975/6	Grooming of Nicky Davis by Brother Brendan	Father Peter McGrath CP, parish priest, supervisor	Grooming at Terrey Hills church, other girls also being groomed. Brother Brendan in sole charge of all parish youth groups, including weekend retreats.
1976 - 1981	Sexual assaults of Nicky Davis by Brother Brendan	Father Peter McGrath CP, parish priest, supervisor	Frequent surprise evening visits to family home resulting every time in lengthy sexual assaults. At least 60-100 assaults. At least one known concurrent victim at the same time.
1981-1996	Nicky Davis escapes home, community and assaults. Assaults by Brother Brendan continue on other victims.	Father Peter McGrath CP Provincial and/or parish priest some of this time. PFGM grows to become national and international organisation headed by Peter McGrath	Brother Brendan continued to visit family homes through PFGM, and social evening visits, and parish youth group role.
Winter 1996	Public revelation (within closed community) of sexual assaults	Father Kevin Dance, CP, Provincial and President of Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes and co-author of Towards Healing.	Brendan removed without a trace and all reference to his existence expunged. List of 49 victims collected, but no assistance or apology offered. Internal "investigation" is promised but no information or action resulted. No report to police or authorities.

1996-2001	Conspiracy of silence	Father Kevin Dance, CP, Provincial, possibly others	Brendan in Marrickville, NSW. No other information known. Victims pressured into silence, ostracised. Community pretended it never happened. One or two victims seem to have gone through Towards Healing.
2001	NSW statutory requirement to report introduced. No report made. Brendan moved to Victoria and now known as Brother Vince.	Unknown	Brendan moved to Templestowe Victoria at Holy Spirit Retreat House. Name changed. Website records Brendan/Vince in front line role with retreat guests, which include attendees at mother/daughter retreats.
2008	World Youth Day	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Young Passionists on way to Sydney for WYD have residential retreat at Holy Spirit Retreat House, Victoria where Brendan/Vince lives and works.
2008	As a result of Papal visit, Nicky Davis resolves to disclose direct to police, not to Passionist Order. After all, they know already and have done nothing but coverup.	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky Davis has no idea where Brendan has been moved to, and knows Passionists and Terrey Hills community will not help her. She never knew his surname so cannot find him in catholic directories. Luckily another of Brendan's victims contacts Broken Rites – she lives in VIC near Brendan/Vince and had seen and recognised him and reveals he is hiding under a new name. Broken Rites informs Nicky, and she reports him to police.
2008/2009	NSW Police Investigation	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Police investigation is obstructed. Documents are only handed over if forced to by search warrant. Evidence is found during police search, hidden in church roof. No details of any "investigation", the list of 49 victims or any Towards Healing documentation ever handed over. Father Peter McGrath is "unavailable" to speak to police for the entire 18 month investigation.

2009	Despite obstruction, investigation finds enough evidence to lay charges. Application for extradition from VIC to NSW	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Extradition attempts are obstructed strenuously, causing NSW police considerable extra inconvenience, work and expense.
2009	Extradition from VIC to NSW	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	NSW police advise Passionist Order Brendan/Vince will be arrested and forcibly extradited to NSW the next day. To prevent negative media and the appearance of non co-operation, Brendan/Vince instead turns up at Hornsby Police Station in NSW "voluntarily", something that could have been done at any time over past months to assist police, but was not.
12 July 2009	Charges laid	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Brendan/Vince released on bail on condition he not approach Nicky Davis
July – Nov 2009	Pre trial preparation	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky has multiple eyewitnesses and longs to reveal the story of not just the crimes, but their coverup. She works with psychologist to be able to face Brendan in court. Other victims have spoken to police but none is able to make statement or appear in court.
Nov 2009	Application to have Vince Crawford declared not fit to stand trial	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky Davis devastated by this news.
April 2009	Independent report confirms Vince Crawford not mentally fit to stand trial. Charges dropped	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky Davis devastated by this news.
April 2009 - today	Brendan/Vince back in hiding, whereabouts unknown	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky Davis concentrating on activism through SNAP, recovery work and settlement with Passionist Order. Settlement leaves her traumatised for next 12 months. Some of Nicky's requests during settlement were for other victims to be assisted, and for Brendan's

			whereabouts to be made public. These were refused.
Jan 2011	Father Peter McGrath CP awarded OAM for his work with PFGM. Unfortunately that work did not include stopping decades of abuse, or saving dozens of young lives from being destroyed, or assisting police in criminal investigations, or even answering a single question from police.	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	Nicky Davis insulted that this honour is awarded to someone who refused to co-operate with a police investigation, and who totally neglected his duty of care to dozens of girls. She writes to Governor General's Dept asking for award to be withdrawn. No response from Governor General's Dept.
June 2012	In response to first public discussion of laws enabling police to hold church officials responsible for the coverup of child sexual abuse Nicky Davis asks NSW Police to investigate the coverup of Brendan/Vince's crimes.	Father Joachim Rego, CP, Provincial	No response from NSW Police.

My Story

My years of abuse by Vince Crawford, then known as Brother Brendan, occurred in NSW at the parish of Terrey Hills in Sydney's north.

But my story has direct relevance to this inquiry, both because my abuse and its coverup is part of a pattern consistent throughout Australia and indeed worldwide, and also because once his crimes were publicly revealed to the local catholic community, Brother Brendan was removed from sight, and eventually turned up interstate, in Templestowe, Victoria, under a different name, and with the local community completely unaware that he is one of the more dangerous and prolific of the catholic church's many carefully protected child sex predators.

After the man now known as Vince Crawford was with great difficulty extradited from Victoria to face charges in NSW, his lawyers, working to well worn catholic strategies, managed to exploit a legal loophole to ensure he never faced me or my multiple eyewitnesses in court.

And ever since he walked free from court, unable to be held accountable for his many, many offences against me, or the hundreds, possibly thousands of offences against his other victims, and any offences he may choose to commit throughout the remainder of his life, the Passionist Order has kept his whereabouts a strict secret. Putting his privacy and ability to pretend not to be a dangerous child sex offender above the recovery of his existing victims, justice, and the protection of any children who may unknowingly be exposed to this cunning criminal.

Has he returned to his previous hideout in Templestowe, Victoria?

Is he being adequately supervised to ensure he cannot add to his current tally of at least 50 little girl victims?

And how are those victims supposed to recover, knowing he has been helped to escape justice through a technicality, has admitted no responsibility, expressed no remorse, faced no consequences, and is free to re-offend?

My work with SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) has made it very clear that my story is far from unique. Every story of clerical abuse of children and vulnerable adults has unique aspects, and is uniquely sad that these wonderful children, so full of promise and potential, have been made to suffer so callously by church officials who describe themselves as holy men, but who personally demonstrate the very worst aspects of humanity.

But there are also clear and consistent patterns within these stories. Patterns in how their prey is selected, targeted, hunted down and overpowered. Patterns in how these victims are then manipulated and dominated to

become, in many cases, regular objects of satisfaction to these dangerous criminals, patterns in how these predators terrify, threaten and subdue their victims to ensure the horrifying truth is never revealed, but also to prevent our ability to escape their most unwelcome attentions.

And patterns in the complete and utter neglect of our safety, not just by heartless church officials, but also by smug and selfish congregations, entire communities, and in some, but by no means all cases, even by dysfunctional, staunchly catholic parents.

The coverup of his crimes and my denial of justice I will cover in addressing the questions contained in the submission guide.

For now I will briefly provide some background about my abuse to put the coverup in context.

Child sex offenders are often popular, charismatic, good with kids, pillar of the community types. But scratch the surface and underneath you find maybe an empty narcissist, a callous sociopath, an evil psychopath, a manipulator, a bully or a coward.

They are looking for easy targets. For vulnerability.

They don't want to work too hard.

Extreme youth – many of Brother Brendan's victims were first abused from six. Tiny, sweet, little girls with no defences at all, barely more than babies.

Dysfunctional or abusive families – that's what drew him to me. I was older, twelve when he first abused me, probably only eleven when he was grooming me. This type of victim includes recently bereaved kids, and kids from single parent families, or families where parents are self absorbed, too busy, fighting or never around.

Inability to defend themselves – I had been emotionally abused since birth, I had a psychopath older brother determined to crush my spirit and my self esteem, getting his kicks from torturing me. The family dynamic was poisonous and I had never experienced support, understanding or love. I was painfully shy and insecure and had been taught to believe I was hopeless at everything, and I was too worthless to exist, far less to have opinions or needs.

Brother Brendan couldn't resist. Initially he groomed me, paying attention to a shy child starved for love and affection. The fact that any adult would pay attention to worthless me was a foreign concept, far less a godlike creature such as Brother Brendan. But it didn't turn my head. I guess I never believed I deserved such notice. And the minute his attentions turned lover-like I was repulsed and avoided him. This was at the parish church. There was little he could do. I believed I could deal with this uncomfortable but not impossible situation by avoiding him and running away whenever he came near.

But he had other plans. He visited our house. There I was trapped and unable to escape.

The Passionist Order, who ran the Terrey Hills parish, were a happy-clappy bunch by catholic standards. Particularly under the direction of Father Peter McGrath.

Things were very laid back, casual, relaxed, friendly. Coffee and cake after mass every week and the occasional "lolly Sunday" distributed by Brendan, to attract the kids. No fire and brimstone and being screamed at for your sins like you could get down the road at St Ives, under the red rimmed eyes of octogenarian Irish traditionalist Father Shiels. Instead we had silly jokes and a discussion of how Parramatta had gone in the footy that weekend. And kids gathered round the altar, sitting on the floor.

And this was the time and the place that saw the birth of the Passionist Family Group Movement. Peter was a rock star priest, who featured in the media, and attendance grew exponentially. Parishoners were allocated to a family group of about 10 families. Parents, kids, even grandparents, got together for social functions, even the occasional home mass, and became the extended family missing from modern life. Highlights were the weekend retreats to Lawson or Leura, and everywhere there was Father Peter and Brother Brendan.

They became fixtures in people's homes. Peter would get drunk with the fathers, and Brendan would sexually assault the daughters.

They still promote PFGM as "A family for all". A dysfunctional, abusive family that sacrifices its daughters, and keeps the criminal skeletons firmly hidden in the closet.

My parents were grovelingly ecstatic this exalted figure had honoured our house with his presence. They had made it. They were catholic inner circle. Their ultimate objective in life. And all it cost was to turn a blind eye to the regular sexual assault of their only daughter.

Thanks to my parents' assistance, pretending nothing was going on right under their eyes, and thwarting my attempts to escape, I was trapped and regularly forced to endure his hands on my developing body for an extended time over a period of six terrifying years.

For I was terrified of him. Completely and utterly terrified. I couldn't move, couldn't speak. My parents approval and assistance in his assault of me robbed me of my voice, even of reality.

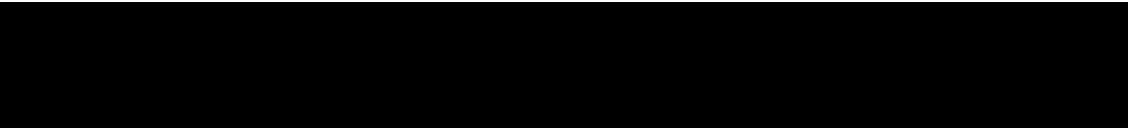
"No you can't go and do your homework. Stay here and be nice to Brother Brendan".

All so middle class and respectable and nice.

I had no choice but to pretend, like them, that it wasn't happening. I could manage that, and I could get through the days and the awful nights as long as I kept the memories buried deep, kept up the pretence this wasn't happening, that I didn't have to deal with this all alone, that I wasn't trapped, exploited, prostituted to advance my parent's social ambitions.

As long as I didn't have to see his smirking, gloating face, his rotten teeth, his grizzled hair, his disgusting tobacco stained fingers, and smell his revolting whiskey breath. But when I did, when he turned up at our door, or terrorised me across the room at mass, I froze on the outside while I fell apart inside.

I never knew when he would appear, unannounced, at our door. So I never felt safe.



Like many catholic sexual assault victims I have experienced more than my fair share of sexual re-victimisation in subsequent years. But no rape was ever as damaging as the years of being at the mercy of Brother Brendan's hands. Of being powerless, abandoned, silenced, trapped in an upside down world where those who pretend to be holy are really evil, and those who tell the truth are called liars.

Brendan lived in the Passionist's St Ives monastery. Many of the Terrey Hills parishoners, including my family, also lived in St Ives. As he headed out on his evening walks to terrorise and abuse little girls, he had the choice of multiple concurrent victims, many of whom, like me, were abused regularly for years.

Did he pause and ponder who he felt like abusing tonight? There was not a regular pattern. It was not, for example, every Friday night, it could happen at any time. That kept me more unsafe, more frightened than if his visits were predictable. And if I had known he was coming I would have been able to feign sickness, to stay the night at a friend's place, to go for a walk, anything to not have to be there and to be forced to be abused yet again.

Strangely enough the weekend retreats were easier to escape him. I wasn't under my parents' watchful eyes forcing me to stay put, to be nice, to be abused. Instead I simply left the room every single time he entered. And, as I now know, he probably had any number of other victims there at the same time who were easier to trap.

The abuse ended just before my eighteenth birthday. I had finished school and was at university, and was able to escape and leave the house when he arrived to abuse me.

I moved out of home soon after that, without my parents' permission, to escape ever having to see him again.

Questions from the Submissions Guide

10. RESPONSES TO CHILD ABUSE| VICTIM EXPERIENCES

Reporting the abuse

10.1 Could you tell anyone about what happened?

Absolutely not.

Did I ever consider speaking up?

Well denial was my survival mechanism, so I was more focused on pretending this wasn't happening. But I remember being acutely aware of a conspiracy of adults not to admit or discuss this. That everyone knew it was happening but no-one was saying anything or making it real by mentioning it. Every single one of our close friends had at least one daughter abused by Brendan (as I later discovered).

Did we kids mention it to each other?

No. We all felt powerless and abandoned and wrong and guilty and to blame. We were made more powerless, and silent, by the adults' silence. We didn't know for sure that the others were also suffering, or who exactly was being targeted and would therefore understand. We were kept isolated and without peer support by our loneliness, insecurity and our suffering.

My three brothers and even one of my friends witnessed my abuse, my brothers on a regular basis. Nothing was ever said and I was never offered a word of acknowledgement or support to make it real, to make me feel less alone and abandoned, or that anyone was on my side.

Did I consider going to the police?

No, it never occurred to me. I was sure adults as powerful as the police would not stand up for me when my own parents and their whole community sacrificed me. They were not there to protect me, and seeking out the police on my own (since my parents would never have allowed it) was completely outside my experience or anything I could ever imagine doing.

Subsequent information from other victims of other offenders who did approach the police at the same time leads me to understand the police probably would not have pursued such an issue. The catholic church were above being held accountable.

Did I perceive what was happening as a crime and as something I could be helped to overcome?

No. Since everyone I knew was so busy pretending nothing was happening, I couldn't imagine a powerful adult believing anything I had to say, far less taking action over it.

I have carried that belief that no one will listen to me or believe me or help me my entire life, among other damage, and it has caused me immense pain.

Did I feel I had a right to ask for the abuse to be stopped?

No. My parents were enabling and benefitting from my abuse and had trained me from birth to endure whatever abuse was meted out to me, and not to believe I had any rights to anything, even safety or bodily integrity.

I firmly believed I would be punished if I spoke up, not helped and not believed. Not just by my parents but by the whole community.

The entire community is now trying to pretend they would have done something, if only they had known, but that is either a lie or self delusion.

Apart from the fact that they did actually know or at least have the information available to them if they chose to face it, at the time of the abuse, they have had ample chance to help victims or do the right thing since 1996, when the crimes were first publicly revealed, and again since 2008 when I reported Brendan to the police.

Victims are still abandoned without assistance, still pressured to remain silent, and anyone with evidence of the crimes or the coverup still feels unable to disclose this information due to reprisals. Instead the entire community hides behind evasions such as ,“we have dealt with this issue”, or “we will pray for you”, or pretends it never happened, or that it was nothing.

Did I feel I even had a right to complain or anything to complain about?

I was accustomed to being abused in one form or another since birth so this was just another, more painful form of my normal life. Something else I must endure. I was barely able to define it as wrong (I knew it was wrong to me, I just didn't think anyone else would think he had done anything wrong or that I had a right to not be subjected to it).

I felt intense pressure to just absorb the pain and say nothing and was intensely aware every single day of my life of how badly that community did not want me to put what happened to me in words, to bring it out into the open and to make them face the truth.

They would not (and indeed did not when I finally reported him to police) support me in any way. They are far more concerned about my transgression in telling the truth, causing a public scandal and embarrassing them, than about Brendan's crimes against little girls, or the appalling coverup in 1996 and ever since.

And I felt too fragile and too ignored and undermined, and too likely to be severely psychologically damaged by a negative response at the time to say anything. Though I could never have expressed it that way or understood it fully, I just knew it was dangerous, perhaps deadly to do so.

10.2 Did you feel discouraged from reporting the abuse?

Absolutely. The entire community was determined not to admit this had happened in their perfect little community.

Did we feel anyone would help us?

No. We were made to feel worthless, insignificant, valueless, expendable, beneath notice. No one would believe us, and even if they did they would not do anything to help us against such powerful figures. And if your own parents won't stand up for you, pretend you are lying, how on earth do you take on the even more powerful adults in a community where you are worth absolutely nothing.

A friend of mine was so outraged by the appalling coverup by the Terrey Hills community she decided to speak to them on White Balloon Day one year. The Catholic Church is given a tick of approval from child protection education charity Bravehearts, and their fundraising exercise White Balloon Day. The Catholic Church pays to purchase white balloons from Bravehearts and is supposed to engage in a number of activities which demonstrate support for victims and commitment to child protection. But churches do not display the balloons, do not do any of the accompanying activities, do not support victims and are not committed to child protection. They just want to buy some cheap credibility on this topic. Unfortunately their cynical participation is particularly hurtful to the very victims who are supposedly being supported by this exercise, particularly those parishes, like Terrey Hills, which sacrificed so many children, and which are now so very cruel to the adult victims they have become.

So my friend turned up at Mass on White Balloon Day. There were no balloons, no activities, no discussion of ways to better support victims or to protect children.

My friend then asked to speak, and spoke tearfully on behalf of the many victims in this very parish who were abandoned and denied help.

The parishoners tried to shout her down, surrounded her, and physically manhandled her out the door then called the police on her although she was not breaking any law. They, however, could have been charged with assault.

What did the compassion of these parishoners compel them to shout at my friend (herself a victim of another offender)?

“We’ve talked about this already.”

10.3 Who did you tell about what happened?

No one. Not until my wedding night (and I have traumatic memory loss of that ever happening). So my first memory of telling anyone is not until my forties. Until I had the support of female friends I trusted enough to tell.

10.4 How long after the abuse occurred did you tell someone?

If you count my wedding night nearly ten years after I reached adulthood, left home and the abuse finally stopped. But since I can’t remember that, then 30 years till I disclosed to my female friends.

10.5 Did you tell the religious body or other organisation about the abuse?

No, I did and still do even now find the very thought of reaching out to the Passionist Order, PFGM, or anyone associated with Terrey Hills parish on this subject incredibly frightening and traumatising. I am fairly certain of being harmed by the inadequacy and callousness of their response on such a very sensitive issue. The potential harm is increased by the fact they promote themselves as moral leaders and as compassionate, yet I am certain they will waste no compassion on an abused child they abandoned and sacrificed and to whom they owed a duty of care.

The current Provincial of the Passionist Order has offered to meet with me but these guys just cannot understand how very frightening and threatening and traumatising they are, even so many years later. I am an adult, I have done a lot of recovery work, and I am not scared of anything else, but the thought of being sacrificed, abandoned and treated as worthless once again by the leader of the group so directly responsible for my lifetime of suffering is a distressing situation I am simply not prepared to put myself in.

His response is better than some in the catholic church, not that that is saying much, as generally the catholic response is just about as cruel, heartless and evil as it is possible for human beings to be. I hear a lot of different victims’ stories, not just Catholic victims, in my work with SNAP, and I had no idea how vile human beings could be until I heard about their disgraceful treatment of so many fragile victims. But even though this provincial is not one of the worst, he does not want to actually help me. He just wants to be seen to do the right thing. He wants to be able to say, “Yeah, I met with that pesky victim and calmed her down. She won’t be a problem any more.”

I suppose the other thing that is scary about the situation is he wants to come in as this important, big official and make me a penitent, a beggar. I am not a beggar, I do not recognise his status as a holy man or a moral leader and I do not recognise him as having any authority over me. I do not want him talking down to me or trying to control me. That is what these guys do, it is how they operate.

At the time it literally never occurred to me to tell, for example, Father Peter. I simply didn't consider it. He was as thick as thieves with Brendan, so if my own parents wouldn't stand up for me against this all powerful religious figure, why on earth would his boss and the leader of this tight knit community.

The interesting thing is unlike most church leaders at the time, and even today, Peter's persona was very approachable, ordinary, not exalted. Yet the community still slavishly adored him and put him on a pedestal just as much as they do to the disgraceful George Pell.

But in no way did I think he would ever support an insignificant child against the harpies in the congregation who wanted to maintain this façade of being so "good". What happened to me would destroy that façade and they would do anything to prevent that.

10.6 If you delayed in telling or reporting what prevented you from disclosing earlier?

I firmly believe that if I had taken the risk to disclose during the years of my abuse, and been ignored or abused for it, and I would have been, I am fairly certain that would have killed me. I would have felt too worthless to live and would have had no choice but to commit suicide. So not disclosing was a self defence mechanism against the callousness of the catholic church and to prevent them killing me along with so many others.

The pressure on me and all the other victims was silent. No one ever came out and said "Don't say anything". That would involve admitting there was something to say. And yet as far as I know, despite at least 50 victims over a period of decades, all within the one supposedly open, supportive community, not a single victim felt valued enough, supported enough to disclose. Not one family stood up for their daughters in all that time, though I doubt they were all as complicit, as abusive, as my family.

It is not that I didn't want to disclose. I desperately wanted someone to acknowledge what was going on and to say "This is wrong" and to make it stop. But there was no-one like that in the Terrey Hills parish or the PFGM. I would have loved to have someone I could trust enough to confide in but there was literally no-one.

I was desperate all those years, in fact all my life, for someone to rescue me and make the pain stop. But I was never rescued, again and again I was abandoned.

Part of the recovery process has been to realise I now have the strength and the ability to save myself. That I don't need rescuing any more. If I had not come to that realisation I would be at great risk of falling victim to other abusers and that is indeed what happened to me throughout my life until recently.

I have spoken to a victim of another offender, who came to this community for a while as an adult and immediately recognised something was off about Brendan, and the whole community. That is what silenced us. The fact that it was obvious yet unacknowledged was what silenced us. His public behavior towards me was most inappropriate for a celibate adult male towards a young, blossoming girl, yet no-one blinked, far less mentioned it, or even had a quiet word to him to act more appropriately. Because it wasn't just me, and nobody though little girls had a right not to be sacrificed to a sexual predator in a cassock.

I also believe many church leaders are secretly pleased when victims die as that is one less incriminating secret to deal with, one less problem to potentially bite them in the future.

I do believe they are really that callous.

I have been told by someone who witnessed it first hand that Cardinal George Pell enjoyed showing off how good he was at "getting rid" of victims. The person who was present believes both they and their spouse would lose their jobs if they were ever to publicly repeat what they heard on the subject.

I have met personally with George Pell. The very first thing he asked was to ensure the person I was accompanying had already signed a release. He had no intention of meeting with anyone who had not signed a release. I am not sure what protection this might give him, or what threat someone who had not been stripped of their legal rights represented, but clearly he was scared of being put in that situation.

I was there as a support person. I was also myself a victim and had not signed a release. But he didn't ask me.

While in the meeting his body language indicated clearly that he had no desire or intention to listen to anything we might say. His mind and his heart were closed in advance. He had already decided victims were the enemy and he wasn't going to pay us the respect to listen. It's not as if we had anything worthwhile to say, or if he needed to understand this issue to do his job, is it?

I believe his only reason for meeting with this victim was that she was amazingly determined and wouldn't take no for an answer. And that she really had been treated appallingly under his Towards Healing process.

Response to the disclosure

10.7 What was the initial response from the organisation?

The abuse by Brendan was reported to the Passionist Order in some form in 1996. Any information I have on this subject I have been told second or third hand from other victims of Brendan's. I deliberately had absolutely nothing to do with Brendan or Terrey Hills parish, or indeed the catholic church, ever since I left home.

One of his other victims had a breakdown, received counseling, and the abuse by Brendan became public. I understand another victim may also have come forward at this time. These victims were supported by their parents in seeking, at the very least, an end to the abuse which had continued for decades.

I understand they may have gone through some early form of Towards Healing around winter 1996, even though it had not been officially launched at this time. I know one at least is very unhappy with how the issue was handled, in particular because, despite any reassurances that may have been offered about doing the right thing, what actually happened was a coverup.

Father Peter had been the Provincial or head of the Passionist Order in Australia for some years prior to this, and the head office was at the St Ives Monastery where Peter and Brendan had long resided.

But in 1996 the Provincial was Father Kevin Dance CP. Kevin was also the President of the Australian Conference of Heads of Religious Institutes, the equivalent of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. I have been told in 1996, and this is a matter of public record, at the very same time Kevin was responding to public revelations about Brendan's abuse, he was also joint author of Towards Healing with Bishop Geoffrey Robinson, then President of the Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference.

I met with Bishop Geoffrey Robinson a couple of years ago and asked about this, but he had no intention of telling me anything about working with Kevin on this, or whether Kevin had mentioned the abuse within his own order at that time, and the coverup of that abuse.

Apparently there was some sort of investigation, certainly there was a claim made to the parish of a comprehensive investigation. I have heard, once again third hand, that there was a list made of Brendan's victims and that list contained 49 names.

Was my name on that list? Impossible to know as the Passionist Order have no intention of revealing any information about the coverup. One thing I can say absolutely. It would have been very easy to have worked out I was one of his victims, if anyone had been interested. And I received no apology, no acknowledgement of my suffering, no information to help me feel certain Brendan would face consequences for his actions, no assistance whatsoever,

and certainly no counseling to help me recover.

I was ignored completely.

I understand a number of other victims are very unhappy with how they were treated and feel they were silenced and their abuse covered up. I heard of one who complained about this, who was ostracised to such an extent that she felt it necessary to leave the region and the community where she had grown up and to which she had contributed so much as a volunteer.

10.8 If there was an investigation of the abuse, how was it conducted?

I have heard that a promise was made to investigate thoroughly in 1996.

One thing that was not done was to speak to victims. I was not contacted.

I suspect there was no real investigation, only coverup. Unfortunately at the time of the original police investigation in 2008/9 I had not heard of this information, or of the list, and so was not able to inform the police so they could request this information specifically in a search warrant, and conduct a thorough search for it. The information was never volunteered and the police never saw it, no matter how many times George Pell and Denis Hart and others claim “co-operation”.

10.9 What meetings or other interactions did you have with the organisation?

In 1996 the Passionist Order and the PFGM made no attempt to contact me in any form, communicate with me, apologise to me or offer me any form of help. I was kept completely in the dark about what happened in a situation so intensely personal to me, and so very important to my recovery.

I have seen very little reference at all to this deliberate strategy to keep victims uninformed or misled (there have been many publicly revealed episodes of church officials lying to victims) and the additional damage it inflicts. It is an incredibly harmful aspect of my re-abuse at the hands of the catholic church. Knowledge would help me understand, feel less powerless, feel on top of the issue and be able to move on. To know that I have been kept in the dark to help the coverup of the truth and that any questions I may ask will never be answered, as if I have no right to know about what concerns me so personally – that makes me feel completely worthless.

In 2010, after I was denied justice through the police and court system, I wrote directly to the Pope. I hold him personally responsible for the system of coverup in his organisation, and I object strenuously to the consistent policy of church officials of passing the buck “that’s not my responsibility”, “I knew nothing about this”.

I wanted to ensure that at least in this one case Pope Benedict could not disclaim knowledge or responsibility. I recommend all victims do likewise.

I have had a number of meetings with senior church officials in my role with SNAP. Often this is as a support person for another victim who has, through determination, managed to push through the barriers designed to deny victims access to these officials. At one such meeting with Cardinal Pell it transpired my letter to the Pope had not been ignored or thrown in the bin, as has consistently happened in the past. Today's media focus on this issue has forced a change in attitudes that regard communications from victims as unworthy of response or acknowledgement.

My letter had been sent from Rome to Cardinal Pell, for him to deal with.

It was then passed on to the Provincial of the Passionist Order, who wrote to me offering a meeting.

I have not taken up that offer as I find the very idea far too traumatising. I hope to be able to do so one day and to ask some very hard questions.

10.10 Were you encouraged or supported to report your abuse to the police? Did you do this? If not, why not?

There was a definite desire to ensure this issue did not reach the police. The order cannot claim any of the usual excuses in this case – they had a list of 49 names. Based on my own experience and the victims whose stories I do know, if that pattern were repeated across all or most of the 49, then Brendan was responsible for thousands of child sex crimes.

It beggars belief that they could not imagine this was an issue that should be in the hands of the police. I wonder how much easier my recovery would have been, how much suffering and how many years of being constantly suicidal I would have been saved if they had reported him to the police or encouraged victims to report in 1996?

Brendan, now known as Brother Vince, was eventually reported to the police. But not by the Passionist Order, who should have done so. Nor at their instigation by any of the dozens of other victims.

I reported him to NSW Police in November 2008, after realising, thanks to the horrors of the Papal Visit and taxpayer funded catholic youth marketing exercise earlier that year, that I was still being abused by the catholic church. That the Pope did not mean one word of his supposed apology. That he wanted me to suffer in silence for the rest of my life and die off as soon as possible so he wouldn't have to deal with the problem. And that my silence was exactly what my abusers wanted. And by remaining silent I was helping them to re-abuse me and get away with more and more crimes.

I had seen advice from Broken Rites to not report to the church, to not subject myself to the abuse of Towards Healing but instead go direct to the police. This recommendation was consistent with my own experience of callousness and coverup. I far preferred to speak to the professionals who could treat this matter objectively, rather than give the self serving catholics another chance to reabuse me and coverup.

But I had no idea of Brendan's name or whereabouts. I knew the Passionist Order would never tell me.

Luckily another of Brendan's victims lived near his hideout and had recognised him, and could report his present name and whereabouts to Broken Rites. Otherwise, without a name or location, I am not sure how far my police statement would have progressed.

10.11 What were the consequences for the perpetrator(s)?

After the revelations in 1996 Brendan disappeared from sight. I believe one victim's mother insisted on that.

Unfortunately she did not insist he be dealt with properly, or be turned over to the police. This woman is still an integral part of the PFGM today, despite her daughter's suffering, and has been heard to be encouraging the parents of other victims to drop the issue, and think of it as no big deal.

The Australian Catholic Directory lists Brendan as residing in the order's Marrickville premises after 1996, until about 2000/2001.

After that time he turned up in Templestowe in Victoria, under a different name. Did something happen to lead to this "shuffling"? (Priest shuffling is the term used when known offenders are sent to another parish, another state, even another country, with a blemish free reputation, and frequently a fresh name to match). I have no idea what may have triggered his going into hiding in Victoria.

Though I have since become aware of NSW legislation requiring crimes such as his be reported to child protection authorities being introduced around this time. The Passionist Order and PFGM did not report him as required, just as they had never reported him to the police. Instead he was moved out of the jurisdiction, under a different name, and foisted upon an unsuspecting community.

10.12 What were the effects of the response to the disclosure on the victim and other individuals? (eg. Family members, other members of the organisation)

Things were actually worse for me, and I understand for a number of other victims as well, after 1996. Probably all or most victims felt that way.

Because we had been abandoned again. Treated as completely worthless again. Before, we couldn't be absolutely certain they knew what was going on. But now they definitely knew, and still keeping this terrible secret hidden from view was considered more important than helping us to recover. Or acknowledging our suffering in any way.

I was an emotional wreck and unable to function for weeks before, during and after the Papal Visit in 2008. But after disclosing to the police later that year I felt stronger, lighter and happier than I had ever felt in my life. I felt like a weight I had been carrying around for as long as I could remember had been lifted from my shoulders. I was able to smile, to simply enjoy existing, to feel alive. All of which was a new and exhilarating experience.

I consider the day I reported Brendan/Vince to police as the first day of my life. Before that I wasn't alive, I was a victim.

I was only able to go through with this by cutting off my birth family completely. I was unable to deal with everything else, and also have to deal with their abuse and manipulation as they tried to punish me for speaking out, and force me back into silence.

Support

10.13 Were you supported by the organisation? If so, how?

Between 1996 and 2010 I was not offered any apology, support, assistance, information, understanding, acknowledgement or compensation. The pattern seen in this case and so many others would appear to be: to be as cruel and unhelpful as possible to victims, and to pretend they don't exist or that the church knows nothing about them, and to keep them in the dark about what is going on and isolated from each other. My conclusion is the reason for this disgraceful tactic is the hope victims will go away, suffer in silence, not cause trouble, never recover and never find their voice and die off as soon as possible thus providing a swift and permanent solution to the problem.

Only those victims who have someone to support them, or are strong enough to stand up to the bullies behind the pulpit and those in the pews, ever receive any form of assistance. And those that do are forced to fight against a determined and consistent program of denial, minimisation, evasions, excuses, blame shifting, delay, deliberate incompetence, being completely ignored, as well as threats, bullying, manipulation, legal technicalities, and secrecy.

This technique is more effective because of the damage suffered by victims. Damage that makes victims more likely to accept blame for others' crimes against them, and far less likely to be able to or believe they have a right to stand up for themselves. Do Catholic officials deliberately exploit the damage inflicted on victims, damage they themselves increase exponentially? I believe so.

10.14 Did you receive counseling or psychological help? If so, who provided it?

I organised counseling for myself and paid for it myself, as well as a number of other services to assist me in the long journey towards recovery.

Once my lawyer contacted the Passionist Order, he was able to request they pay my counseling and other therapy costs in the interim.

Once I signed a release, something I was loathe to do, but had absolutely no choice if I was to receive any help, the Passionist Order's lawyers immediately, abruptly and without notice cut all payments to my therapists, including those they were in the process of paying and had already made a commitment to pay. They were rude and aggressive about this instantaneous cut off, and wrote letters to my therapists implying there was some attempt to overclaim these very invoices, which, before I had signed the release, they were quite prepared to pay.

This caused me considerable unnecessary inconvenience and embarrassment, which could have been avoided by advising me that the effect of signing the release would be to instantaneously refuse all payments, even those already approved.

This added to the feeling I was being manipulated and made it clear the rush to resolution was not to help me in any way, but to save money. It is completely inappropriate for catholic officials to inflict such aggressively adversarial treatment on someone they had gravely harmed, and whose healing they were supposed to be promoting. Especially when claiming to be showing compassion and learning from past mistakes. The fact that even after everything they still thought it acceptable to treat victims with such brutal lack of consideration, or even courtesy, once again added to my feelings of being treated as completely worthless and as an enemy to be deliberately harmed.

10.15 Did you receive an apology or an acknowledgment of the abuse you had suffered?

There was an apology as part of my mediation with the Passionist Order. It was vague and evasive, and did not acknowledge the considerable additional harm suffered as a result of the coverup by the Passionist Order and PFGM, only referring to the original crimes.

It was an improvement on the 1996 "apology", (see 10.19) but it still demonstrates more concern for avoiding an admission of legal liability than desire to deliver justice or assist my recovery.

10.16 How adequate was the support that was offered?

None was offered. it was totally inadequate. Worse than that, the deliberate withholding of any support when they unquestionably knew there was a need for it was actively harmful.

From what I have heard from other victims, the aggressively adversarial approach towards any victims who requested help was also actively harmful.

Result

10.17 Did the religious or other organisation accept responsibility for what happened?

As part of the mediation process there was an admission by the current Provincial of the Passionist Order that the events in my police statement are most likely to be true. There was nothing from PFGM or Father Peter McGrath. This one admission is better than nothing. It is however insulting and inadequate from an organisation which must understand the fact of his unquestionable guilt, and the depth of his cunning and criminality.

It in no way acknowledges their appalling conduct in obstructing the police investigation, the conspiracy of silence for decades to ensure this information never came to light, and the awful pressure to not speak out and suffer in silence, robbing me and dozens of others of a chance of recovery at a time when there would have been so much less trauma to recover from.

10.18 What was the consequence for the perpetrator(s)?

After his extradition and arrest Brendan/Vince was required to appear in court on a regular basis. Once his excuse of being unfit to stand trial was accepted, he was let off without any consequences whatsoever. Naturally this was devastating to me.

I had been working hard with my psychologist to get to the point where I could be in the same room as him and not be terrified, where I could be an adult he couldn't harm, rather than the little girl whose childhood he had filled with fear and betrayal. I found out by chance that the charges were to be officially dropped the next day, though the DPP had given me the impression this had already happened.

Knowing this was my last ever chance to see this serial criminal where he belonged, in a court of law, I attended. My first sight of him was terrifying. I tried to glimpse him without being seen, fearing if he saw me he could somehow harm me again. But eventually I forced myself to face the fact that I was not the criminal, I had done nothing wrong, and I had a right to be there. I made it inside the court – just. I sat right up the back, alone, frightened and unsupported, just as I had always been, while he was the centre of a happy group, surrounded by devoted catholic supporters, as he had always been, feted as a hero as they laughed and patted him on the back in congratulation.

And then he walked free. Free from facing justice for any of his crimes. Free to re-offend and not be held accountable if he does.

If the application had been lodged after committal, rather than before, he would have gone before the Mental Health Review Tribunal and probably been found guilty to a lesser standard than the criminal standard, been required to undergo counseling, been supervised, and possibly had restrictions placed on him to reduce the likelihood of him re-offending.

The Passionist Order expect everyone to just take their word for it they will do the right thing in the future and ensure he is properly kept away from children. But they have not earned anyone's trust in their handling of this issue so far, and certainly don't deserve to be allowed to cover it up once again, exploiting my denial of justice to pretend he is not a danger to children.

He will be financially and emotionally supported for the rest of his life. He will be feted by his colleagues, treated as a victim, even a hero, for getting off scott free and beating those "nasty victims who are just out to get him".

Meanwhile dozens of victims have once again been abandoned to suffer in silence as the façade that this never happened is pulled back in place.

10.19 Were you offered an apology, compensation or other forms of assistance? If so, were there any conditions attached to accepting that compensation or assistance?

Apology

After the 1996 revelations the parish did print a vague "apology" in the parish newsletter. It is so vague, that unless you already knew what it was about, you would literally have no idea what they were referring to, or that it was something as serious as the decades long reign of terror of a serial child sex offender. You couldn't even be sure that it was supposed to be an apology.

No mention was made of the way this crime spree was allowed to continue for decades and the responsibility of the Passionist Order and PFGM for not doing anything to prevent our abuse, despite plenty of warning signs.

But far from being an open and honest admission and the beginning of an attempt to address this issue properly, they covered up the very existence of the "apology". Even today, people who are horrified about what happened are not brave enough to stand up against the pressure to keep quiet and publicly admit they saw the "apology"!

I never knew the "apology" existed until I started investigating details for my statement to police in 2008. I had never seen the "apology" until sent a copy by my lawyer in 2010. I have no idea of its date or how long after the initial revelations it was issued.

Victims were not the intended audience for this "apology", as no attempt was made to communicate it to victims, many of whom could not bear to have anything to do with the parish and institution which continued to betray and abuse them.

It seems the 1996 era “apology” was an attempt to stop what was considered “gossip” amongst parishoners at the time, not help victims. This supposed “apology” was actually a part of the coverup.

I did receive an actual apology from the current provincial of the Passionist Order as part of the mediation process. But I had a leading victim advocate lawyer on my side who is himself a victim and understands the crucial importance of non monetary issues.

The recent apology appears to convey a genuine personal regret for the original crimes by a man who is conveniently not implicated in the original criminal conspiracy to coverup Brendan’s crimes. But as well as being overall far too vague and evasive, there is no recognition whatsoever of the immensely harmful role the Passionist Order and PFGM played in this disgraceful episode, nor is there any acknowledgement that their behavior is still far from acceptable, particularly in relation to other victims, who have been completely abandoned, or in relation to their obstruction of the police investigation.

I asked for an apology from the offender. I was told he has no recollection of me.

This from the man who barged his way into my family home in order to force himself upon me for six long years.

Though I can perhaps understand that for a serial child sex criminal with at least 49 acknowledged victims, and probably many more, we may be hard to tell apart.

Compensation

In 1996, despite a list of 49 victims, at most to my knowledge two were offered any assistance. These had parents who stood up to church officials and demanded something be done.

I do not know what form that assistance took, but at that time the church’s begrudging offers of compensation to any victims were woefully inadequate to even cover the most obvious and necessary recovery costs, far less compensate for the irreparable damage caused. This information is necessarily vague, and third hand and gathered from snippets of information from different sources. Catholic officials keep victims isolated from other victims and ensure information is kept hidden from those who would be helped by understanding what is really going on, or by the support and understanding of those who shared their suffering.

10.20 As a result of your complaint to the religious or other organisation what actions were taken by them?

I did not complain directly to them, but went to the police. Their response was to obstruct the police investigation strenuously.

No information was produced voluntarily. Any documents were only obtained with a search warrant. A police search of the church found documents hidden in the roof of the church. Documents whose existence I only found out about afterwards were hidden from police and never handed over. Church employees spoke to police officers about their desire to tell what they knew, but felt unable to do so as they would lose their jobs. Key church witnesses were unavailable to be interviewed throughout the entire eighteen month investigation. The entire community still imposes a conspiracy of silence, to protect the offender and their own reputations against the legal operation of the justice system.

10.21 How long did it take to achieve a result?

From the 1996 report, when the Passionist Order was first forced to address this issue, and when my name probably appeared on their list of victims, fifteen years.

From the time of my report to police, three years.

From the time I engaged a lawyer, only months. Both my lawyer, who had seen so many times the devastating effects of the delaying tactics used by many catholic officials, and the Passionist Order, were keen on an expedited resolution. Unfortunately for me the process was overly rushed, so much so that I was unable to keep up emotionally with the effect of having my harm, which had been so exponentially increased by the callous and criminal actions of catholic officials, reduced to a monetary figure.

I was unable to provide documents that may have helped my case because I found the issue too traumatic, and was emotionally overwhelmed. I was prevented from participating personally by my trauma at the mere thought of being in the same room as the Passionist Provincial, the man who had, in all likelihood, recently ordered the obstruction of the police investigation and orchestrated my denial of justice.

The “result” was being absolutely denied justice through the police and court system.

The police and court system is immensely biased towards protecting powerful male offenders and is quite prepared to sacrifice large numbers of innocent victims. The system features innumerable technical legal loopholes to provide any number of options for a “get out of jail free” card in order that the mythical “one innocent man” not be unjustly sentenced to a few months jail. But these heroic efforts to prevent this happening unleash large numbers of dangerous

predators on unsuspecting communities and also sentence many thousands of truly innocent child victims to a life, if not death, sentence.

The catholic church uses its immense resources, and its aggressive lack of co-operation with police, and the damage of victims (to which its deliberately adds) to weigh the scales of justice even further in favour of priestly sex predators and deny any form of justice to as many victims as possible.

10.22 Were you satisfied with the process in dealing with the complaint and/or the result?

In 1996 there was no process, only coverup.

After I was denied justice in 2010, I entered mediation with the Passionist Order. They tried to have me use Towards Healing or speak to them directly but I had no intention of putting myself in a position where I could so easily be manipulated, misled, exploited and psychologically harmed.

Since I am also denied the option of civil action due to legal loopholes and technicalities, I had no other choice but mediation.

It was adversarial, legalistic, insulting, intimidating, disempowering, and immensely traumatic. It was made far worse by the use of aggressive lawyers determined to “win” by harming me as much as possible, and by minimising the financial cost to their clients. The fact that I was denied access to justice via civil suit was exploited by these lawyers to refuse to offer any more than a fraction of what I would likely be awarded by a court.

This is a totally inappropriate and harmful approach to victim compensation. The focus solely on financial compensation is also inappropriate. Instead, victims need acknowledgement of their suffering, taking responsibility, delivering justice, protecting other children, and most importantly, recovery. Money isn't even on the list, but can be a means to deliver recovery and some form of justice.

Once I signed away my legal rights in order to fund my recovery, or rather a part of my recovery, I was immediately treated by the church's lawyers as if I was a money hungry fraud who was trying to squeeze additional crumbs from an unfairly victimised church.

10.23 What was your view of the effectiveness and adequacy of any compensation, either offered or received?

No amount can ever compensate for the immense harm done by the original assaults, and the even greater harm done by betrayal, lies, coverup and denial of justice on top of the original harm.

To suggest that it can is insulting.

To accept the church's blood money is abhorrent.

I did finally decide to accept the inadequate and insulting offer as I had no other choice whatsoever. It was that or be forced to fund my recovery by myself.

From a psychological point of view it was important that I have a pool of funds available for recovery so that I actually engage in recovery services and activities. It is far too easy for victims to fall into patterns of self denial, self harm and lack of self care (as I have done all my life) and not feel worthy of recovery.

That money says to me that I am worthy of recovery. And makes it more likely that I will move towards recovery and away from self harm.

10.24 What were the effects of the result on you and other individuals? (eg. Family members and supporters)

Going through the process of police investigation, and the obstruction of the investigation by the Passionist Order, the extradition and its obstruction by the Passionist Order, the pre-trial preparation (including acclimatising myself to seeing Brennan/Vince and to being in a court room), the denial of justice through a legal loophole, and the mediation process with the Passionist Order has all been incredibly stressful, traumatic and emotionally challenging. It has taken a huge toll on me and my family, particularly my children and my ability to parent them, physically, mentally and emotionally.

The set backs caused by the self serving and largely callous response has left me unable to function, unable to do little other than cry for months afterwards. I have managed to survive, but I worry for others not as strong, and how they would cope if they exposed themselves to being treated in this way.

But despite the toll it has taken on me I still consider the day I reported Brendan/Vince to the police as the first real day of my life. Before that I was a victim, a prisoner, one of the living dead.

Conclusion – Urgent Need for Reform

We don't have to help the child rapists to prey upon children.

And we certainly don't have to ignore, deny assistance to, abandon and re-abuse the innocent victims.

But that is exactly what the catholic church and other religious organisations, have been doing in Australia and throughout the world.

Because our society lets them.

We give them the benefit of the doubt. We assume they are trustworthy because they have told us so many times that they are different from other human beings.

We take their word for it when they assure us such crimes are impossible. So we don't check up on what is really going on.

We believe their excuses when they are finally forced to admit what they previously denied.

We refuse to believe the horrific eyewitness accounts of absolute evil told by victims of these self described holy men.

And even after hearing mountains of evidence of a widespread and systematic problem with child rape, we don't act to ensure it can never happen again.

This issue is tough to deal with. As a society we can't bear to face this challenging and uncomfortable truth and what it says about the religious organisations we have been taught to revere, and about human nature.

But that is no reason to allow organisations which routinely rape children to continue to operate in secrecy and above the law.

To allow them to police themselves, assuming, because they say so repeatedly, that they will radically change and now do the right thing.

While we continue to shirk this issue more children are being knowingly exposed to dangerous serial predators, more survivors are being denied assistance and their suffering increased exponentially, and more innocents are seeking refuge from their pain in fast or slow suicide.

If adults find this issue hard to even think about, just imagine how hard it is for innocent, trusting little children to have to survive the actual experience of such abuse.

But the original crimes are but the start of the suffering for child victims.

The catholic church and other religious organisations cannot forgive victims for knowing first hand about their colleagues' carefully hidden dark, abusive and criminal nature. Officials are desperate to bury the knowledge that a percentage of religious leaders are not only not deserving of the unquestioning awe, reverence and respect they believe themselves entitled to, but should be in jail for their crimes.

As a result of this criminal conspiracy to coverup child rape, the problem, and the rapes, and the suffering of survivors and their families, and the suicides, and the enormous cost to society inevitably continue.

Because we let them.

Recomendations

- No organisation should be above the law. Without exception.
- No religious customs, ceremonies or sacraments should be above the law, especially when they endanger children or allow child abuse to be hidden from authorities. Without exception.
- Our current legal system is incredibly predator friendly and results in the majority of dangerous child sexual offenders remaining free to re-offend while many thousands of innocent victims receive a life sentence, or even a death sentence. This is completely unacceptable and requires a comprehensive review of the working of the criminal, civil and child protection laws in relation to child sexual abuse.