

Submission Relating to Sexual Abuse

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RAAF 1969 to 1990

I am making this submission to add my voice to the process of trying to gain suitable outcomes for those affected by sexual abuse, violence, other crimes, and the denial of adequate justice for the victims.

I am a survivor of one year of abuse at HMAS Leeuwin, and I would like to see the following outcomes:

1. Many of victims, myself included, had a "Services No Longer Required" or "Dishonorable Discharge" from their branch of the military. This should be reviewed in light of the circumstances that led to their being discharged. In many cases, I believe their discharge should be changed to an "Honorable Discharge", and a certificate reflecting this should be issued. Why? This is a blight on each of our professional records which was not just undeserved, but a total miscarriage of justice.
2. For those who had additional service in any another branch of the Australian Defence: Their time in the Navy should be credited to their time in the Australian Defence, regardless of the length of their service in the Navy. They should be offered the right to purchase this time back, thus allowing it to be credited to their DFRDB, or whatever superannuation scheme they are or were under when they retired. This would have the effect of increasing their superannuation pensions. The effective date of the increase should be backdated to when the victims started receiving their military pension.
3. All victims who were under 18 years old when the offences occurred should (voluntarily) be incorporated into the existing Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
4. Any monies that were forfeited as punishment when the victims were discharged from Defence, should be returned at today's value. (Loss of leave, pay, and savings etc., which was common for the victims at HMAS Leeuwin.)
5. Each victim should receive a personal apology from Defence admitting their failure in preventing the acts of brutality, and for the miscarriage of justice in the handling of the situations.
6. That DVA amend or issue appropriate SOP(s) to cover the medical and

psychological conditions that have manifested in the victims of the abuse.
This needs to be acted upon urgently.

7. That the victims have their medical and psychological conditions resulting from the mistreatment at HMAS Leeuwin be accepted by DVA as service related conditions, regardless of the time elapsed between the events and their application being submitted.
8. That, where necessary, professional assistance be given to the victims in completing the DVA applications.
9. That realistic compensation is made to all victims.

My Story

The following is my story, and while I don't like all the details of my abuse being public information, I am willing to make this sacrifice if it brings a better result for all. I have tried not to be graphic in my description of the event, as this is not some cheap novel, but rather my real life pain. I have also not expressed my emotions, or the physical pain I suffered, as this only serves to heighten my distress. It's bad enough to just write this account.

In May of 2014, I was assessed by DART, and as a result have received a AU\$50,000 payment. I have also received counselling, for which I am truly grateful. However, the overall response has not been adequate, thus my desired outcomes which have been detailed above.

I have little memory of the exact or even rough dates, nor the sequence of the events detailed, except they happened between the date of my enlistment into the Royal Australian Navy on 7 July 1967 and my dishonourable discharge on 17 June 1968. Other than the names mentioned in this document, and someone called [redacted] I don't remember the names of people involved. I don't accuse the person called [redacted] of anything, although I'm fairly sure he was one of the bullies. However, it could be just a name I happen to remember from that period.

I confess I have done my best to suppress the memories of my time at HMAS Leeuwin, and the fact that it all happened so long ago doesn't help. However, details of the barbarous acts inflicted on me still return in nightmares and lurk waiting to pounce without warning. I remember the following events as if they happened yesterday, though I wish I didn't.

After applying to join the RAN, sometime in the early months of 1967, I received a letter from the Navy requesting that I report for a medical examination and to undergo suitability testing for possible entry into the RAN as a Junior Recruit. A short time after this I received a letter inviting me to enlist for twelve years. Considering my previous poor academic achievements while at school, I was surprised and realised I must have achieved better results than I thought possible.

As instructed, I reported to the Defence Recruitment building in Brisbane's CBD, where I was sworn in, given an advance on my first pay, a train ticket to Perth, a letter detailing when and where I was to be at the South Brisbane Interstate Railway Station, exactly what to bring, and what was considered suitable attire for the journey. My departure date soon arrived, and I was on my way to the navy's Junior Recruit Base at HMAS Leeuwin, which was located in Fremantle in Western Australia. On this trip, I was accompanied by a bunch of eager young teens from Queensland. We were all on our way to an exciting adventure, the beginning of our lives as sailors serving our country in the RAN.

The overland train trip took about five days with many changes of trains due to the different rail gauge system in each state. When we finally arrived at Perth Central Station, we were escorted to a waiting Navy bus and driven to the base. As we entered, we were all eyes, captivated by the stark difference between the outside world, and the Spartan right-dressed inner sanctum of a military base. The bus pulled up next to a row of three, three-story brick buildings.

We embarked directly opposite the 'housing blocks,' as this type of building was called. As we stepped from the bus the older recruits taunted us by slamming their fists into their palms, and insulting us with offensive language. They shouted at us with threats of beatings if we didn't give them our money and cigarettes. At first, they only menaced us a little, but this was enough for some of the boys to be totally intimidated. Unfortunately, the taunts soon turned into unprovoked violence. What shocked me was that all this occurred in front of the base staff.

As I realised this was to be my home for the next year, my heart sank. To add insult to injury, in addition to the intimidation, there was little grass and only a few trees except on and around the sports ovals. Every building looked like it had come directly out of a communist city. There was virtually nothing at all to stimulate the senses, except of course from the threats, and the loudly screamed commands from some seemingly very unintelligent people telling us what to do and where to go.

There were some of the boys who didn't like to take showers as often as needed, and without their mothers to hassle them, they soon became rather stinky. When their stench became unbearable for others, they were usually forcibly thrown into the shower by the base staff members and some of the older recruits, and scrubbed with very hard-bristle brooms that were designed for cleaning the decks of ships. These "Bass Brooms", as they were called, literally tore small strips of skin off and left the victim bloodied and scratched all over. Fortunately, this never happened to me, but I am sure it was both physically and mentally stressful for the victims.

Shortly after arriving at Leeuwin, I was required to report to the Chief Petty Officer in charge of the Naval Police on the base. While in his office, I made the mistake of relaxing, and resting my hands on his desk. The Shore Patrolman, who had escorted me in, immediately swung his stiff arm backwards hitting me in the chest. He knocked the wind out of me, and sent me flying across the room, until I came to a sudden and painful stop against the wall. I was totally surprised by the savagery of

his attack, considering the unimportance of my breach of protocol, which I had made in ignorance. I was to find out some time later that some of the base staff members enjoyed inflicting pain on young boys.

Within a fairly short time, the threats from the older recruits progressed to bullying, physical attacks, theft, and homosexual acts. The new boys were sometimes rounded up, stripped naked, and made to run through the long corridors of the building while the earlier recruit intakes hit them with pillowcases that they had filled with bottles (which sometimes broke on impact and cut their hapless victims), boots, and any other hard things they could get into them. These 'gauntlets,' as they were known, resulted in many a lad being badly hurt. While I was a victim of these gauntlets and suffered injury and the indignity of being naked and exposed, I never sought medical attention, though I often wished I had, so I could have had time to convalesce and hide in the protected environment of the base Medical Section. Though, who knows, that may have also been an unsafe place!

These same sick individuals also participated in midnight raids, where they beat boys while they slept. I would often wake in fright to the sudden excruciating pain of someone's fists pounding on my face and body. Unfortunately, sometimes the base staff members were also involved in these acts of bastardisation. Why I was a victim of these attacks I don't know, maybe because I was a pretty-faced mummy's boy.

On some occasions, I was hauled out of bed, and thrown into a cold shower along with all my kit, or even worse, taken outside and beaten senseless by a group of cowardly thugs who hid their identity, but I could tell some of them were regular staff members as their bodies were not those of boys. On one of these attacks I was hit across the back many times with a large lump of wood. After this I was made to carry others on my back while bent over or doing the duck walk. This caused me to have a pain in my back for some time, and as time was to show, it was the start of long-life back pain. During another attack, someone literally jumped on my back while I was prostrate on the ground; this simply added to my back pain.

There were also the homosexual games, where they would force me and other boys to perform sexual acts on each other. These things caused immeasurable physical and mental damage to me and other victims, even those who didn't think it affected them, were in fact infected with this insidious daemon, as some of the victims later became the predators, over-lording the next bunch of fresh recruits.

Each accommodation block had a staff room located on the bottom storey right next to the main entry where there was always at least one adult staff member on duty. Given this, I could never understand why, during the beatings and homosexual attacks, these staff members didn't hear what was going on, and come to our rescue. I now realise it was impossible for them not to hear what was happening, and they either just didn't care, were in cahoots with the perpetrators, or worse still... they enjoyed it. To this day I can feel the emotional pain of those dreadful days of hell welling up inside me. Unfortunately such abuse never really leaves you.

Sometimes, I would be snatched from my bed in the middle of the night, and dragged to a sports oval where I was beaten, and subjected to sexual abuse. Sometimes I was forced to suck other man's penis, lick their anuses after another person who had been buggered and had ejaculated into, to bugger one of the other scared victims or be buggered myself. On at least two occasions someone defecated and the shit was rubbed on me. One poor guy even had it shoved into his mouth. I'm unsure of how many times this happened, as I have tried to block out so many memories of my time in Leeuwin. One thing of which I'm sure, I wasn't the only victim of these macabre and cowardly attacks.

The peer pressure to take up smoking while at Leeuwin was very strong, and unfortunately, I started this stupid and dangerous habit, which was to be part of my life for the next ten years. It's strange; I actually started buying smokes before I took up the filthy habit in the first place... just so I could placate the bullies when they demanded something from me.

There were many occasions when older recruits approached others and myself, and demands were made for not just cigarettes, but money and possessions. If we refused to comply with the demands, we were beaten mercilessly.

On a number of occasions I wrote to my father about the problems, and begged him to help me get a discharge from the Navy, so I could escape the incessant torture and homosexual acts of aggression with which I found myself imprisoned.

When I think about the Navy requiring youths of fifteen and sixteen years old to sign long contracts of twelve years, I think it was criminal. Nobody minor has the wherewithal to make enduring agreements of this nature. Of course you think you do, but the reality is far from it, and the adults around you, including parents, should have known better. Though I guess if parents had known their sons were to be subjected to such brutality and sexual abuse, they may well have never let them join. I feel the unseemly actions of the Navy on such young men, amounted to nothing less than being shanghaied and used as sexual food for homosexual and paedophile predators.

My father did eventually help me in a small way. When I came home on my first leave break, after suffering something like six months of sheer hell, his only action was to pay for me to have boxing lessons. The trainer my father had hired was an old retired professional, and he taught me how to win a fight, by whatever means necessary. When you think about this, answering violence with violence is the most stupid thing we can ever do. Though I guess my father saw it as a way for me to at least defend myself.

Unfortunately, I was too ashamed to tell my dad all the graphic details of the sexual and violent attacks, so I guess it wasn't entirely his fault for not helping me in the way I needed. Shame and disgust, mingled with self-hatred, is a very powerful deterrent to spilling your guts, even when it could save you.

All too soon my leave came to an end, and I reluctantly returned to the hell of Navy life. Yes, I now had some confidence, and this did relieve the situation a little, but my newfound skill had yet to be tested. I now felt I could actually defend myself in a fight. Unfortunately, most of the fights were not one on one, and it didn't take long for the bullies to start up their sick actions again. I soon found myself faced with the decision to either fight back or hide. Eventually, I decided enough was enough, so I refused to comply with the demands of the very next person who tried to intimidate me. The usual result of actions such as this was to be challenged to have a fistfight against one of the tough guys late that night.

I was told to be in a certain place at a particular time after rounds, where I was to meet my opponent. It was with much fear and trepidation I made my appearance, right on time. Of course, news about the fight soon spread and there was the usual large ghoulish crowd, which included base staff members. On my side, there were all the boys like me, and on the other side, all the bullies and their crawler sidekicks. Once the fight started, my opponent soon realised, not only had my confidence increased, but also my skill, as I landed some well-placed punches to his head. I took a couple of painful blows to my face, but having a propensity to endure substantial pain, I had time to think back to my training, and how I could cut the fight short.

I remembered my trainer telling me it was always a good tactic to draw blood from your opponent, as this usually caused them to panic. He had taught me the best and easiest place to cut someone was just above the eye, as the skin in this area was thin as it was drawn tightly over the edge of the eye socket. In addition, this area bled profusely without actually doing any real harm. A couple of well-aimed punches soon saw my opponent totally startled, as he felt his blood running into to his eye. The tactic worked, as I found myself the recipient of threats of merciless revenge, by a retreating bully along with his throng of cowards.

After I had won a few more of the one-on-one type of fights, the bullies tended to leave me alone most of the time, but this was not to last. At one point, a huge Islander man, who I think was from my own intake, challenged me. During our fight, I must have hit him at least a dozen times, however, he hit me only once. This was all that was necessary for me to see stars and smell smoke, as the world around me slowly turned black. I am guessing that once the bullies realised I could hold my own against most of them, they sent in someone against whom I had no real chance.

Not long after returning from my leave, I had made an appointment to see one of the chaplains to talk about what was happening to me. I felt safe with this man, so I told him all the gory details of the brutality, paedophilia, and homosexual attacks that had not only been inflicted on me, but also many others. When I asked what I could do about it, he suggested it was possibly better I didn't do anything, as if it ever got out that I had ratted on the predators, my life itself might be in danger. I left the man's office hoping he would at least bring the problem to the attention of the base commander. Unfortunately, his listening ear never actually turned into action

of any sort. Of course he may have reported the problem, however, if he did, I certainly didn't see any let-up in the predatory behaviour.

Because of my frustration over the lack of action to prevent the bashings, paedophile and homosexual attacks, I sought an interview with my own commanding officer. Unfortunately, when I explained to the staff member why I wanted to see him, I was dismissed and told it was in my best interest not to raise such matters.

Nearing the end of our Junior Recruit training, we were taken to Garden Island off the coast near Perth. The first days on the island were virtually event-free, and we even did a little fishing. Unfortunately, the peace soon came to an end, as the troublemakers were getting bored. They decided to have a few bashings, and play some homosexual games to brighten up their pathetic lives. One of their favourite games was called "Milking the Cow." This was where they would have a boy masturbate another recruit, who had been forced to undress and get on all fours. As I didn't want any part of this, nor to have any interruption to my recently acquired sense of freedom and peace, which had been engendered by the tranquil setting, I felt the best thing for me to do was to disappear.

I hid in a small cave I had discovered a couple of days earlier, and while I was sitting there, contemplating how much I hated my life and the insanity of the navy, another boy who had obviously had the same idea as me, entered the cave. I think his family name was or something similar. As we talked about the hopeless situation in which we had found ourselves, we decided as long as there was a Navy, there would be these same types of subhuman events, and we would be better off without it. There and then, we hatched our plan to escape from the homosexual, paedophile asylum called the Royal Australian Navy.

For the remainder of the time on the island, we both managed to avoid any run-ins with the bullies by working as a team. The trip back to the base was warm, and on calm seas, so it was quite pleasant... not unlike a leisurely cruise. Our first task when we returned to the base was to make preparations for our escape. We had no idea where we would be going, however, we knew being anywhere but where we were, was where we wanted to be.

In discussing the problem, I found out we had both told our superiors about the problems of the bastardisation and homosexual acts perpetrated on us, as well as many of the other boys. Unfortunately, no one had listened or taken any action. We didn't actually want to be on the run forever, rather, just long enough to be considered deserters, thus giving us the right to elect to have a court martial, a venue where we could cry out loud and long about why we had left.

To cut a long story short, we did make a successful escape, and managed to get to Kalgoorlie where we worked to support ourselves. When we had been away for long enough and felt we had made our point, now, just maybe, someone would listen to us. If not, we were officially deserters, and could demand our right to have a

court-martial. This meant we could make a statement on how we had been treated, and because a military court was as binding as a civil one, the statements must be recorded. We felt this was our opportunity to expose the paedophile, homosexual, and bastardisation problem, giving nobody the chance to erase our statements... I guess we still had a thing or two to learn about military injustice.

Eventually, we walked into the local Kalgoorlie police station, and after surrendering ourselves, were duly locked up. The Navy left us to stew in the watch house for a few days. Eventually, we were escorted to the airport and put on a flight back to Perth. On arrival, as we exited the aircraft, we were met by two burly shore patrolmen, who roughhoused us into the back of a waiting Navy paddy wagon. When we arrived on the base, we were transferred to the base lockup, and given our uniforms into which to change. We stayed in the lockup for a number of weeks, but were let out during the day to do punishment work. This usually consisted of washing dishes, scrubbing pots, or preparing vegetables in one of the three galleys on the base.

As part of our punishment, even before we had been put on trial, we had to spend a couple of hours each evening running around the parade ground holding a rifle above our heads. This was carried out regardless of the weather, and by the time I was finally put on trial, I was so fit I would often do it running backward.... just for a change, and to break the monotony. Unfortunately, carrying a rifle above my head while running always caused me immense pain in my lower back.

The daytime work and evening running was really easy, compared to the nights in the lockup. As I said earlier, some of the Navy Police liked to inflict pain on young boys, while using them for their sexual pleasure. I later learnt this perverted type of sexual pleasure was called 'S & M,' which stands for sadism and masochism, I guess the real thrill for these guys was they could do it with pretty faced boys. The difference between the bastardisation on the base, which was inflicted on us by our peers and some of the staff, and the activity in the prison, was that at least on the base you could run and hide, but when locked in a small cell... there was nowhere to go. I don't know if this happened to my friend, but during my time in the lockup, I suffered a great deal of violence and sexual abuse including oral sex, buggery and masturbation.

Finally, but not soon enough for me, my court martial was set up. I was given the option of selecting a representative to testify on my behalf during the court martial proceedings. I asked for my Divisional Commander, Lieutenant Commander

When he visited me, he asked me what I really wanted the result of the court martial to be, so I told him I wanted to be discharged from the navy, and clearly detailed to him why. I told him about the bashings and sexual attacks to which I had been subjected, even my treatment while I had been in the cell. He tried to convince me to stay in the Navy, as he felt I would make a good sailor. He said the performance of my duties was beyond reproach, and I was even doing well in the academic program. When I explained to him I couldn't take the bastardisation anymore, and I really wanted out, he said okay, and told me to let him do all the talking.

On the day of the trial, my fellow escapee and I were brought to a waiting room, and then escorted into the courtroom one at a time. After some initial statements by the officer-in-charge regarding the charges against me, and my identity was confirmed, I was asked if I had a representative. I named my commander who was promptly called in. After answering their questions, Lieutenant Commander [redacted] was asked to give his statement. He proceeded to tell the court I was a troublemaker, didn't work at my studies or duties, and in his opinion, I would never make a good seaman. I was in shock at hearing what he said, as it was the opposite of what he had said to me in private. To add insult to injury, he said nothing of why I had deserted. I really didn't hear much of the rest of the proceedings, as my mind was reeling at how I had been duped.

The only thing I remember happening after that was the judge's sentence. I was to be dishonourably discharged, and all my back pay, savings, leave pay, and pension rights were also be taken from me.

As I was returned to my cell, my head was still spinning, and I felt caught between two conflicting emotions, the elation of finally being released from hell, and the hell of being betrayed. Nothing had been said as to why I had run away, and my commander, who was supposed to represent me honestly, had lied about my performance and achievements. Did the man not realise how hard I had worked, and what such achievements meant to a boy like me? I had previously thought he was a Christian and a friend, but it seemed to me, he was neither. What he was, I couldn't say, I could only guess, he too, may have liked young boys, and needed to protect the web of deceit.

In hindsight, a better name for this process would have been Kangaroo Court, as I was charged and found guilty, without even being given the chance to defend myself properly, and state the reasons for my departure. So much for making my point, and putting on record just what had driven me to such extreme measures. As per the judge's instructions, I was stripped of all my back pay, leave pay, savings, entitlements, and dishonourably discharged. The next day I was sent home in disgrace, feeling like a total failure.

As sad as this may seem, the only things I learnt while in the Navy, resulting from this woeful situation, was how to fight and defend myself, and to never trust again. What a blight this is on an institution that should have equipped me with some profound life skills, and fond boyhood memories. Instead, my memories only cause me sadness and pain.

As I took the long and arduous trip back to Brisbane by train, I was still in a hazy state of confusion and conflicting emotions. I felt ashamed I was in a uniform without insignia or markings, as this was regarded as a public disgrace. However, I endured it because I had no choice, and at least I was liberated. My real regret was that the criminals who had inflicted such indignity and pain on others and myself, were free

to continue with their ghoulish predatory behaviour of destroying many more young boys' lives.

On the last leg of my five-day trip, I was in a cabin for six people, however, as I was the only occupant, I stretched out on the long seat, and slept to hide from my tormenting emotions. I was so damaged; I even wet myself with the tension as I slept. I now realise my mental state at that point was not very good, and I was in desperate need of counselling, and some words of comfort.

Sometime during 1971, while I was serving in the RAAF, I was told I was to report to a Judge Rapke in Sydney, as there was an inquiry into the bastardisation at HMAS Leeuwin. 'At last,' I thought, 'someone is actually going to try to fix this situation.' I was flown to Sydney, met at the airport, and then driven to the where the judge was gathering his evidence. On arrival, I was met by a Shore Patrolman and escorted to the Judges rooms. However, on the way there, my escort made it extremely clear to me, that if I said anything other than the events at Leeuwin were "boys being boys", I would pay a very dear price. He told me they knew where I was, and they had people at the top in all services, and my Air Force career would end in disgrace... so much for justice.

Many years later, while serving in the RAAF, I applied to have my one year in the navy added to my military service, which would have increased my DFRDB superannuation pension, but I was informed as the service was a couple of weeks short of a full year, it didn't qualify... robbed again. Does it ever stop?

In early 1982, I was under a great deal of work related stress while working in AIRENG 1A in the RAAF Headquarters Support Command in St. Kilder Melbourne. While traveling to and from work on the trains, a number of homosexual approaches made inappropriate approaches towards me. I don't know why, but for some reason, I was a gay magnet. All these approaches caused me additional stress, as I couldn't help recalling the abuse I had suffered at HMAS Leeuwin. One night while I was relaxing and watching television at home, I was contemplating a partially aggressive homosexual approach that had been made towards me on my way home.

As I sat, all my memories of the homosexual attacks on me at HMAS Leeuwin flooded my mind. I found that for some reason I could no longer push the memories back into the dark cave I had created especially for them. Suddenly my heart began to beat very fast, and I was completely overwhelmed.

Some hours later, while my emotions had subsided, my heart rate was still very high, so I asked my wife to drive me to the Box Hill Hospital ER. I was taken straight in, as my heart rate was bout 230 beats per minute. I was eventually diagnosed as having Atrial Fibrillation (AF). After many tests there never any physical cause found. The long and short of this story is that from that day onwards I have had AF, which I believe could have been caused by my never ending trauma from the abuse I suffered while in the Navy.

In 1997, about thirty after leaving the Navy, I was on a flight returning to Australia, when a movie about a similar situation in a boys' reform home was shown. I became so upset and angry, had one of those men been standing before me, I would have gladly killed him with my bare hands, and I don't mean it figuratively. It was only then that I realised, while I had dealt with much of the pain from those days, the deep-seated damage had never been repaired. I had to get out of my seat, and pace up and down the narrow aisle to walk off the adrenalin my rage had pumped into my body.

I am not saying these feelings are okay. What I am trying to illustrate here is the longevity and depth of such pain. I am not surprised so many victims, both men and women, have committed violent acts against their predators, and even produced their own victims. I have forgiven, but it's impossible to forget, and unfortunately the pain never leaves you.

Bastardisation of the type of which I have written is still practiced, and not just the Royal Australian Navy; it's in all three services. This pathetic situation needs urgent action; unfortunately, it's a catch 22. If the Government admits there is a problem, they will be sued for compensation, on the other hand, if they don't, this type of behaviour will continue unchecked, as it has for generations.

I realise in today's world, we are taking giant steps towards tolerance and treating all people as equals... and I totally support this. However, as Christ taught, you can love the sinner and still hate the sin. I find it hard to see how anybody can see such violent homosexual, paedophilic behaviour as acceptable. It makes no difference if it's forced onto children or adults, males or females. There are no circumstances in which such inappropriate violence, sexual advances or behaviour is acceptable, even within a heterosexual relationship or marriage.