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breaking silence
By Trent Dalton

"They admit something happened but won't admit a duty of care.

"I knew [my son] needed counselling but I didn't know where to look."

Male victims of sexual abuse rarely talk about the fallout - but now a brave few are speaking up.

The sign rests on the carpet of Richard "Tommy" **Campion's** bedroom. Bold block letters:

"**ANGLICAN CHURCH - DUTY OF CARE - CHILD ABUSE - COVER UP**".

Tommy had the sign made at Officeworks. He walked to the counter, showed a staff member his wording. "I said, 'Can you do this?' She said, 'Yeah, do you want it on an A4?' And I said, 'No, I want it on an AO'. That's that size there." Tommy rubs his hands together and smiles mischievously. This is a man who sleeps on a Tweety Bird pillow. "She just typed the words in, no bloody worries whatsoever. She didn't say a word." Of course she didn't. Nobody does. It took Tommy four decades to say a word about the sexual and physical abuse he endured for 11 years as a resident of the North Coast Children's Home at Lismore in northern NSW in the 1950s and '60s.

More than 200,000 Queensland men have experienced sexual abuse as children, estimates Brisbane-based male sexual assault resource and service Living Well. Seventy per cent of them have never told anyone about their abuse. Why?

Because it makes some men convulse and vomit and weep uncontrollably. Because the memory of abuse can overshadow everything a man might think about manhood. Because it infects a man's confidence; his ability to do his job, to be a dad, to be a lover, to be a bloke.

Because silence is easy. Because memories can make a man turn violent. Because they can make a man like Tommy **Campion** consider stepping in front of a moving bus.

"I was making a sandwich, you want one?" he says, walking to the kitchen bench of his rambling Southport apartment. He grips a ham sandwich with two hands and takes a bite. Then he draws a map of Ann Street, in the Brisbane CBD. "There's the church," he says. "There's the little driveway in there where they park their cars. Here's where the Archbishop and all the chiefs count their money and discuss life. And I'm going to be standing on that footpath." He marks an "X" on his mud map and ponders for a moment. "I don't know where I'm going to take a leak," he says. "But someone told me the church is a public space, so I can go have a snake's hiss in the church toilet." Tommy was 58 years old when he wrote his first letter to the church, detailing his experiences in the home where he was abandoned, aged two, by his sole parent father, Peter, in 1949. It was six years ago that he wrote the letter. Tommy was well-known around Brisbane and the Gold Coast as the zany, stripe-panted, barrel-of-laugh newspaper photographer who could make the grumpiest politician or visiting celebrity smile for a page three colour yarn. His shtick was to play the spoons and wear pink socks. Badda bing badda boom, snap, crackle, click. Make'em laugh, they'll be putty in your hands. He could shoot it all: suburban colour, Hollywood glamour, rock royalty - George Harrison, Roy Orbison, Johnny Cash, Peter Allen - or a cop drawing a pistol in a dramatic street standoff, like the shot that was named Best News Photograph at the 1989 Australian Press Photographer of the Year Awards. "You bewteeeee!" Tommy hollered across the Sunshine State.

His nights were not so colourful. At night he was "the black snake curled up in the hole". He'd fall in and out of deep depressions, drinking himself to sleep. Work was a welcome diversion from night-time thoughts of being flogged by the home's matron, a violent drunk whose grainy black-and-white photographic image today removes his ability to breathe. "She'd grab me around the scruff and flog me with a belt," he says. "I was left alone on the floor bleeding in my ratty hundred-times-worn pyjamas.

"Children were locked in the bloody cupboard.

Half an hour to an hour. No comfort. If you comforted another child, you'd get the same.

Flogged. Beaten. I watched sexual abuse by ministers and staff to the children. The abuse to me was by a minister. It involved masturbation, touching, grooming ... " He can't continue on this train of thought. His voice quavers, pauses.

"... et cetera, et cetera." He stares at a photograph from the home, the equivalent of a school class

photo. There are 32 children in it, boys and girls. "That's me," he says, pointing to a boy right of frame.

"These people kill themselves. People turned to grog. Some went to jail." He cries at his computer table. "You better put that away," he says, turning away from the photograph. "I'm the clown. 'He's right. Always joyful. Never seen the world looking so bright'. Yeah ... well, I've been sleeping in the foetal position." Tommy addressed his letter six years ago to the Anglican Church Diocese of Grafton (NSW), the diocese he believed held the duty of care in the running of the North Coast Children's Home. The letter was almost apologetic in tone, he says. I'm sorry to bother you, but I believe you may have destroyed my life.

MARK* JUST KNOCKED OFF WORK. HE WORKS in infrastructure in the city. A solid senior job, well paid, well respected. Driving home tonight to his wife and kids waiting in a happy home in the northern suburbs of Brisbane he dropped in here, the Living Well offices in Nundah, to talk about being sexually abused as a boy by his piano teacher. He sits at a table in the office common area. Blue carpet, kitchenette, bar fridge. He's relaxed, leaning back in his chair, right leg resting on his left knee, laughing about the fortunes of British football clubs with Dr Gary Foster, 51, creator of the Living Well service for men who have experienced childhood sexual abuse.

Foster is a tall, slim, bespectacled Englishman in black jeans and Doc Martens boots. He looks like he could have been the bass player for The Cranberries in a past life and not, as he was, a cop working for 15 years in the areas of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Running off the office common area is a rear patio space with a barbecue where often Foster hosts his ten-week men's group meetings. He realised long ago that some men prefer to talk about child sexual abuse over a beer and a burnt snag than over a clipboard around a circle of plastic chairs. Mark is also English. He's 48. Well-spoken and well-built. He wouldn't look out of place in the forward line of his beloved English rugby team. Carefully, but comfortably, Mark recounts the harrowing hours he spent alone as a young boy with a sexually abusive piano teacher who was so admired as a pianist and composer within London's Royal College of Music that he would later receive his own Wikipedia page. What follows is a profoundly moving and startlingly pragmatic discussion about Mark's threedecadelong processing of his abuse, from the boy who grew into a physically capable man who fantasised about bashing his offender in a back alley, exorcising a lifetime of pain with a fist driving into flesh, to a loving dad who came to the realisation he was, for much of his waking adult life, carrying around a figurative bucket in which sat his confused, betrayed and terrified nine-year-old self. Into this bucket went his memories, his insecurities, his negative experiences - a setback at work, a setback with his love life - all of which could be linked easily and understandably to the actions of his childhood piano teacher.

In a rage-filled search to track down his offender, he discovered via a 2004 obituary in a British newspaper that the piano teacher was dead. Mark would never have his revenge. He contacted the author of the obituary who, in turn, gave Mark a contact address for the piano teacher's former wife, to whom he wrote informing her of the abuse he had suffered at the hands of her husband. She responded with a deeply empathetic letter saying she was familiar with her former husband's abusive tendencies.

She noted his 1995 conviction for sexual offences against other individuals. "For what happened to you I am profoundly sorry," she wrote.

That sentence brought deep relief and vindication for Mark but it didn't bring justice.

Justice implied a restoration of balance between Mark and his abuser. He soon realised this was impossible. He would always be left carrying the bucket. "Where is the real justice?" asks Foster. "We put these very dangerous sex offenders away, and we want them locked away, but we concentrate on them and forget about the victims because they're not speaking up." Two years ago, Foster told Mark he had a great name for a service website and resource he was creating. "Beyond Surviving!" Foster said. "Well, that's shit isn't it?" Mark retorted, bluntly. "You're tying it to the abuse again. It's not about surviving. I'm about living a good life. I'm about living well." Mark's sessions at Living Well are about letting go of the bucket. All those despicable things occurred, he says. The bucket is there.

But he doesn't have to pick it up. He can see the fragile boy on the piano chair but the boy no longer defines the man. "It is what it is," he says.

"It is what I am feeling now. It was sexual abuse that I experienced. It is what it is. Nothing more,

nothing less." And Mark gets by in his own way. He lives his life. Goes to work, kisses his wife, puts his kids to bed. And every once in a while he will go to his home computer and type his piano teacher's name into Wikipedia.

At the bottom of the piano teacher's glowing profile, Mark adds the details of his 1995 police conviction. Every now and then the Wikipedia administrators remove Mark's additions and every now and then he types them back in.

Lunchtime in the Brisbane CBD. Richard "Tommy" **Campion** sits on the grand stone steps of St John's Anglican Cathedral in Ann St.

A real estate agent - mid-fifties, on a lunch break - passes the church and reads the sign Tommy is waving at passersby. "I think you need an equals sign," the agent says. He pulls out a pen, scribbles some "plus" symbols on the sign. "That plus that plus that equals 'COVER UP'," he says.

Tommy laughs, appreciates the suggestion.

"Are you alone?" the agent asks.

"I'm alone but there were a lot of other children who were abused," Tommy says.

"I don't mean to be rude but that's how you get momentum," the agent says. "Could be a long fight. Churches are hard to beat." "Nah, I can beat'em," Tommy says.

It was the Rev Pat Comben, former Queensland environment minister and then Anglican Church Diocese of Grafton registrar, who responded to Tommy's first letter six years ago. "I am unable to adequately express my personal feelings of revulsion, sorrow and helplessness the letter raises inside me," Comben wrote. "While the bishop is presently away, I have no hesitation in speaking on behalf of the diocese in saying that we will do all that we can to assist you to move beyond the pain that was caused in an Anglican place that should have been safe, but which was clearly not." Through endless free public notices he placed in newspapers across the country, Tommy was joined by 40 former residents of the home in a legal push to have the Anglican Church offer an apology and compensation. In April 2007, the church made a one-off "act of compassion" payment of \$825,000 which was to be divided among the 41 complainants, with those deemed to have suffered the worst abuse receiving up to \$22,000. Tommy initially refused payment and regrets later accepting money from the church at a time when, he says, he'd hit "absolute rock bottom, in order to continue to live and to fight the church for the truth". Critically, for Tommy, the payment did not come with an admission from the Anglican Church Diocese of Grafton, and its head, Bishop Keith Slater, that it held a "duty of care" in the running of the home.

Bishop Slater maintains the church did not have a legal duty of care because the home was run by a Lismore community group with support from the church. This single point of difference - small on paper, impassable to a man processing the gross abuse of his childhood - is why Tommy had his sign made at Officeworks. It's why he's spent five years writing to Slater. It's why he shows people old photographs of metal signs at the home reading: "Church of England North Coast Children's Home". It's why he's spent five years requesting a sit-down with the Archbishop of Brisbane and Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia, Phillip Aspinall. It's why he lugged his sign on the train this morning from the Gold Coast. It's why he wants Archbishop Aspinall to see his sign today and make everything right by encouraging Slater to admit to a duty of care.

And it's why an Anglican Church spokesman is walking towards him this moment. They shake hands. The spokesman speaks sympathetically.

"But isn't the church admitting [what happened] was wrong?" asks the spokesman.

"That terrible things happened and they arrived at a settlement?" "Yeah," says Tommy.

"They admit something happened but they won't admit they had a duty of care." The men mull over the situation for almost an hour. The spokesman stresses the Primate's lack of authority to instruct a bishop to do something against his will, outside of his own diocese. The Archbishop says he has written to Slater eight times encouraging him to address Tommy's concerns. He has also written 19 letters to Tommy in the past five years, each on a central theme that a sit-down would not be appropriate because "it is properly a matter for Bishop Slater".

"He has had to leave it at the door of the people in Grafton," the spokesman says. But Slater won't talk to Tommy, nor to Qweekend. Tommy sighs, rubs his hand across his face. Stalemate. He tells the spokesman he's going to bring his sign back to the steps every day until he gets his meeting with Archbishop Aspinall. The spokesman says he's welcome to. Tommy turns, carries his sign up the stone steps and enters St John's in search of a toilet. He's wearing his pink socks.

In a small bedroom in her quiet cottage in Bardon, inner-west Brisbane, English language teacher Tina Pentland stares at a painting of a vase of sunflowers. It was painted in 2008 by her son, Hamish, when he was staying in the mental health unit of the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Hamish painted it for his mum. It shows two sunflowers standing stout and radiant. These flowers, Hamish said, represented his mother and his sister, Miranda. Next to these flowers is a single flower arched over, its tip tilting toward the ground. "He said that was the dying flower," Tina says. "He said that was him." Hamish was found in his apartment in inner-northern Kelvin Grove on Christmas Eve, 2009. He'd died of an accidental drug overdose.

"The autopsy said methadone mixed with painkillers and sedatives," Tina says. Hamish was 28 years old. The decade before his death had been marked by mental illness, violent episodes and suicide attempts. It was in January 2000 that Hamish was first admitted to hospital after what Tina calls "a mental health episode".

And it was then, aged 19, that Hamish told his mother that he had been sexually abused at the age of 11 by a boy four years his senior.

Almost three years since her son's death, this discussion keeps replaying in her mind. "I was really upset subsequently that I didn't respond as well as I could have, through ignorance," she says. "My story is not rare. I know the relationship between abuse and issues later in life. Earlier intervention might have been good, but Hamish wouldn't have known how to speak to me about it, would he? There was no conversation in the community about it. I think the impact of the abuse may have been worse than I understood.

Maybe if I'd been more proactive when he was 19 in addressing the reasons for his distress and his developing addictions ... But there was no culture for men to discuss these types of issues.

In the early days, in his late teens and his early twenties, I was quite frustrated because I didn't know what to do best. I knew he needed psychological counselling but I didn't know where to look. It was the matter of who and how. Those specific services just weren't there." No culture. No discussion.

No services.

In February 2009, the year of Hamish's death, Queensland Health commissioned a KPMG Review of Queensland Health Responses to Adult Victims of Sexual Assault. Page 37 of the review states:

"Nationally, sexual assault services for males are not comprehensive and service access by male victims is very poor.

Some evidence suggests that when men do seek help they may be treated poorly, creating 'secondary victimisation' or 'sanctuary trauma' through a lack of empathy and understanding of the effect of rape on the victim." The review's summary of findings states:

"There are some clear gaps in service delivery.

Services are available to women only and there are no Queensland Health-funded services for male victims. This situation is untenable and must be addressed immediately." It wasn't. "At the moment there's nothing," says Gary Foster, who has received \$200,000 to fund the Living Well service for the next three years. The money comes from the Anglican Church. "I'm an atheist," he says. "And I'm very appreciative of all they give. I have a couple of part-time workers and we do the best we can with what we've got, but we cannot respond to the amount of people who want us.

"We're on the Titanic. The women and children have been addressed and now the men are looking around and there's no more life rafts. They jumped in the water and now they're drowning." The new state Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Tracy Davis, tells Qweekend:

"There is no denying the strong link between childhood abuse and suicide among both men and women. In Queensland a majority of support services for adults who were victims of child sexual abuse have been targeted towards women, and in the past there has been a lack of services for men."

The Newman Government, she says, will provide \$1 million over four years for nongovernment counsellors to provide additional services for child victims of abuse and sexual assault and "will be working with community groups and organisations to ensure our ongoing service model supports all victims of sexual abuse and violence, both male and female".

"We have completely failed these men," says Foster, "and on so many levels. We've known about this stuff for a long time. I've presented the profound impact of this since 2006 in repeated letters. The lack of services. I've had repeated acknowledgments, spoken to some wonderful people in policy in health departments who fully acknowledge the profound impact and who say, 'Yes, we are doing a really poor service'. They've got all the evidence. We know what works and we have not done

anything. Why?" Because boys will be boys and men will be men and we will never see a group of Queensland blokes protesting on George St with signs marked:

"Forty-six per cent of male child sexual assault victims attempt suicide. Stop this now." "It's only pressure that changes anything," Foster says.

"Men are very, very good at not doing this.

Something we do very well is not talk. They do the men thing. They take responsibility.

They try and handle it themselves. They numb themselves with drink. They're five times more likely to drink and do drugs. They get frustrated and they don't know what to do. And they kill themselves. And dead men don't talk." On the back patio of his home in Brisbane's western suburbs, Jack*, one of Foster's group members, takes a long drag of a cigarette and tells me about the profound power of talk. Last night, he'd given me a three-page document that took him a month to write, detailing the sexual abuse he received from his father as a boy. The document brought tears to my eyes and I couldn't sleep because I kept hearing the sickening voice of his father: "You've got to keep your horn up, Jack." "It's not like you can go to someone, 'I have a problem because when I make love to my wife I have memories of my father and what he did to me'," Jack says. "You can't say that to anyone. How can you explain that to anyone?

"But I knew that if I was to harbour the anger and resentment and the hurt I would never be able to cope in the long-term basis. It would constantly be coming back to haunt me in ways I couldn't control." Jack's 28 years old. He's about to be a dad.

Where once his life was defined by rage and depression, his world is filled with family and promise. His turning point came at the end of 2001 when, as his father lay dying in a hospital bed from a brain tumour, Jack forgave him for the abuse. "I got a call the day before," he says.

"I was leaving to go to the UK. I got a call from my aunt to say, 'Your father is dying'. I'd had limited contact with my father. That Monday morning I went in and spoke with him. I was sorry for what he had done, for his own life.

Because I know it had destroyed him as well. He was my father and I did love him as my father.

"Forgiveness is not achievable for everyone.

It's the hardest way. I've been in a room with men and said, 'Look, I forgave my father and someone said to me, 'Get the f..k out of this room because you're the only one who thinks that'. But it wasn't easy. He was very emotional.

He kind of apologised. I mean apologised, as opposed to saying sorry. I think he meant it.

I never expected a 'sorry' from my father.

I barely got it. But it doesn't matter to me any more. The thing is how I cope with it today.

How I get on with my life." A month ago I asked Tommy **Campion** if he could forgive his abusers.

"Impossible," he said.

"How in the name of God can someone forgive that?" Tommy's talked. He estimates he's received almost \$10,000 worth of church and government-funded counselling. "If they say they did not have the duty of care," he says, "why would they pay for me to have counselling and to see a psychiatrist?" Tommy was offered a place in Foster's Living Well program. He respectfully declined. His problems, he says, could be solved in the voicing of seven little words: Yes, we had a duty of care. "Everyone's journey is different," says Foster. "Look, the reason things happen is because of people like Richard **Campion**.

Change is laid by people who are very upset and distressed and who want justice.

"He's having his say and nobody should take that away from him. If something awful happened to him we need to get better, we need to get it out there in the public and talk about it. And we can do something about it. That is what hasn't happened."

There's a message on my mobile phone.

"Youuuuu bewteeeee!" says Tommy **Campion**.

Archbishop Aspinall has agreed to a sit-down.

Three days later, on February 22, 2012, Tommy is on the doorstep of the Archbishop's imposing office building adjoining St John's. "For five years I've tried to get in to see the Primate," he says.

"This could be the greatest day of my life." Next to Tommy stands an old friend, Tony Madden, who worked for 41 years in the Department of Communities, including 13 years in Lismore where he would regularly visit the North Coast Children's Home. "As far as I was concerned this was a home conducted under the auspices of the Anglican Church," Madden says. "But in the end my concern for

Tommy has always been about how he's coping with the battle of taking on a bureaucracy. It's been about self-care. He's got to move to his own beat. And he's got to say 'enough' when he reckons enough is enough. Even people who love him and care for him can't say for him when it's enough. "And he's taken it in good grace if I've said to him, 'Is it time to put up the sword?' " Tony turns to Tommy now. Tommy smiles, shakes his head. "No, it's not," Tommy says.

The big brown door to the office opens.

Tommy steps inside and the big brown door closes. Ninety minutes later, Tommy emerges.

He pulls a voice recorder from his pocket.

Presses play. "I will try to get to the bottom of this question you're asking about the ownership and control and operation of the home," says Archbishop Aspinall. "Who had the duty of care?" Tommy stresses. "Whether it was the Anglican Church or there was some other legal entity involved, I will try to get to the bottom of that in discussion with the people in Grafton for you. So we can discover the truth about that." "And how soon can you do that?" "Well, we'll start the process straightaway."

He stops the recorder. "He gave me a good hearing," he says.

On April 12, an email from Tommy lands in my inbox. It's been 50 days since he sat face-to-face with the Archbishop. There's been meetings and phone calls and more meetings and phone calls. The Archbishop has negotiated a possible sit-down with Bishop Keith Slater and an accompanying lawyer.

"... but I declined when he said they would not talk of the 'community group' to whom they said had the duty of care of the Home for the last six years," Tommy says. "I have fallen back into a deep depression. I will be back protesting on the streets next Monday."

*Names have been changed. To contact Living Well, ph 3028 4648 or 1300 114 397 or email livingwell@spiritus.org.au or visit www.livingwell.org.au

Caption: On pages 25, 26 & 27: Help at hand ... Dr Gary Foster, of male sexual assault resource centre Living Well; (opposite, previous page) church abuse victim and activist Tommy Campion; On pages 28 & 29: Helpless ... Tina Pentland, whose 28-year-old son Hamish took a fatal overdose after years of abuse.

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