

The Secretary
Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee
Suite S1 59
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONAL CARE

Dear Sir,

I wish to make a submission in relation to the current inquiry into "Children In Institutional Care". This submission primarily relates to Part 1 (a) of the terms of reference ie. "the unsafe, improper or unlawful care or treatment of children".

I was made a state ward of Victoria in the early 1960's and was placed at St. Augustine's Orphanage in Highton Geelong (Victoria) approximately between 1963 and 1971. During this period I spent the majority of the time in a cottage adjacent to the Orphanage at 115 Thornhill Road, Highton. The cottage parents were Len and Dorothy McNamara who had two children David and Thelma.

During the early years at St. Augustine's I was subjected to and witnessed a brutal and sadistic application of corporal punishment by the Catholic Christian Brothers in charge. One brother in particular had a red strap that was referred to as the "red terror" which was used to inflict maximum pain. This Brother as well as a number of other Brothers were also known by the boys to be paedophiles.

During the time I spent in the cottage I witnessed violent assaults on children by the cottage parents. They occasionally whipped children with an electric cord to inflict maximum pain and the cord left severe welts on the legs and buttocks. I also witnessed the unprovoked assault on another state ward which left him with severe facial injuries.

I wish to point out that the violent application of corporal punishment by the Catholic Church was common place in the 1960's. The alternative to children who resisted violence at orphanages like St. Augustine's was Turana a Victorian Government run "pseudo" prison for boys in Melbourne.

The Victorian Government at the time would certainly have been aware of institutionalised violence by the Catholic Church. At no time during my period of detention at St. Augustine's did I witness any monitoring and auditing of the conditions there by the Victorian Government.

The Victorian government also did not provide an adequate exit strategy and support services to myself when I was discharged from St. Augustine's. Fortunately I was permitted to live with my sister where I completed my HSC at Broadmeadows High School and then completed an Associate Diploma in Electrical Engineering at RMIT.

CONCLUSIONS:-

- I can confirm to the committee that improper and unlawful care and treatment of children did occur at St. Augustine's orphanage in the 1960's. State Wards were placed into the care of Christian Brothers (a number of these Brothers were sadistic violent paedophiles) by the Victorian Government who would surely have been aware of the risk of sexual and physical abuse to these children.
- The scale of unsafe, improper and unlawful treatment of children was extreme as it occurred regularly on an ongoing basis.
- I am not familiar with the relevant statutory obligations of the Victorian State Government to State Wards during this time however due to the absence of any monitoring and auditing process it would fair to conclude the Victorian State Government did not display any "duty of care" to State Wards.

Regards

Douglas William Hardy