

**REPORT OF MEETING WITH JOAN ISAACS**  
**20 APRIL 1999**  
**Centacare Rooms, 58 Morgan Street, Fortitude Valley**

Present: Joan Isaacs, Mr Peter Deed (Joan's support person),  
Father Adrian Farrelly (representing Bishop John Gerry), and  
Mrs Bernadette Rogers (Facilitator).

The meeting began with Joan telling her story of the abuse that she had suffered at the hands of Father Frank Derriman when she was a secondary school student at Sacred Heart Convent, Sandgate. Joan, at the time, was aged between fourteen and sixteen.

After telling her story, Joan asked me what effect listening to the story had on me. I told her that both reading the account, which I had done prior to the meeting - from her own record of police interview, her victim impact statement, and the transcript of the Court proceedings, and then listening to her actually tell the story - that I found it gut-turning. She should not have suffered the abuse that she did. It was not her that did something wrong. Father Derriman had abused the position that he held as a priest and as a friend of Joan's own family.

I did not offer an apology on behalf of the Church but did express my sorrow at what had happened to her, and that the Church as a whole had not in those days listened well enough to the accounts of what people like Joan had suffered. The conversation ranged over what the Church, over the years, has learned and how it now approaches situations such as what Joan found herself in. Joan found the time together - about one and a quarter hours - fruitful. I had a sense, and this was confirmed to me after the meeting by Mrs Rogers, that the session had gone well. Mr Deed had not entered into the conversation, merely took a few notes.

Joan has for some time been seeing a counsellor, a neuro-psychologist, I think she described the lady as, in whom she has great confidence and who has helped her cope with the after-effects of this teenage incident. Joan does not see the counsellor on a regular basis but, from time to time, will see a great need; at other times, a less need. This perception of need is what determines when she visits the counsellor. I offered to her that the Church would pay for ten sessions of counselling and then review the situation after that time. Mr Deed said that he would send me a note to that effect.

Joan did raise the question of compensation. This was not, she reiterated, her primary motive in having the meeting. The first thing she wished to happen was for the Church to hear, to listen, to what had happened to her, and to respond to that. The next item that she was looking for was assistance with counselling. The last item, and I believe that she was honest when she said that it was the third item, was compensation from the Church for what she had suffered. She was hurt by this incident and hurt badly and, as she said, she does want the Church to feel some of that hurt through a compensation payment.

From comments made by Mr Deed, he and Joan would be aware of the difficulty of pursuing the matter through the Courts. I responded by saying that I was not entitled to discuss the allocation of monies entrusted to the Church but would refer the matter to the appropriate processes and advisers who needed to be involved in such decisions.

Joan was disappointed that she was not seen by one of the Bishops. She was very keen on the Bishops themselves hearing what she had gone through and having her face in their mind when they think about these matters. This was in response to a comment that I had made that from the meeting we had today, when I discussed this matter with anyone or talked about it, I would be thinking of her along with others. I promised Joan that I would relay the substance of our meeting to the Bishop.

Finally, Joan asked could an apology be given to her in writing. I told her and Mr Deed that I had no instructions about this matter, but that I would raise it with the Bishops to see what could be done.

The meeting finished amicably.

The fallout from this whole incident has been large. Her sons, now twenty-three and twenty-one, whom she told about the abuse as it was part of the Court proceedings, have gone from being very regular Mass attending Catholics to not attending much at all. Her parents have both ceased to practise their faith after they became aware of what Derriman had done to their daughter. Fortunately, Joan's mother, who died only during the trial or just a bit before, was buried from the Church, and her father has now resumed practice, going to Mass with her. It became clear to me once again that the Church of this Archdiocese would offer much healing to people were it to celebrate some Mass of Healing/Reconciliation to which it invited those who had been hurt by priests in the way that Joan has been hurt.

Signed:        Father Adrian Farrelly