



Statement

Name Martinus Hendrikus CLAASSEN
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Date 9 February 2016

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence that I am prepared to give to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.
2. My full name is Martinus Hendrikus CLAASSEN. I was born in 1962 and am 53 years old.
3. I grew up in Ballarat with my mother, brother and sister. My father had passed away in 1969 and as a result I believe an understanding was reached with the Christian Brothers where the school fees for my brother and I were waived. My mother only had to pay for school books, uniforms and things like school camps.
4. I was a pupil at St Alipius Primary School, Ballarat East, from 1967 to 1973. This is where I first met Brother Edward DOWLAN. Initially, we had a good relationship. He wasn't my class teacher but coached us in basketball. He was mostly good humoured and friendly but he could lose his temper and become quite angry.
5. From 1974 to 1979, I attended St Patrick's College, Ballarat. In 1974, I was in Form 1A. Brother DOWLAN also moved to St Patrick's this year and became my housemaster. By housemaster, I mean that he was the main teacher for my class, teaching us English, Maths and Religious Studies.
6. Mid-way through the year I went to Melbourne to visit family. I clearly remember that it was very cold and think it may have been the Queen's Birthday long weekend in June.

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7. I had been given homework to do over the weekend but had accidentally left it in Ballarat. When I returned to school I had to 'confess' that I had not done my homework.
8. Brother DOWLAN came up to me at my desk and put his head very close to mine and started speaking very softly, asking me why I hadn't done my homework. He started stroking my thigh. His hand then moved so he was stroking and squeezing my genitals.
9. At first I froze then instinctively struck at his hand to push it away. I said something like "No" or "Stop".
10. The next thing I knew, Brother DOWLAN struck me heavily on my head. He said very angrily, "Don't you ever, ever do that again. Get up and get to the back of the room".
11. Brother DOWLAN grabbed me and pushed me to the back of the room. He said, "Stand there and face the wall." After a few minutes Brother DOWLAN came to me. I was very upset and was crying. He stood behind me with the palms of his hands on the wall above my head. He was close behind me and I could feel his body gyrating against me. During this he was lecturing me about how he was angry and disappointed that I had not done my homework. This continued for a time until the lunchtime bell rang and Brother DOWLAN let me go.
12. Later on that afternoon, I remember going to the toilet and crying and vomiting in the cubicle, because I was so worried that I would be in trouble.
13. When I got home that night I was pretty withdrawn. My mother noticed something was wrong and asked me "What is wrong with you?" At first I denied there was a problem but later that night, when I was doing the dishes after dinner, I told her "Brother DOWLAN touched me and I told him to stop, then he hit and pushed me to the back of the room."

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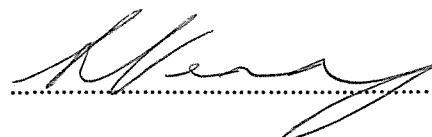
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14. The next thing I recall was that a meeting had been arranged between myself, my mother and the Headmaster of St Patrick's, Brother NANGLE. I remember that the meeting was held in a room in the O'Malley Wing at school and I believe it was on a Thursday at 2.30pm. I was afraid that I was going to be expelled so my recollections about this event are pretty clear.
15. I don't recall Brother NANGLE having a pen and paper or sitting behind a desk. It was just the three of us seated in a sort of triangle. I was crying at the meeting. Brother NANGLE asked me to tell him what had happened which I did. I said to Brother NANGLE that Brother DOWLAN had touched me.
16. He asked me, "Why are you making these stories up?" and "Are you sure you're not making this up?" I remember him asking me, "Show me where he touched you?" I showed him by putting my hand over my crotch and said that Brother DOWLAN had put his hand on my dick. Brother NANGLE said, "Are you sure that's where he touched you?" I replied, "Yes" and started to cry again.
17. Brother NANGLE then terminated the meeting saying, "Thank you for coming." My mother and I then left the room. She didn't ask any questions during the meeting and neither did I. Brother NANGLE made no other comments.
18. I felt demoralised by the interview with Brother NANGLE. I was still worried for a couple of weeks afterwards because I half expected to be summoned to the office to find out what was going to happen. I really did not know what the outcome was going to be.
19. I never heard anything else about the interview from Brother NANGLE. There was no letter or phone call or conversation or any follow up at all.
20. After this event many other boys would ask me what had happened in the meeting with Brother NANGLE. I would tell them that I had doxxed on Brother DOWLAN for 'touching me up'.

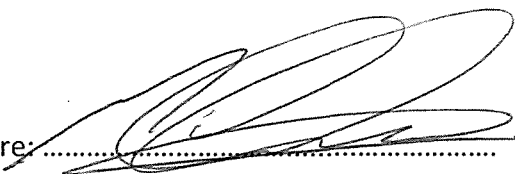
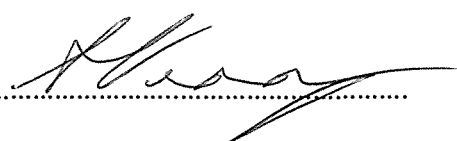
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21. There were no further incidents with Brother DOWLAN. He did not speak to me for the rest of the year, even though he remained my housemaster, except to call my name in the roll or to hand back work sheets.
22. Brother DOWLAN left St Patrick's at the end of the year. He went to teach at another school but I don't know which one it was. I do not recall there being an explanation as to why he left.
23. At the time, I was not aware of any incidents involving Brother DOWLAN and other boys at St Patrick's. It was only in later years that I came to learn that many other boys had also been abused by him.
24. My mother passed away in 2001. When she was dying, she told me that going to St Patrick's to talk to Brother NANGLE about what had happened to me was one of the hardest things that she had ever done.
25. In September 2014, I made a statement to Victoria police in relation to Brother DOWLAN. Later that year he pled guilty to 33 charges of child sexual abuse relating to 20 individuals.
26. In early 2015, Brother DOWLAN was sentenced to a maximum of six years imprisonment which was increased on appeal to a maximum of eight years imprisonment.
27. In April 2015, I had a discussion with my mother's younger brother. He told me that in 1974 my mother called him to ask what she should do about Brother DOWLAN abusing me. She was worried that if she complained to the school, my brother and I might be expelled. My uncle told her "He's your boy. You've got to look after him." He advised her to go to the school.


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28. From the time that I was old enough to actually reflect on this incident with Brother DOWLAN, I came to conclude that this was a missed opportunity for Brother NANGLE to act on the information provided to him by me and my mother in 1974. There were innocent victims from later years that may not have had to suffer if Brother NANGLE had handled the situation differently. I think that Brother NANGLE failed in his job as Headmaster by not acting to protect the boys in his care.

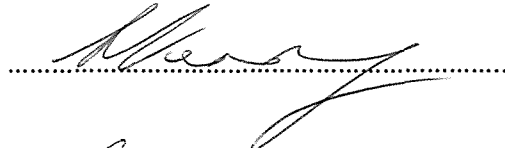
Signed:



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