

November 2008
received via email

Steve Fisher

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Bishop John Harrower
Anglican Church of Tasmania
VIA E-MAIL.

Dear John,

It is with great joy that I write to you for a number of reasons. First, I would like to thank you for the incredible role you played in establishing the Pastoral Support and Assistance Scheme. Without your compassion, understanding and foresight I believe that it would never have come into existence.

Secondly I would like to share with you my thoughts about how being compensated in monetary terms can change a persons life. I know there have been a lot of questions asked about how survivors use any financial assistance that they receive, and also what giving people money actually does for them in reality. John I would like to outline how receiving the ex-gratia payment from the church changed my life.

When I received the money from the church it was like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. At last I was able to feel that I was almost in the same sort of financial position as my peers. As you would understand, one of the effects of Sexual Abuse is the constant need to want to keep moving, in effect running, which never gives you the opportunity to settle down and do what is considered the normal things such as save for a house. The cost of being so transient for me was huge in monetary terms and I actually moved either interstate or intrastate approx 18 times in 20 years. Every time meant a new start and financial strain looking for a job etc. The effect of this of course was that the savings I had were always eaten up.

After intensive counselling which I would never have been able to afford, but which was provided by the church I began to understand why I was doing things and was at last able to exorcise some of the demons in my mind.

After receiving the ex gratia payment I found I was in a position to also concentrate more on my University studies which had been put on hold due to the need to work and the very public work I was doing to support other victims. Due to this I completed my degree in 2006. This is something I could only ever have dreamed of and something that was an incredible boost for my self-esteem. Again if I had not received the payment this would not have been possible.

So now I had reached the stage where, in my mind I was able to hold my head up high as I had achieved a dream, which I believed was out of reach. John, I will never forget how proud I felt to have my family and friends at my Graduation ceremony to see me receive my degree, especially given the events of the preceding 6 years. It was indescribable.

In late 2006 unfortunately there was a situation whereby I had to give evidence against a co-worker who was abusing some of our clients at Disability Services. This caused a hiccup in my plans, however is now over and done with.

Due in part to me receiving my degree, I am now working for a Job Network Member as an Employment Consultant.. It is a very taxing job but the monetary rewards are about 40% better than my previous position. This has allowed me to save and relax a bit more as I am finally receiving a good income.

John the best thing that has happened is that, due to the counselling and lift in self esteem, I am in a place in my mind where I finally want to settle down and start a family. I have been lucky enough to meet a wonderful, intelligent lady and we have brought a house at Blackmans Bay. This, I believe would not have been possible if not for the ex- gratia payment.

The best news I have left till last. John I am getting married on 20 December! The ceremony will be at All Saints at South Hobart. I have finally achieved all my dreams and together Veronica and I are forging new ones. We also have a daughter who is 6 years old, from a previous relationship of Veronica's.

So John I guess I wanted to share with you the difference an ex-gratia payment can make in somebody's life. As you can see from my story the effect was quite incredible. I am happier now than I have ever been in my life. As I said, my dreams are coming true and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. There will, of course still be major hurdles to deal with, but I feel that with the love and support of my family and friends I am now going to be able to lead as normal a life as possible (whatever normal is 😊)

Please spare a thought and a prayer for us on 20 December as we embark on our journey together, take care and God Bless.

Sincerely

Steve Fisher.