

I attended Holy Family School in Doveton from grade prep in 1973 until finishing grade six in 1979. My whole family was very active in both the school and church communities. My two brothers and I were altar boys there, me from mid-1976 until sometime in 1983. We were also involved in a youth group and had (what we thought) close friendships with Tom O’Keeffe and Victor Rubeo.

For ease of writing and understanding it seems sensible to write this submission in chronological order.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## 2. Tom O’Keeffe

My older twin brothers became altar boys in either 1974 or 1975 and I pestered people to let me become one also. O’Keeffe relented and I became one in mid-1976 at the age of 8. He always played cricket with the grade 5 and 6 kids during all school recesses as well as every Friday afternoon and oftentimes after the last mass on Sundays over summer. It wasn’t until last term of grade four we were allowed to play also.

I remember being particularly excited because I was asked to play on a Sunday afternoon with my two brothers and about 20 other kids for the first time in maybe November 1976. I’d heard my brothers talk about the ice-creams and other treats they often had after games and the thought of these unaffordable treats excited me as much as the game itself. O’Keeffe was umpire.

The game ended and the majority of the boys went back to the presbytery with O’Keeffe. He handed around ice-creams, ‘Wild Strawberry’ or ‘Wild Toffee’, soft drink and toasted cheese sandwiches. Older guys started handing around magazines and I guess I thought they were cricket ones so I took one to read.

What does an eight year old think when staring at hardcore pornography? I feel I’m in an excellent position to offer some insight into this. ‘What happened to his dick’ I thought. I’d never seen and had no idea what an erection was. I had absolutely no knowledge of what the pictures meant. ‘Why is he putting it in there? And there? And there?’ I knew nothing of anal sex, oral sex and multiple partner sex. I thought only urine came from a penis. I was eight and was meant to be playing with matchbox cars and reading Dr. Seuss, not looking at very hardcore pornography.

Clearly I was a little confused and shocked about these magazines as a few of the older boys teased me and O’Keeffe asked me ‘‘What I thought of the pictures?’’ I have no idea how I answered. I do recall though his crass, childish, pervert-like sniggering voice. It was a voice we all heard a lot as he often threw around innuendo laden ‘jokes’. I have no idea why I never told my parents [REDACTED]



good. He took me to my local football games as my mum couldn't. He took me to virtually every VFL game Melbourne played in. He provided a place for my brother, another boy [REDACTED] and I to study [REDACTED] our respective homes were too small to accommodate teen boys studying at the same time. Rather than walk home late, he allowed us to stay overnight. [REDACTED] I earned money doing 'handyman' jobs at the school and around the presbytery. [REDACTED]

In October 1980 he took [REDACTED] on an overseas trip. [REDACTED] and I were left with the task of 'managing' the parish whilst various priests covered the Sunday masses. My mother [REDACTED] did the weekly church newsletter. We were very involved in the church and the church community and spent a lot of time with Rubeo.

Sometime prior to Rubeo taking the older boys overseas I met [REDACTED] I often babysat the boys with Rubeo and as I was a keen footballer I got along quite well with [REDACTED] Rubeo and I would often go over to their house in [REDACTED] a Sunday after 11.00 am mass and spend the night there, returning early enough for me to attend school on the Monday.

[REDACTED]

After Rubeo and the others returned home the relationship stayed pretty much the same. I took trips with him during the school holidays to Adelaide, [REDACTED] Sydney and various other places. At no time did I ever feel in any danger. Rubeo was kind, concerned with my wellbeing and helped me where possible at school. He arranged for a group of boys to go to Perth for a 'Guild of St. Stephen' retreat for altar boys and this was my first trip on a plane.

My first uncomfortable moment came when I bought a girl from school to youth group and he caught me kissing her. I was in year 10 and whilst he said nothing at the time, he told me off later as he 'didn't want any of "that" to affect my schooling'.

In mid-1983 he asked if I wanted to go on an overseas trip with him and it was all arranged. We were going trekking in Thailand and Nepal so I finished school in October and we headed to Adelaide to prepare by hiking daily through the Adelaide Hills. In November 1983 we left for Bangkok.

With the benefit of hindsight it's easy to look at some of the events during this trip in horror. From the first night in Bangkok when we went out for dinner he would give me a glass or two of white or red wine and this happened at every meal. I was 15. I'll share various events that spring to mind:

- Walking home from a dinner in Bangkok he laughed when an attractive Thai hooker asked me to go with her and then asked if I wanted to. He was quite interested in whether I wanted to have sex with her or not and persisted in asking until I answered. He got quite annoyed when I said that if she wasn't a hooker I'd certainly be interested. I thought he was annoyed at my lack of morality...
- In Chiang Mai when walking around the city he'd occasionally ask if I wanted to sleep with this girl or that girl....quite loudly.

- In Chiang Rai when the tour group was having dinner the girl singing came to our table and sat next to me. Through an interpreter she said that 'she wanted me to stay with her' and that she 'thought I was very handsome' and she 'wanted me to be her husband'. She constantly hugged me and leant her head on my shoulder. Rubeo stormed out of the restaurant and returned to the hotel. When I returned he made many comments about 'that Thai slut'

- One night in Nepal he, after dinner and some wine asked me whilst I was on the toilet "Are you a c\*nt-f\*\*ker or a cock-sucker Adlard?" I was pretty shocked by this as whilst a lot of the banter between us was what you would call 'blokey', I thought he'd crossed the line here and I clearly recall telling him to "piss off".

- During the trekking portion of our trip in Nepal we slept in two man tents. Rubeo told me that he has to pray the rosary every day on multiple occasions. He asked me to join in with this which I did. After a few nights of me he told me I had to hold his hand to do this and I'll add I was uncomfortable with this.

- In Jaisalmer, India, at the end of the camel safari part of a tour we did we had a big dinner. There was lots of wine and beer being drunk by all. Rubeo encouraged me more than normal to drink. One of the women on the trip, a late-20's Perth woman named [REDACTED] kind of took me under her wing and kept telling Rubeo that "Paul is only 15 and shouldn't be drinking!" After the wine had finished Rubeo started drinking whiskey. When dinner had finished we all went to our rooms – I was sharing with Rubeo – and he started wrestling with me. This was a common occurrence and was once again what I thought was normal "blokey" behavior. On this occasion though it got very rough to the point where I was quite frightened and felt very unsafe. I told him "if I wanted to travel with a drunkard I'd travel with my alcoholic father."

He apologized and all calmed down and we started to get ready for bed and then he started up again. I grabbed my bedding and threatened to sleep in the locked bathroom when he apologized again and all calmed down. The third time he started we must have been quite noisy as there was a knock on the door and he stopped. I opened the door and [REDACTED] was there. She must've noticed (and would've heard the noise) that I was distressed and pretty much forced me to sleep in her room. (I'm very grateful she did)

We returned to Australia and Rubeo was moved to East Brighton parish as a relief priest as Father Daly was unwell. For the rest of that year he would collect me after school on Friday afternoon and I would spend the weekend with him. Oftentimes he would drop me home early on the Monday morning. Each dinner we had I was given wine and on many occasions we would have two bottles between us. I suspect that after the events of Jaisalmer I was more wary.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

During the course of this ear Rubeo developed a back problem. He had purchased an electronic acupuncture machine from a mail order catalogue or similar. He asked me to use this on his lower back and I would do this at night whilst we said the rosary.

There were more trips away to various places during this year, not overseas, and at the end of that year he took up a parish priest role at East Preston. It was on one of these trips whilst staying at a hotel in Sydney that he started yelling at me whenever I was in the toilet "Are you wanking Adlard?" and "Masturbation is a sin Adlard" - comments to me that went beyond banter. He also started telling me to "be sure to sleep with your hands out of bed Adlard."

After conversations between him and my mother it was decided that I would live with him there and attend Parade College for years 11 and 12 to take me away from whatever distractions they thought I was succumbing to. [REDACTED]

The nightly electronic acupuncture sessions stopped as Rubeo felt that a massage would help more. At night during the rosary sessions he would insist I massage his lower back. He would also insist that I massage "lower" and eventually to the point where I was rubbing above not far above his anus and below his coccyx, all the while reciting his rosary. His praying would be interrupted by other 'noises'. On a few occasions he'd insist I rub lower but I refused. The last time he asked I recall with no doubt at all telling him to "f\*ck off" and I returned to my room. I avoided the massages from then on and told him he needed to see a doctor or chiropractor. I am quite horrified now about this.

We were allowed to bring girls to the year 11 social (Parade being single sex) so I invited a girl from our youth group, [REDACTED]. Rubeo knew her as she and her family was involved in the parish but that didn't stop him being rude to her during dinner and when he drove us to the social, to the point where I told him not to bother picking us up. She arranged for her dad to collect us using the payphone near the school.

The next night at dinner he asked if I "spent the night pashioning-on?" These were his words. I admitted that I'd kissed her goodnight and then he said "if you f\*ck her and she gets pregnant, don't marry her... I'll arrange an abortion." Strange words from a priest!

In year twelve [REDACTED] it was just Rubeo and I. When I'd returned from summer holidays I was caught not going to church one Sunday. For the entirety of year eleven I pretended I was going to church as I had completely stopped believing and would only go when the youth group had involvement. He asked me this one Sunday what his sermon was about and I said "I forgot as was sitting next to [REDACTED] and was distracted." He lost his temper and called me a liar and a few other words and left for the day - [REDACTED]. The next evening when I returned home from school he sat down with me to talk about why I wasn't going to church. I told him that I didn't believe anymore and to be honest the conversation was very calm and there was no anger, just sadness on his part.

I returned home from school the next night to find all my stuff had been moved to the other end of the house like I had been banished. Conversations were pretty stifled and we pretty much spent only meals and cleaning up the kitchen afterwards together. Shortly after this he asked me to stop being involved in the youth group as I “wasn’t Christian enough”. I was pretty happy when most of the other kids stopped going following my departure.

Midway through the first term of year twelve I started spending as much time away from him as possible and more time mucking around with my friends. Quite a few of them had finished school and started apprenticeships.

I would go out with them on Friday and Saturday nights and would return home via the last tram home. We all started drinking and this worsened over the year. I was staying with him under the guise of maximizing my intellect at school but instead I was an unsupervised underage drinker not studying, going to night clubs and on occasions staying at virtual stranger’s houses.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Rubeo had no idea where I was and I’m pretty sure he didn’t care.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### **4. Peter Searson**

My involvement with him was minimal – thankfully. On first meeting he said something about not having ‘favored families’ and made me very uncomfortable. He was just creepy to be around. In Rubeo’s last year in Doveton I replaced one of my brothers cleaning of the primary school and continued that role when Rubeo left and Searson took over as parish priest. I can’t remember how my employment ended at Holy Family but I do remember my disdain for Searson was such that I delighted in telling him to ‘stick his cleaning job up his pious arse.” By that time my mum, who managed the primary canteen and cleaned the church had also been let go. It was pretty much at that point our involvement in Holy Family ended.

My brother Kevin is also submitting to this enquiry and I will mention here I can very clearly remember him coming home one night from cleaning quite shocked that Searson had pulled a gun on him. At the time we rationalized it as “oh well, it was late and he thought it was an intruder.’ A common theme here – give them the benefit of the doubt, they’re priests after all.

As an adult remembering these occurrences I always thought of O’Keeffe as disgusting, Searson as creepy and Rubeo with both gratitude and sadness. It wasn’t until the police contacted us regarding their investigation into Rubeo’s actions in Doveton and then rumors came our way that ‘something’ had happened with [REDACTED] that I began to wonder whether Rubeo was interested in my wellbeing or had darker intentions. In my conversations with the police at the time I did describe my relationship with Rubeo in detail but to be honest more defended him than anything else. I probably also rationalized it [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Reading and seeing Tony Hersbach’s online interview earlier this year detailing his relationship as a teen with Rubeo made me realize how I too was being groomed by him for sex and how fortunate I was not to be seriously physically abused. I am both furious and devastated by the fact that I cannot possible believe now that Rubeo had any genuine care for me at all. His motives to me were nothing more than to fulfill his own desires and I find myself constantly revisiting every place in my memory about our “friendship” with incredible sadness as the motive behind every act of kindness is questionable to me. Graeme Sleeman’s interview earlier this week in ‘The Age’ add clarity to what I thought I saw in East Brighton on that one occasion I mentioned earlier.

I will admit here to talking to a counselor about these events primarily as I, nor does my wife, feel I am coping that well with these recent revelations nor do I feel I have the facilities to arrange my thoughts regarding this in a way which enables me to function as a husband and father without the feeling of having a “black cloud hover over me”.

What I want from this enquiry is for this to stop. No child should ever be put in the position I was, **EVER!**

I have absolutely no doubt the actions of Rubeo and the tragically long list of other pedophile clergymen was known of amongst the hierarchy of the church and I am furious that the resolution was virtually always an internal enquiry and relocation of the accused, subsequently putting more children at risk.

Finally, I will add the following

- Each single accusation **must** be investigated by the police and **not** the church. Any old internal investigations must be reopened and investigated impartially by the police.
- Do clergymen undergo ‘working with children’ checks like I will to be a junior soccer coach and my wife does as a teacher? If not, why not?

- A full investigation of the cover up within the church must begin as soon as possible with all of these criminals punished to the full extent of the law **and** all victims compensated.

Thank you for accepting my submission.