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Submission to The Inquiry Into The Handling Of Child Abuse By Religious And Other Organisations.

I was sexually assaulted by a Marist Brother at Assumption College, Kilmore in November 1967 when I was 13 years of age. The brother's religious name was Br ██████████ I think he is still in the Marist Order.

He had long been suspected of criminal behaviour because of his overtly inappropriate behaviour towards young boys in public. Goodness knows what he was getting away with in private places.

He had behaved inappropriately towards me on many occasions but on one particular night he assaulted me at 10pm while I lay in bed, in a dormitory while about 40 other boys were in various stages of sleep nearby.

At about 11pm I woke the headmaster, Br ██████████ (now deceased) to try and tell him what had happened. I could not get the words out so he virtually told me. The impression I got was that Br ██████████ had « form » at previous schools and that Br ██████████ was well aware of his tendencies.

By next morning Br ██████████ had left the school and was moved to Western Australia. My parents were called down for a meeting and I was taken out of an exam to meet with them and the Principal. My impression was that the onus of responsibility of taking further action was placed on my parents, who were in a state of shock. They were also told that Br ██████████ would never be teaching in Victoria again. Within 4 years he was back in Victoria teaching at ██████████ and he sat within about 4 rows of my parents at an athletics meeting I was competing in at Olympic Park. I never knew how distressed my father was about this until after his death when my mother told me.

My mother was traumatised as well and for many years subscribed to Broken Rites.

My parents were told to think of the hurt Br ██████████ family would experience if news of his actions became public. My mother was appalled that the hurt caused to the perpetrator's family seemed to be more important than the hurt caused to the victim's family.

In about 1996, while my marriage was falling apart, the church paid for 20 sessions of counselling from a Psychologist to help me deal with the possible unresolved trauma. In retrospect what may have helped more would have been if the perpetrator had been held to account. And if the church took responsibility for its complicity in my abuse and also the abuse of thousands

of others. The pretend ignorance of the church powers is the most galling thing. The perpetrators can virtually not help themselves. They are notorious recidivists and are almost impossible to cure. It is the church hierarchy which must be dealt with for their disregard for basic justice, human rights and the law. They have placed the church above the law and the protection of the church's reputation as more important than protecting children. The complicity through silence makes the non-perpetrators and the church leaders almost as culpable as the abusers themselves.

I have now been a Social Worker for 30 years and some of my work has involved dealing with victims, and perpetrators, of sexual abuse. At least my experiences gave me some insight. And my assault was never a secret. Half the school knew about it by breakfast next morning. The victims that have suffered in silence for years with their shame have had a harder journey.

It was also very disappointing to learn that sexual abuse continued at Assumption College for many years afterwards. The Marist Brothers, and the Catholic Church, going right to the top, and especially Dr Pell, have a lot to answer for and they have never really been held accountable.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Terry Kelly

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