Report in Support of Application to Redress WA (4345)

VI approached CBERS Redress Service for assistance with his Redress application in March 2009. I was the chosen practitioner to work with VI on his application, given that I was the counsellor at CBERS who VI and his mother saw briefly in 1996, as a part of VI involvement in VOICES and then the Class Action.
Vl was born in ACT on 56, lived with his parents and older brother in Perth till he was 2. His father left the home at that point, and it was also around that time that his mother had their third child, another boy, and gave him up for adoption. When Vl was 5 years old his mother placed his 7-year-old brother in the care of the Christian Brothers at Castledare; and this is where Vl followed in February 1964, when he was just 7 years old. Vl remained in Castledare, occasionally going home for a week-end or a slightly extended break in the holidays, until he was transferred to Clontarf in February 1968. In December 1968 Vl left Clontarf and was returned, along with his older brother, to the care of his mother, who by then had been married to REDACTED for approximately a year.

Vl attended the local high school but left when he was 14 and started work. A year later he was working up on the mines and never returned to live with his mother.

Vl married when he was 19 and he and his wife had 4 children; they separated when the youngest was 11. Since that time Vl had the principal care of the children - two of whom still live at home with him; he has not established any other viable adult relationship.

Section 5: (question 14) details of abuse and/or neglect that Vl experienced whilst in institutional care

Vl and his mother used to visit his older brother for the two years Vl was at Castledare and Vl was at home with his mother. On these visits Vl remembers being "welcomed" by Brother Gerald Dick and said that Br Dick "always made a fuss of me, giving me lollies". At the time Vl didn't realise of course that there was anything untoward in the "welcome", but now he sees (and it makes him feel sick) how Gerald Dick was effectively grooming both him and his mother; and how he must have been thrilled at admission into Castledare - he had a ready-made victim.

As far as Vl can remember, Br Dick's sexual abuse of him started almost immediately and occurred on an extremely regular basis. He (purposefully) gave Vl the bed nearest the door, which meant that Br Dick had the easiest access to him. As far as Vl recalls, the nocturnal sexual abuse by Gerald Dick continued until he left Castledare, aged 12.

And then there was the more subtle and yet "in public" abuse of Vl by Br Dick; the kind of abuse which the child fears that all the other children must somehow intuite and yet everyone remains silent, which tends to imply implicit acceptance. The major element of this for Vl would take place of an evening when Br Dick would ostensibly be playing board games with the boys. He would use these
created opportunities to take onto his lap and would be performing frottage all the while; leaving feeling immensely uncomfortable and trapped.

When went to Clontarf he very soon felt under threat of sexual assault from some of the older boys - many of whom had been at Castledare of course. Some of the older boys would send him notes saying what they were going to do to him sexually; this of course terrified and made him fear that what Br Dick had done to him at Castledare must (after all) have been general knowledge. This intensified shame to intolerable proportions. The fact that he was never actually sexually abused, in a "hands on" manner by any of the boys or Brothers at Clontarf only became a fact after he left; i.e. during his 10 months there was terrified that he would once more be sexually assaulted by either older boys and/or Brothers.

like all the other boys at Castledare and Clontarf, was subjected to Witness Abuse; i.e. Having to witness the harsh and wanton physical and emotional abuse meted out to boys by the Christian Brothers, knowing he had to stand by helpless and powerless to do anything about it. In this case Witness Abuse was amplified by the fact that he often had to witness his brother being severely physically abused by the very Br Dick who would then come to his bed that night.

still remembers one occasion on which got an extra severe beating, which had to witness and all because was accused of spending some of "tuck shop" money. is sure that he had said his brother could spend some of his money, only somehow it wasn't conveyed to the powers that be; and to this day can feel terrible when recalling that incident, as if it were actually his fault and he should have been able to have prevented that severe beating.

Emotional Abuse is of course an integral part of Sexual Abuse, and in case the real emotional complication for him was that Br Dick did not perpetrate open physical abuse on him; that set him apart from all the other boys, meaning that he spent his entire time in the Institutions on his own, while seeing others in friendship groups.

Educational opportunities were of course limited at Castledare and Clontarf; so did not feel educationally or socially prepared when he left and went to a State high school. He found his time there agony, so he left at 14. And the repercussions of this reverberate on till this day.

Unpaid work. While did attend classes during regular school hours when at Castledare he, along with the other boys, had to labour and graft on many a "project" after school. He remembers the most arduous one being the construction of the railway which then carried trains on "open day" all round Castledare. That was immensely hard work and yet the boys got no
acknowledgement for that; but the Brothers apparently showed it off as their Piece De Resistance during Open Days.

Health. During the era that Vi was in Castledare and Clontarf it seems that there was enough food to eat, but Vi reports that the quality was atrocious, but he and all the other boys knew they had to somehow eat it as otherwise they would literally get belted.

Vi said that his medical needs were "basically" attended to; i.e. without compassion or real care; but it was the lack of attention to dental care which has really effected Vi throughout his life. Cleaning one's teeth had to be slotted into the frenetic routine of "all the jobs to be done of a morning and of an evening" and, because no one instructed them in the importance of dental hygiene, and due to Vi's anxiety to be at the next routinised appointment on time, he invariably skipped cleaning his teeth, but this went unnoticed as there was no caring adult supervision.

Question 15: How has the abuse or neglect affected you?

Effects as a child

Vi grew up feeling alone and isolated; the other boys saw he was Br Dick's pet and so would not include him in their games. And he anyway felt he needed to be separate; he couldn't afford others "knowing" about the sexual abuse; he already felt overwhelmingly ashamed and guilty.

He sees that there was not one part in the whole of Castledare where he felt safe and could be happy. There was always an ominous presence or threat of it; always the fear that he or some one else would be brutalised in one way or another. He remembers no happiness, no 'ordinary kid' laughter; just fear. Even in the place where the families would come and see their kids, or collect them, that was not a happy place either, as Br Dick would always be hanging round there.

Vi has come to see of late that his early experiences trained him to fear and believe that he would always be separated from anyone he cared about. While neither the Catholic Church nor the Christian Brothers had anything to do with Vi father leaving and effectively disappearing from his life, nor to do with his younger brother being adopted out and also effectively disappearing from his life, they were instrumental in his older brother being removed to Castledare and also in enabling/encouraging his mother to leave him there. And he then also soon learned that he could not always go home during the holidays - which to a young child must have felt like he wasn't always wanted at home; and no matter what he did to try and show his mother that he never wanted to be returned after a break at home, she always did return him, so again separating him from her.
VI told me that he remembers some visits from his mother when he was in Castledare; how she could come, usually bring him lollies, and tell him, as she was leaving, that she loved him. So for VI loving someone came to be associated with leaving them where they absolutely did not want to be.

So the phrase "I love you" came to have negative connotations for VI even as she was leaving he knew that that phrase would hold no comfort for him later that same night when Br Dick would come to his bed again and plunge him into yet another episode of abuse, with no one to come to his aid.

As an adult he has come to know that the Catholic Church convinced his mother that there was no better place for her boys than in the care of the Christian Brothers. While he was of course not cognisant of this fact when little, he had however picked up that there was no use saying anything as he would not be believed. So he was left feeling helpless and powerless and always with an impending sense of doom at being sent back, like a lamb, to slaughter.

Effects on the relationship with his wife
His sexual relationship with his wife was of course severely impacted upon by his long-standing sexual abuse by Br Dick. So that proved to be an area which never truly worked for them in their marriage. As a result of his sexual abuse by Br Dick, VI grew up feeling that being sexual was dirty, and that feeling permeated and contaminated his marital relationship and has always contaminated the possibility of any real pleasure from sex for VI.

Only of late has VI begun to grasp why he somehow felt it was inevitable when his wife left him. For years he felt guilty, especially for his children, feeling that he should have fought to keep her in the family, and not understanding why he did not. But now he sees it - He instinctively felt helpless and powerless to keep anyone who he cared about close to him.

Effects on VI relationship with his children
VI is aware that his own abuse made him into what he can now see was probably an over-protective father; he was just so determined that his own children would not be subjected to any abuse that he possibly was too controlling of them. Fortunately, this does not seem to have had any adverse long-term effect on his children.

Effects on his Sibling relationship.
VI brother, showed his distress at how he was being treated by the Brothers in a very real and full-on way, so that it did come at least partially to their mother's attention that "VI was not really happy" there. The way VI handled
his total distress at his treatment at Castledare and Clontarf was to keep it all inside and to do his best to be invisible and not come to anyone's attention. And on the occasions he went home (as he sees it now) he actively worked at "being good" so as hopefully his mother would not make him return. Consequently, any attention or support which his mother, and then the step father too, ever gave to the children, was always directed at as he was "seen to be in trouble", whereas was not seen to be in any strife.

As a magnanimous adult is able to see that his brother has needed all the help he can get, but it understandably irks him (and more) that the way his personality adapted to life in the Christian Brothers Institutions meant that even when he returned home, he got nothing.

said that it is only really since Redress WA made such institutional abuse the "fault" of the institutions and not the "fault" of the boys, that and his brother have been able to speak about their time in the institutions. Till recently it was the hugest shared experience but they never shared about it; and even now it is at a fairly minimal level. of course has no idea as to what his sibling relationship would have been like, had they both not been sent away and had very different reactions overtly to their mistreatment in the Institutions, but he can only imagine, looking at the sibling relationships which his own children have, that he surely would have grown up feeling his brother to be some kind of friend, rather than an estranged acquaintance.

Effects on Relationship with his mother

Again, it is impossible for to know what his relationship with his mother would have been like, had he not been sent away; but what he knows is that he simply does not feel her to be his mother, in what he has come to understand the meaning of that word to be; he simply knows she is. And hence he feels a great sense of filial duty and loyalty, but not love;

And he does not feel love from her either. He believes that the act that his mother was allowed/enabled to abrogate parental responsibility for him, by sending him away, has meant that she has never felt herself to be an integral part of his support system.

Effects on Education/employment

Educationally does not know where he might have progressed to, had he, for instance, had the educational opportunities such were as afforded to his brother who was adopted; but they do come from the same gene pool. That brother went to university and has a Senior Management position in industry. would have loved to have gone to University, but he simply did not have the grounding, nor the self confidence.
While he has always been in employment, he has needed to find jobs which do not require "being sociable" as an integral part of the job; and he has never been able to attain a professional position. Hence, his ability to earn has been effected and there were times when his children were younger when he and his wife, and then he on his own, struggled to provide the basics for the children.

To this day a major driving force has been to try and protect himself from feared harm in the dangerous world, and when anyone has to live like that, their vision is narrow and there is just no space to look out into the world and be expansive in the self; and all this then limits one's horizons, and one's employment opportunities, because self protection prevents someone from even beginning to know what they would like to "do" with their life; all their energy goes into trying to protect their life from anticipated danger.

**Effects on sexual self**

He used to worry about potentially becoming an abuser himself. He had heard so much about victims of abuse becoming perpetrators of it. This fear really got in the way of him being free and easy with his children; he always used to have to have his wife around, and for quite some while would not do the natural fathering things with them, like change-their-nappies: But that did get better over time.

Br Dick's sexual abuse also inevitably made him wonder if he were homosexual. As an adolescent and young adult he did not want to mix with his peers, for fear of what he may be; while knowing that he felt no attraction as such to boys, but never knew why he was selected by Dick. And of course that whole uncertainty delayed his having any girlfriend.

This uncertainty about his own sexual orientation troubled him for years, and he knows it also heightened his anxiety around being a father to his two boys.

**Effects on spiritual life**

(If course) was made an altar boy, which gave him lots of opportunity to witness what he came to see as blatant hypocrisy. i.e. the Brothers, including Br Dick, would be all pious during religious ceremonies, but he knew what they/Br Dick in particular was like in the rest of daily life in Castledare; so he inevitably grew up with confusion as a child and outrage at hypocrisy as an adult.

has struggled spiritually ever since his time with the Christian Brothers - he has longed to and felt the absolute need to believe in God, and has longed to be able to join in a church congregation to bear witness to God. However, since leaving Clontarf, he has not been able to enter a church without all the old feelings from his time in Castledare and Clontarf from resurfacing. Consequently, as an adult, he has chosen not to go to church. This however
does not feel to be a free choice, as he would love to be able to attend and not be reminded of the abuse and hypocrisy.

The spiritual assault he suffered as a child now has a very real impact on his family life. One of his sons-in-law is a deeply religious person, and he knows that if he is to support his grand-daughter as fully as he would like to, he will probably have to enter a church with her on various occasions throughout her life. At present this is a terrifying prospect for him.

In addition, whenever anyone mentions religion he is torn - he wants for them to have that spiritual comfort in their lives, but simultaneously he feels this almost compulsion to warn them off; but he knows he has to keep quiet. He does but it is a real inner battle for him. Whenever he sees a representative of the church in the media he instinctively feels suspicious and is highly anxious, lest that person too is abusing some of his flock; but again he has to keep this inside, as he also knows it may not be so. And still he is trying to find an effective way for him to pray, when he can't have the comfort and communion of a church congregation to join with.

**Effects long-term on relationship with himself**

Childhood was dominated by a very real sense of unsafety, and the knowledge that adults, who were supposed to care for and protect him, harmed him and hence gave him a terrible knowing that the world was a very dangerous place. Naturally therefore, he had to learn, at a very tender age, as to how best to try and protect himself in a dangerous world. He effectively learned to shut himself in and off from others. This was adaptive when young but tends to be maladaptive in adult life.

Childhood in Castledare unfortunately also taught him that anyone "being nice" to him was not to be trusted. Throughout his life anyone "being nice" to him has always triggered a fear reaction, as that is how Br Dick started off the whole abuse of him.

Consequently, he has been and felt all alone, never having or knowing how to and not daring to make a friend; and now he feels it is too late for that.

Learned, through the terrible years at the Christian Brothers Institutions, to "keep himself to himself", to make himself as invisible as he could; he also learned that there was no point speaking out, and would not dare to in any case. This led to him being a predominantly silent player on life's stage, hardly making his mark; as to make a mark was always dangerous in the institutions. So now, when he can see that sometimes it is necessary to speak out, or "make a mark", it is incredibly hard for him to do so.
But there are of course situations which require one to be visible, talkative and connected, and while VI has now learned how to manage these situations, reasonably well, this art has taken a while to develop; meaning that he spent much of his earlier years feeling excruciatingly exposed or desperately trying to avoid situations which he knew would require him to be "sociable".

VI has managed over the years to make a reasonable life for himself but within a very narrow, self-contained frame; and consequently he has not learned any of the art of emotional intimacy, both in terms of receiving it and giving it. He can see now that this is what his wife was crying out for, but he had no conception of it; and even now would have no idea how to meet another with full emotional intimacy.

VI effectively learned how to live in a bubble, having to put a shield up against the feared harm (or nice-ness) of others; but this also means that on the inside of his bubble he did not mature emotionally; so then the shield grows to perform a secondary function - to keep the fragile self within safe. Even thinking of changing could be tantamount to feeling: "that could be the death of me, far too dangerous, I could disintegrate altogether." This tight bubble in which VI has found it safest to live has meant that he can be seen as fairly rigid; and he knows himself that he can get very anxious if his immediate world does not feel sufficiently ordered. And sadly but inevitably, VI has tended to be harsh and self-critical within his bubble.

Since working with me on this Application for Redress, VI has of course started to remember lots of things which he had instinctively, for his own protection, learned to hide away; so it has been and continues to be a very confronting time for him. During the course of these sessions he has experienced P.T.S.D. symptoms and has been fearful of Br Dick "look alikes" such as has not been the case since Br Dick was sentenced in 1994. He has been fearful that this state of heightened awareness and anxiety might remain, which is why I have asked for additional counselling hours for VI.

VI recognises now that when he first came for counselling, 12 years ago, he was simply not in the space to be able to make good use of it; at that time he instinctively needed to remain in his self-protective bubble. However, with this current work with me VI has really discovered the freedom and safety which a developing therapeutic relationship can reveal. He is thriving in the safe container of counselling. VI now wants to continue working with me in order to

- Understand how his past has made him who he is today
- Achieve his aim to be content with the narrow focus which self protection has made his life take
- And to be reconciled with how his need for self protection has by default on occasions sadly impacted adversely on others