

REDACTED



**Royal Commission**  
into Institutional Responses  
to Child Sexual Abuse

### Statement

**Name** CNG  
**Address** Known to the Royal Commission  
**Date** August 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 <sup>CNG</sup> . I am 39 years old.
3. I was born in Cessnock, NSW. I am the middle child with two older sisters and two younger sisters. I grew up in a happy family in town. I was very spoilt with love from both sets of grandparents and my whole family. It was a great childhood.
4. I started school in 1982 at Aberdare Primary School. I was four years old, turning five that year. I went into Year 1 in 1983 and repeated Year 2 in 1985. I finished Year 3 at Aberdare Primary School in 1986.
5. I started Year 4 at St Patrick's Catholic Primary School in Cessnock in 1987. I went there until I finished Year 6 in 1989.

#### St Joseph's Catholic Church

6. My parents were strict Catholics and every Saturday and Sunday the whole family, except dad, went to St Joseph's Catholic Church at Cumberland Street, Cessnock. In around 1987, I became an altar boy. I would serve on the altar three to four times a week including late Thursday night mass. There were other boys who were altar boys as

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well. About seven boys were rostered on for certain masses. Normally I was rostered on for three to four masses a week, this included Thursday night mass.

7. I also went to church during school hours as we had to attend mass for school. Father Vince RYAN was the parish priest. I don't remember the priest who was there before Fr RYAN.
8. Initially, I had a very good relationship with Fr RYAN as he would come to my house regularly and would play games with me and my sisters. He was a trusted friend and priest.

**Sexual abuse by Fr RYAN**

9. RYAN started to abuse me in late 1987. It was a Thursday night and mass had finished and there were two other altar boys there with me. After mass ended we had to tidy up, cover up the chalice, snuff out the candles, trim the candles and put them away, tidy the altar and polish the crosses and other ceremonial items. We would then have to disrobe and put the robes back into the cupboard.
10. The other boys left early but I wasn't allowed to ride my bike home at night so I waited for my dad or pop to come and pick me up.
11. I was in a room, off the main part of the Church and I was polishing a cross. The only people left in the Church were Fr RYAN and me. I was still wearing my robe and underneath that I had my underpants on, dress pants and a shirt. Father RYAN came up behind me and reached around my waist and started playing with my penis through my pants. He said, 'it will be alright <sup>CNG</sup> it will be all good.' I didn't know what to do.

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12. The abuse occurred numerous times. Another time it happened was also on a Thursday night and he did the same thing to me, putting his hands where they shouldn't go.
13. Next thing I heard was bashing on the door and my dad yelling out to me, 'are you ready son?' I disrobed, put my bike in the back of the car and went home. I did not tell my parents what had happened to me because it wasn't something I was able to talk about.
14. During 1988, I would do altar boy duties two or three times a week. The abuse happened on a weekly basis on the Tuesday or Thursday night after the mass ended. It was always after everyone else left including the other altar boys and I was completing the jobs I had to do. Father RYAN would always come around and grab me from behind and fondle my penis.
15. There were times that Fr RYAN would drop me home after a late night service. On these occasions he would abuse me in his car.
16. In early 1988, Fr RYAN also came to my house on a weekly basis to give my mum communion as she couldn't attend church for some time due to illness. During these visits Fr RYAN abused me. He would play games like handball and hopscotch with me and my sisters. Somehow he would get me alone in the shed as I was left to clean up the toys and put the balls away and would abuse me there. I did not tell anyone about this at the time.
17. I continued to be an altar boy and serve at mass on a weekly basis until I finished primary school at the end of 1989. I even served during school holidays. When I was an altar boy on the weekends there were always a number of people around and so nothing happened to me on those occasions.

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18. I was due to attend St Peter's High School in 1990 on a scholarship but I turned down that scholarship in Year 6 and organised to go to the public high school, being Cessnock High School. This caused arguments with my mum as she wanted me to go to the catholic high school but I knew if I went to St Peter's I would remain an altar boy and continue to have contact with Fr RYAN. I knew the only way to get away from him was to go to the public High School, which I did.

19. I did not have further contact with Fr RYAN after 1989, except for one time when a relative died and Fr RYAN attended the funeral. When I saw him at the funeral I felt sick.

#### Disclosing the abuse

20. In December 1987, I told my nan on her death bed that Fr RYAN had been touching me and swore her to secrecy. The abuse kept happening.

21. In around 1989, when I was about 11 or 12 years old, I told my mum that Fr RYAN had touched me. I made her promise to never tell anyone, especially my dad. My mum cuddled and consoled me. My mum was bedridden at the time and Fr RYAN would come over to our house to give her communion. After I told my mum about the abuse, she arranged for a different priest to attend the house instead of Fr RYAN. I can't remember the name of this new priest and I didn't tell him anything about what had happened with Fr RYAN. I don't know what reason my mum gave him about coming to the home instead of Fr RYAN.

22. Around the same time as I told my mum, I told a nun at my school what Fr RYAN had been doing to me. I swore her to secrecy. The nun couldn't understand why I turned down the scholarship. At different times throughout primary school, I would seek some  
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solace and comfort from this nun for guidance, help and to confide in her about my family and anything that was going on for me. I do not believe this nun told anyone else about the things I told her.

23. In order to forget the abuse, I thought of it as 'handball and hopscotch' for many years.

This was a way for my mind to cope with the abuse.

#### Life after school

24. After school, I got a job and studied for 12 months. I got married and had four children. I

had a social and active lifestyle. I raised poultry, cared for and maintained them and actively showed them in poultry shows. I did have a breakdown in my marriage but I managed to get my own place and had custody arrangements in place to see my kids. I maintained a job as well. I was happy and free for the first time in my life.

25. I started smoking pot when I was 13 years old and continued the habit. Other than that,

I did not take drugs.

#### Police reporting

26. In 2012, I received a phone call from a police officer from Maitland Police. The Detective

told me that Fr RYAN was in jail for abusing kids and that he had named me as one of his victims. The police wanted me to make a statement. I did not want to have anything to do with it and told the officer this. I had never disclosed the abuse as an adult to my family or friends and I didn't want to start. I didn't want to have to remember it. I was at a good place in my life and I had convinced myself that the abuse was only ever a game, like 'handball and hopscotch'.

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27. After this, I received more phone calls from the police, asking me to make a statement.

My parents also received phone calls from police asking them to get me to contact police. I did not like this at all. I did not want to be a part of any investigation. I was living my life just fine and then this out-of-the-blue contact from police happened and then I feel like my life spiralled out of control.

28. I did end up making a statement to Tamworth police on 20 May 2013. I was told by

Maitland Police later on that they could not charge Fr RYAN with my offences as I was not stable enough and would not be a reliable witness. This really upset me as I felt that I had gone to the effort of making a statement like the police wanted but then they didn't proceed with anything. It was aggravating, annoying and infuriating.

29. The experience of having to remember the abuse that I had put away for years was

traumatising. A few months later I turned to hard drugs like speed and amphetamines. I was out of control.

30. Around this time, Maureen O'HEARN from Zimmerman Services contacted me. I do not

know how she got my number. Maureen organised numerous counselling sessions for me starting in June 2013. Maureen said she was here to help victims who were abused by the priests, offer support and help healing. I would be dead if it weren't for Maureen O'HEARN.

31. Around July 2015, I began the process of seeking compensation through the solicitors

organised by Zimmerman Services. By this time, I felt ready and able to deal with it.

32. Initially I felt like Zimmerman Services made my settlement difficult and nothing

happened. I felt like I had to fight to prove the abuse. The process was very hard for me.

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However, recently I've received some money to cover counselling and other costs, which has helped me.

**Impacts of the abuse**

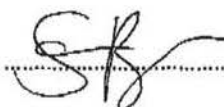
33. I never wanted to talk about my abuse by Fr RYAN. I know people who have killed themselves and I believe it is because of the abuse.
34. Having the abuse brought up again has impacted my entire family. I have had to come back home and live with my parents. Because of my past drug addictions, my sisters don't come to visit and they don't want their kids around me which means the grandkids don't see their grandparents. I am very overprotective with my kids and their bodies and knowing who can touch them and who can't. I didn't realise why I was so overprotective before, but now I do.
35. I want to be able to move on with my life. I don't see myself ever holding down another job. I have tried to get back into work over the last two years but the longest I have lasted is three months before it gets too much for me.
36. I don't leave my home now unless it is for cigarettes or my doctor appointments. I cannot be around people, it is too much for me. I can't even go shopping. I will sit in the bushland or in the garage and wait while my parents do the shopping.
37. Before the abuse came out, I used to be able to walk into a room and be the centre of attention. Now I can't handle doing everyday things.

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38. Maureen O'HEARN saved my life, without her I would have tried killing myself more times than I did. I looked forward to her weekly phone calls and believe that since I've been in contact with her, that there has been a big turnaround for me. Maureen is helping me to heal spiritually.

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