Statement to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Personal Details
John Richard Pugh

This statement is an account of my experience as a border and was systematically abused by
This was the trigger that suddenly made me realise what had really happened. It is very hard to describe how I felt but the sudden clash of thoughts as a result of consciously realising what had really done had a profound effect on me. I have since suffered from bouts of depression and have attended therapy sessions with a psychologist. I have been on medication for the depression and even utilised a spiritual healer in attempts to find peace of mind and to try and stop the endless thoughts of the events that occurred.

The years prior to 2008 were ones of differing emotions. I suffered from a lack of self-esteem and confidence, depression and self-loathing but, I had no idea why. It wasn’t until after I had realised what had done that I understood my state of mind at that time.

The years following my realisation of events were ones of reconciliation. As mentioned I sought various therapies from conventional to alternative. I was told I have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and have been, at times, on medication to treat my depression. I have spent many nights awake with thoughts of the events turning over and over trying to piece them together. I compare my thoughts to being like a fishing line that is tangled up into a big bird’s nest, you sit there pulling and poking, getting frustrated when it won’t untangle but, then, a big loop of line would fall out and suddenly you can put those memories into context. But, however hard I try there are still areas that remain tangled. They are like black holes in my memory. I know something happened there but can’t, as yet, remember.

I wrote to the then Headmaster of the school when I attended. I documented in the letter the events of what had happened and my experiences. I received a letter in response which really didn’t show much concern about my wellbeing. The letter mentioned that the school provided a counselling service if it was deemed that I required it and I was offered an initial evaluation consultation with a psychologist based there in
but as I live in France that offer was totally impractical. There was also a list of conditions attached that I had to sign in order to take advantage of this offer. The letter I received fell short of actually apologising to me for the treatment I suffered while attending. This has been the only correspondence and have never received any follow up inquiries as to my wellbeing. As mentioned, paid out compensation but this was to victims abused after a complaint into activities was not dealt with. My abuse was before that complaint and hence I am not eligible for any of that compensation, in fact I have never received a single cent.

My father was a stern believer in education and he worked hard to provide what he believed to be the best education available for my sisters and myself. It’s a small consolation knowing that both my parents did not know of the abuse I had suffered and that the money they invested in my future led to these events and the effects it has on my life. needs to accept their responsibilities in providing a safe environment for all students, past and present, that attend the school and for which parents pay good money with the belief that this should happen. It is no good saying, we initially didn’t know and therefore it’s not our fault, they have a Duty of Care.

Compensation isn’t going to take the memories away. It’s not going to make me suddenly unabused. I will always be a victim of. However, where compensation does help is that us, as victims, deal not only with the memories and the mental anguish resulting from abuse, we also deal with everyday mainstream stresses that life throws up for everyone. The main stress that most people deal with is making ends meet. Coping with everyday money worries for society can be a daunting task but add on top dealing with life as a victim can sometimes be too much to cope with. Compensation can help to lessen the impact of financial stress which could provide a buffer so as to deal with the stresses and anguish of the abuse.

I will always suffer from the effects had on my life but slowly I have managed to rationalise my situation. Since realising the abuse I suffered I have become an avid scuba diver and have reached the level of Diving Instructor. Diving has become the best therapy for me as it allows me to escape. Down in the depths, despite being with dive buddies, I am alone, in another world that doesn’t know what has happened to me. Diving has allowed me to slowly regain control of my life, a control that took away with his relaxation therapy and abuse.

I would like to submit this statement to the commission as a record of the events that has affected my life. I have found writing this to be very arduous and at times was only able to get one or two sentences written down. Despite that I am still willing to have my experiences recorded by the commission either through this statement or via an interview. Unfortunately I am unable to return to Australia in person but if there is an alternative way I can provide evidence I am more than willing to participate. If only one small piece of advice or evidence could help children in the future from suffering the same fate as me then this task will be all worthwhile.

Lastly, I would like to express my love for my family who stood by me for all these years, despite not knowing what had happened. They too suffered from the mental anguish I displayed as a result of the actions of. To show the support and love through all that is testimony to the strength and love they have. Thank you.