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Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations

Ms Stena Keys

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## **SUBMISSION CONTENT:**

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I was in both Abbotsford Convent and Winlaton in the late 60's / early 70's. My only crime was running away from home because of extreme physical and sexual abuse. I was then placed in CARE by the courts and made a Ward of the State, for my own good and safety ? First experience of abuse in care was in Remand, my place of safety??? I Was bashed so often, any opportunity the girls had. Why? Maybe because my name was different, I was a wog and a bed wetter, so I was prime candidate for being picked on. NO- you didn't report the bashings, you were always threatened with worse if you told/lagged, as they called it. Yes, the staff definately knew things were going on like that, but most just didn't care, most were there simply to make sure you did what you were told, didn't like me, a bed wetter, a problem child. Then into the main section of Winlaton. 3 separate sections. Leawarra, and Gounya, I vaguely remember names. I think I was in the first section, for the better behaved girls??? That is where the sexual abuse started. The girls that did this vile act called it SCRUFFING. Using the end of a hair brush to penetrate into my vagina while I was being held down by another couple of girls. A slap in the face, punch in the stomach...My god, I was only 13/14 years old????This went on often and not just to me. This so called practice of Scruffing-raping with a Hair brush was going on before I got to Winlaton and still continued after I left, from what I heard...the girls/ abusers, had many opportunities as the staff were often in their little offices with their backs turned away, or busy with paperwork, or just simply not interested in what was going on in their sections. So many bashings, always in the stomach the punches were directed, so no bruising would be seen, and even if there was a bruise or two, I fell over or hit the door or something...no- you were never encouraged to come forward with problems or complaints, you were treated worse, by the staff, if you did complain and the girls/bullies would get you really good if you told on them, or lagged, as they called it. I don't know how long I was in Winlaton getting bashed and raped that I decided I had to get out of there, for my own safety and sanity. My dad came to take me on a day visit to see a solicitor in Melbourne. My opportunity to get out of Winlaton. As soon as my Dad had his back turned, I RAN FOR MY LIFE - I ABSCONDED - I WAS NOT GOING BACK INTO WINLATON AND TO THOSE PEOPLE IN THERE - I WOULD RATHER BE DEAD. A few weeks on the streets. looking for a safe haven for me and my poor abused body, I was picked up by the Police and taken to the station. No, they never

asked me why I was on the streets, why I was running...the police had this vision of me as a dirty street girl that was not worth any thing. big, huge uncaring people, again. Was I really not worth anything???? Then came the Abbotsford Convent stay. The nuns were worse than the staff at Winlaton. Cold, cold, so cold, is what I remember. I also remember having to carry my soiled sheets into the laundry every morning, I still wet my bed at night, major fear I carried, specially at night time, I just froze in my bed, could not get out to go to the toilet, suffered greatly, humiliated by the nuns and the girls..Some girls were from Winlaton, some from many other homes. All were abused in one way or another. My best friend in the convent had a father that sexually abused her, often, but the nuns still let her go home with him on the weekends??? she killed herself not long after she got out of the Abbotsford Convent. Me, still getting abused, in the laundry most times now. A little smack across the head, or a punch in the stomach, it all still went on. Sexual abuse in the Convent was less violent, no hair brushes were used, but it was still rife. My few experiences were usually in the laundry where we worked. Often left alone, the girls had again, many opportunities to dowhat they wanted. Punch and pushed into an open locker, underpants being ripped down, or even just being ripped aside, being sickly abused. The experience at the Convent seemed to hit me worse, I've carried all this with me through out my life, secretly...no, cannot be a secret any longer. Too many of us have suffered beyond immeasurable damage. Yes, I did have a meeting with the Nuns from Abbostford Convent in 2011. They apologied...I got a letter for my trouble of dredging up the dirt and humiliation, from the Convent. A LETTER OF APOLOGY???? Please...

We as care leavers can possibly write a library full of our experiences, most of them horrific, at least for me they were, and many that I knew. some are dead, gone, couldn;t cope. some of us are still struggling with the ugly truth. From this enquiry I would like to see the People that were in control of our care charged with the appropriate charges, standing back and allowing abuse to flourish, doing nothing to prevent these horrid acts to happen. The truth is very ugly, as it still is in most institutions this very day. Will the governments continue to put their heads in the sand, pretend??? Separating Religious and non religious groups is a farce...Abuse is abuse, no matter where it happens...CAN YOU SLEEP AT NIGHT KNOWING THESE HORRIBLE THINGS TOOK PLACE TO INNOCENT CHILDREN - DO YOU HAVE A 13 YEAR OLD DAUGHTER OR SON - PLACE THEM IN THOSE SITUATIONS, IF YOU CAN!!!

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File1:

File2:

File3: