



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

Statement

Name David RIDSDALE
Address Known to the Royal Commission
Date 15 May 2015

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. Where direct speech is referred to in this statement, it is provided in words or words to the effect of those which were used, to the best of my recollection.
3. My full name is David RIDSDALE. I was born in 1966. I am currently 48 years of age.

Family background

4. I grew up one of nine children in a large Catholic family in Ballarat. Both my parents are from large families and there are around 50 grandchildren on my father's side of the family.
5. The religion of my parents was an all invasive force in our lives with every aspect centred on the Catholic community. My mother was secretary of St Alipius Parish School and was involved in the school for over 50 years. My parents remain committed members of St Alipius Parish. My grandparents lived opposite the Redan Church and my grandmother was like a mother to all the priests who resided there.
6. As a young child I enjoyed the liturgy and believed what the Church taught. The Church taught me that priests were something more than human with a direct link to God. They were incapable of sin. In my experience, the Church had narrow parameters of sexuality and gender and to fall outside of those boundaries was a sin. The Church dictated the boundaries of right and wrong and the congregation's relationship to the clergy was one of submission rather than supplication.

Signature: 

Witness: ...

REDACTED

7. My uncle (my father's oldest brother) Gerald RIDSDALE, was a Catholic priest in the Diocese of Ballarat. Gerald was treated like a shining light on my father's side of the family, particularly by my dad's mum. I believe he represented the pinnacle of her Catholic achievement.
8. As a priest, Gerald held an almost supernatural level of power in our family and exerted a great deal of control over the family. He was treated as being better than his siblings and took full advantage of his exalted status. Gerald was charismatic and many were in awe of him.
9. When Gerald came home to visit my grandmother, she would be very frantic. For example, hours before he was due to arrive, all of my father's 6 other siblings had to get their cars off the driveway and everything had to be prepared for Gerald to drive smoothly in. My dad told me that as a child, they used to call Gerald the '*God-botherer*', because he was a pious and horrible brother who lauded himself over his siblings in a superior fashion.

St Alipius Primary School, Ballarat

10. In 1971, I started kindergarten at St Alipius Girls Primary School, which was a co-ed school until grade 2. Gerald was a priest at St Alipius for part of this time. I remained at St Alipius Girls' Primary School until grade 2
11. In 1974, I went to St Alipius Boys Primary School for grade 3. My grade 3 teacher was Brother Gerald Leo FITZGERALD. Every Friday at the end of school, Brother FITZGERALD lined up our class, and we all had to kiss him goodbye, or potentially be strapped. Some kids got 'special' kisses, meaning he used his tongue. This happened to me a couple of times and I would see him linger with other boys.
12. Sometimes, Brother FITZGERALD singled out some of us to stay after class or come on his weekend bike rides. I went on a few bike rides with him. We would ride into the bush and countryside where FITZGERALD would teach us about the outdoors. He was both grumpy and affectionate and at the time his lewd behaviour was not obvious, but with the benefit of hindsight I can see the inappropriateness of his physical closeness.

Signature: 

Witness

REDACTED

13. On one occasion when I was aged 9 or 10 years old and in grade 4 or 5 I had to go to the sick bay. Brother BEST was there. Brother BEST was never my year teacher. He moved very close to my body and touched me between my legs. He kept saying *what is wrong with you?* I was scared and I began to cry. He then relented.
14. As I think back to this period in my life I recall other similar incidents. I now realise I had ignored or excused other incidents in light of Gerald's actions upon me. The BEST incident went into the growing pile of 'not as bad' things that happened to me growing up.
15. At the end of my grade 5 year, the St Alipius Boys Primary School closed, and we were reintegrated into the St Alipius Girls Primary School. I went to this school for grade 6 in 1977. I started to misbehave at this time and my parents put it down to the reintegration of the school, but this was not the case.

Gerald RIDSDALE


16. When I was around the age of 9 or 10, Gerald started to hang around my family home more. He gave my family gifts and offered trips away for our large family. I remember one trip to Apollo Bay where we were invited to his place. My family had never been to Apollo Bay before this time.
17. My mum fell pregnant with my youngest sister when I was aged 11 and it was a difficult pregnancy. Gerald began asking to help and offered to take me away for weekends on the preface of easing the burden on her. I was a pious young man and I often suspected my mum was earmarking me for the priesthood. I think Gerald took advantage of this and used it as a means of getting greater access and time with me under the guise of preparing me for priesthood.
18. Gerald first sexually abused me on one of the school holidays when I was aged 11 years old and in grade 6. We were in a car on a parishioner's farm in Edenhope where he was teaching me to drive. He stopped the car and undid my pants and began to pull my penis out to play with it. My naivety was so great at that point that I genuinely had no idea what was happening. I thought he had broken my penis as my ignorance of my own body was so great.


Signature: 

Witness: ...

REDACTED

19. After this, Gerald took every opportunity to initiate sexual interaction with me. He mainly abused me during school holidays or on weekends. Initially it was masturbation and then kissing and then oral sex. I remember the first time we were in the bush somewhere and he tried to make me perform oral sex and I gagged. He used to get angry if I couldn't perform the way he wanted. He never fully anally penetrated me despite trying many times.
20. One year, Gerald took me and 3 other boys to White Cliffs. I now know that 3 of us were molested by Gerald. One of the boys, who was a friend of mine, eventually told me that he had seen Gerald being 'over-friendly' with me one time. Later, when this same friend was aged 17, he told me that Gerald tried to seduce him on that trip to White Cliffs. He told me that he backed away as he realised what was going on. My cousin was also present with his father. My cousin and I are convinced that his father was suspicious of Gerald and as such did not let his children alone with him. Sadly my cousin's father died before taking any action.
21. In 1980, Gerald was sent to Elsternwick in Victoria for a year, supposedly to study. In Elsternwick, he lived with other clergy. He used to take me and other boys to stay with him there. There was no effort to conceal us and we would meet the other students in the common room before heading back to his room. One time there was I and another boy sleeping in separate beds. Gerald would move between us from bed to bed in the same room.
22. On another occasion, Gerald was at my grandparent's home with a boy who had been living with him while Gerald was a priest in Mortlake. Gerald told me that the boy was living with him while his parents were going through a divorce. I remember that while we were at my grandparents' home Gerald stood the boy on the table and was giving him Eskimo kisses and kissing him inappropriately in front of the members of the family who were present. I cannot recall exactly who was there, but it was more than just my immediate family. I remember being disturbed that nobody said anything to Gerald at the time. I remember as my parents were driving home from my grandparents' house, someone commented that Gerald's behaviour with the boy was weird. Nothing else was said.
23. On another occasion when I was 13 or 14 my younger brother and were walking out of the house when Gerald was driving up our driveway. Gerald pulled me into an embrace and

Signature: 

Witness: ... 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

Page 5 of 17


kissed me on the lips in a sexual manner. My younger brother saw Gerald kiss me passionately.

24. That same brother had told me years later that Gerald tried to kiss him in a similar way. But he pushed Gerald away and told him to bugger off.
25. Gerald sexually abused me on a regular basis until 1982, when I was 15. I was abused in a variety of cities in Victoria and New South Wales, including Edenhope, Ballarat, Apollo Bay, Inglewood, Mortlake, Elsternwick, St Kilda, White Cliffs, Mildura, Horsham and Wilcannia. I stopped counting after that.
26. Gerald wasn't secretive about his love for boys or in having boys around and touching us. He would use his power and prestige as a priest to convince children and adults to trust him.
27. When Gerald started paying more attention to our family he began buying gifts for my parents. One gift I remember he bought us was a colour TV. It was the first colour TV we owned. Much later my dad said, '*I always wondered why he was so nice to us.*' I think one of my parents' biggest issues looking back was realising that Gerald groomed them to get to me.

St Patrick's College, Ballarat

28. In 1978, I went to St Patrick's College in Ballarat for high school. I stayed there until Year 11. I experienced physical abuse there, but not sexual abuse. The school was run by the same Christian Brother order that ran St Alipius Boys' Primary School. The teaching method was always firm and the fairness depended on the Christian Brother you had to deal with.
29. I don't know of any kids at St Patrick's specifically who were sexually abused there, but there were rumours from the boarders about some teachers. For example, there was a rumour about a music teacher who would get his baton and flick it in your penis because he thought it was funny, and would then ask if you wanted it massaged.
30. Another Brother at the school once put his hands on either side of my head and got really close and intimate. I now perceive what he was doing as making a pass at me. At that time, I stood on his foot and told him to back off. He asked what my name was and when I told him, he replied, '*Oh you are one of those Ridsdales*'. At the time I thought it was because my

Signature: 


Witness: 

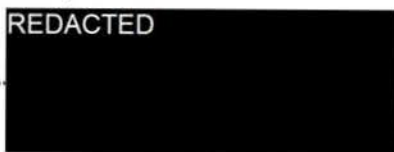
brother was a difficult student and I was following in his shadow but looking back I truly wonder what it meant.

31. I remember another teacher, whose classroom had to be soundproofed due to the noise he made when he would fly into a rage in his class. He was the form 5 and 6 maths teacher and a leading Christian Brother in Victoria and Tasmania. I would often see his violence and aggression surface when he became angry. On one occasion form 5 he decided that I hadn't answered a question correctly and threw my yearly notebook across the room causing the pages to fall out. I questioned his actions because I felt his reaction was uncalled for and that became a huge verbal row between us. The next day the headmaster called my parents and although he listened to my side of the story, they still said that such a respected mathematician and Christian Brother could not be wrong and therefore I was lying. I was given detention. Once again I was reminded that religious clergy were more important than the rest of us and could get away with anything.
32. For me St Patrick's became a painful place to attend because I felt different to the other students.

Disclosing the abuse

33. It was a long time before I knew I was being sexually abused. I just didn't know at the time. After Gerald abused me, I was left alone with feelings and ideas I did not understand, with no-one to talk to. The Church was a leader in the social idea that gender and sexuality was a simple binary choice. In my experience, if a male did not present heterosexual traits he was prone to ridicule and isolation. I felt I was completely alone and unable to tell any adult what was happening, especially as I started to struggle with my sexuality.
34. After Gerald started abusing me, my behaviour at home became unruly, and I was prone to aggressive emotional tantrums and was extremely sensitive about any perceived transgression on my part. I don't think my family made the connection as I had always been rather sensitive and different from my brothers. Gerald took advantage of this.
35. My parents didn't know what was happening on those weekends away with Gerald, but looking back I realise some incidents that should have been clues. For instance, on one occasion when Gerald dropped me home, he told my parents they should check me for

Signature: 

Witness: 

genital lice. He said that I must have gotten it from his bed. I'm a parent now, and if it was me back then I would have been asking, *'What was my son doing in your bed?'* I know there was no maliciousness on the part of my parents. I am sure that if my parents had any inkling of what he was doing they would not have been silent. My father has since said that had he known at the time, it might be him in jail.

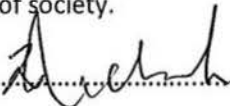
36. From the age of 15 I told a close family member on at least 5 occasions that I had been abused by Gerald. By the fifth time I bluntly said, *'Gerald has been molesting me'*. Rather than respond to my comment the close family member just said *'I hope one of your sisters would return to the Church one day.'* It was as if they did not hear what I had just said.

37. Growing up, I was too afraid to talk about what had happened to me. I didn't tell anyone until I was 15. As a teenager, I lived in terror that my growing sexual feelings were indicative that I had a predatory nature, like Gerald. The Church had done an excellent job of convincing not only me but my whole family that sexual deviation was a terrible sin. To like someone of the same sex was a mortal sin and something a good Catholic could not do. I was too terrified to even consider the feelings I was having. My only sexual experience and education had been at the hand of Gerald and I equated my growing inner feelings with his actions. It took many years to relieve myself of that disinformation.

38. My reaction to the Church was to lose respect and trust in it. I began to question everything and lost faith in the Church. This caused huge problems with my parents as they wanted me to stay in the church and couldn't understand my animosity. I lost faith in all institutions and have held an individual world view since.

39. The sexual education I received at both school and church was almost non-existent. This left me feeling vulnerable and completely ill prepared for understanding my sexuality and therefore had no capacity to understand that what Gerald was doing to me was wrong.

40. When I was about 16 or 17, I started telling my peers about my abuse. I had been working with people of my age in youth and social programmes at the YMCA and issues of abuse had been raised which triggered memories and a new understanding of what had happened to me. I began to confide in my fellow volunteers and, almost without fail, all of them said that some form of abuse had happened to them. At that time, I had a perception that this was a normal part of society.

Signature:.....


Witness: 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

Page 8 of 17

41. I had kept my sanity through my teen years through youth leadership at the YMCA and the programme had achieved national recognition. To compensate my horrible life I threw myself into any project to the point where by the age of 22 I was burnt out. I had been working 80 hours a week and doing full-time school as a psychiatric nurse. I thought I was trying to build a life, but what I was really doing was hiding from reality. I left Ballarat for Melbourne and began a range of jobs including music management, fruit picking etc. I returned to nursing initially part time to pay the bills before working at a private hospital.
42. It was some time before I realised that sexual abuse was not a part of most people's upbringing. Another response that I received from other adults around me was that anyone who committed such acts should be killed and that anyone who was abused as a child was bound to repeat the cycle. This was the type of ignorance within society at the time about such issues.
43. When I was 20, I first wrote to my Gerald expressing my disgust at what he had done to me. I never kept a copy of this letter and received no reply. The confusion inside me led me to make mistakes in my late teens, but I was determined not to follow in Gerald's path. At one point I rang a police number but was too scared and just hanged up the phone.
44. When I was 21, I wrote another letter to Gerald that I showed my eldest sister before I sent it. I again expressed my rage at how Gerald had manipulated me. I again received no response.
45. Even though I had begun to tell family members and people around me, there was no strong encouragement to tell authorities or bring it to the attention of others. I was continuously told that it was my decision to report it, but was also reminded of the damage it may cause to my family and the Church.
46. In 1992 or 1993, I began running a support group for Christian Brothers who had been accused of child sexual abuse. I did this for some months. It was before I came out publically. Gerald was in jail at this time so my surname was associated with him. The supervising psychologist where I worked was fully aware of my circumstances and that although I shared the same surname as a convicted offender, I was one of his survivors rather than just a relative.

Signature: 

Witness: 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

Page 9 of 17

47. Up to that point I had only told siblings and friends. The main reason that held me back from telling others was because I didn't want to hurt my grandmother. Her love and obsession of her son Gerald was undeniable. I loved my grandmother and I was terrified that if Gerald's behaviour was made public, it would kill her. The growing distress within me was just too great and I needed to act. Not long after going public about my abuse, my grandmother became very ill. She was soon bedridden, and then she died. I never got the chance to speak with her again.

George Pell

48. When I was 25, my former partner and I were expecting our second child. I began having terrible feelings and dreams. My main fear was that I would turn into my uncle. I started feeling like I was being abused all over again.

49. It all became too much, and we decided that something had to be done as it was negatively impacting my growing family. I didn't know what to do. I was terrified of ringing the police, and I was terrified to go public with my story. I decided to ring George PELL.

50. I've known George PELL since I was born. He was a family friend. He used to attend church services and activities when he was an assistant parish priest at St. Alipius. We continued to see him, even when he headmaster at St Aquinas Teachers' College and School. Pell was an avid swimmer and I would see him often at either Eureka Stockade or YMCA pool. I have called him George from since I was a kid. I never recall calling him 'Father'. I chose to phone George on that day for one reason, he was the only human being in the Church who I believed was still a friend and that I could trust.

51. At 9 am on 2 February 1993, I rang George from my home in Bentleigh. My partner at the time was sitting in the room with me when I made the call.

52. I told George that I had been abused by Gerald. His first reaction was 'Oh. Right'. There was no shock. His tone then became terse relatively quickly and I could sense anger in his voice. I started to get a sense that he was insinuating things about my story and I felt like I'd done something wrong.

Signature: 

Witness: .. 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

Page 10 of 17

53. I had been clear to George that I was concerned about my grandmother and was seeking a private process that could assist me as the pain and distress was overwhelming. George then began to talk about my growing family and my need to take care of their needs. He mentioned how I would soon have to buy a car or house for my family. I remember with clarity the last three lines we spoke together.

Me: *Excuse me, George, what the fuck are you talking about?*

George: *I want to know what it will take to keep you quiet.*

Me: *Fuck you, George, and everything you stand for.*

54. As soon as I hung up the phone, I called my eldest sister, and told her about my conversation with George. I also called my second eldest sister and told her about this conversation also. I remember saying to both my sisters *'the bastard just tried to bribe me.'*

55. I have never stated that PELL offered me anything specific or tangible in our conversation, only that his attempts to direct the conversation down a particular path made me extremely suspicious of his motivations and what he was insinuating.

56. George was the first person in the Catholic Church whom I officially told about my abuse by Gerald.

57. In 1994, when I was working at a private psychiatric Hospital in Brighton run by St John of God nuns, I saw George PELL for the first time since our conversation in 1993. George came up to me and said *'Oh David, how are you going?'* He did not ask if I was alright, or if I needed help, or if he could do anything to help? He had had plenty of opportunity to call me and help me, but he never did.

58. In the mid 1990s, I saw George PELL again at a Ballarat forum after Towards Healing was introduced. The forum was supposed to provide an overview of the Church's response to the historical abuse. PELL seemed surprised that the attendees did not believe that the Church had being unaware of the conduct of its clergy. I called him a liar there but I was actually the quiet one compared to some of the other individuals present. I recall one man said that he wanted to kill PELL and the other attendees had to calm him down. I now understand that this same man has committed suicide.

Signature: *David Ridsdale*

Witness: 

59. Some days, I don't know who I am angrier at, Gerald for being a sick monster, or George for the way he reacted and dealt with the issue. Catholic clergy are meant to be the moral leaders of our society, but after my reactions from George and the Catholic Church I have zero respect for him and the institution.

The police

60. After I spoke to my sisters, I was furious at George's response and decided to call the police.

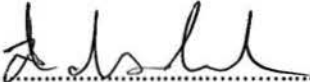
I rang the Benteigh police station and they said someone one would return my call shortly. Half an hour later, the police returned my call and said, '*Are you aware your uncle was to be charged later today?*' I replied, '*no*'. Later that day the police picked me up, and took me down to the police station for an interview that lasted many hours. I was told the charges to be laid against Gerald's were going to be delayed for 24 hours so they could use my statement as well.

61. The police told me I had to be ultra-specific about every instance of sexual abuse I included in my statement, so my initial statement contains a fairly small number of charges because they are the only ones I could remember at that time.

62. Gerald was charged the following day, 3 February 1993, with indecently assaulting myself and several other boys from Edenhope. I hadn't been aware that Gerald had abused other kids at Edenhope, but I wasn't surprised.

63. As the case drew nearer the police asked me whether I would agree to drop the charges that Gerald would not plead guilty. The reasoning for this I was told was to avoid the need to give evidence at a trial and so Gerald could be sentenced and jailed as soon as possible and so they could release his name to gather more evidence against him. I agreed to drop half the charges against Gerald, and as a result he was charged only the more minor offences against me.

64. Gerald was convicted and sentenced for sexually assaulting eight boys, including me, on 27 May 1993. He was sentenced to two years, three months' imprisonment. He served 3 months. Initially I was very upset at the brevity of the sentence and worried that it was all going to be brushed under the carpet. My trust in institutions and authority was a shaken after this.

Signature: 


Witness: 

Going public

65. Throughout the gruelling process the police were very good. They told me that they feared there were a many more victims of Gerald out there. They told me that if I helped them by going public, they would make sure Gerald never ever got out of jail. They felt that a public face to what had been happening would encourage others to come forward. The police said straight up, *'We can't do this without you'*. That was their promise and they kept it.
66. After the first criminal proceedings against Gerald ended, I did an interview with the *Herald Sun*. I expected a few people to come forward as a result, maybe a dozen. From feedback I received from the police and support group, Broken Rights, up to two hundred victims of child sexual abuse came forward after the article was published. There were many more victims of Gerald that came forward, then I could have possibly imagined.
67. In 1995, I did an interview with *Who* magazine. At that time, I referred to George PELL as a *'trusted priest'*. In April 1997, I told *Outrage* magazine that the *'trusted priest'* was George PELL.
68. In 2001, I was interviewed for the *60 Minutes* program. When this program was released, there was a letter in the paper from a man who said *'he knew I was a liar'*, and the reason he knew I was a liar was because *'no human would dare swear at a Bishop who holds such high regard in society'*. The Bishop he was referring to was PELL. I wrote a letter to this man, and I told him why I did what I did. He wrote back to me and said *'I have been sitting here crying for the last four hours. I am so sorry.'*
69. In 2012, *60 Minutes* re-aired this program. I didn't know they were going to do this as nobody notified me of this. I only found out about the re-airing after my family rang me to tell me.
70. Every time I have spoken out, there has been some backlash from the Church, often from PELL. They would criticise me for inconsistencies with dates which they attributed to me lying, rather than consider the sloppy journalism.

Civil proceedings

Signature: 

Witness: .. 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28



Page 13 of 17

Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

71. The Diocese of Ballarat paid for 7 sessions of counselling for me after the criminal proceedings. I not seel that this was enough.
72. I started civil proceeding against the Catholic Church in 1993. I wasn't offered any more counselling after that.
73. Soon after commencing proceedings, I was told by my parents that Bishop Mulkearns who was the Bishop of Ballarat at the time, held a meeting with my parents and encouraged them to get me to drop the case. This meeting was held without my knowledge. My parent told me that Bishop Mulkearns refused to acknowledge any inappropriate conduct on the part of Gerald.
74. The Church made me an offer of \$10,000 to resolve the proceedings. . My lawyers, Williams Winter & Higgs, advised me that if I did not accept the \$10,000 offer I would be dragged through a court case that I would never win '*not in a million years*'. They went on to advise that I would end up with a \$60,000-\$100,000 bill which would '*destroy my family's and my life forever.*' At that time, I was a terrified 25 year old with absolutely no support from anyone. I rejected this offer.
75. The Church made me a second offer of \$30,000. I begrudgingly accepted this second offer after I was made to feel scared and convinced that the Church's legal status as a non-corporate entity meant they could not be legally challenged.
76. At no point did the Church ever say words to the effect '*How can we help?*' I think that would have made a difference to my life.

Impact on my family

77. When my extended family first found out that I had been abused by Gerald, some of them said I was a liar, and '*No, none of that really happened*'. One of my cousins refused to believe Gerald had ever done it and called me a liar. Other family members shrugged off my story and say '*Oh, you know, David is emotional and sensitive*'. Other family members have accused me of being a gold digger or that it was so long in the past and I should have moved on by now. I now know that most of these responses were due to ignorance in understanding abuse and its long term insidious impact.

Signature: Witness: 

78. My grandmother's funeral was one of the last major family events I've been to on my dad's side of the family. My family have difficulty talking to me about the abuse, Gerald or the Church's involvement. It is too painful for them to think about and I ask too many questions as I am unable to keep my head buried in the sand.
79. My mother is still a devout Catholic. And can't understand why none of her children go to church anymore. She thinks it's a failure on her part. My daughter asks me, *'Why does nanna go to church? Does she know how much that hurts you?'* I try to explain to my daughter that my parents grew up in a different era, and that my mother genuinely believes that hell is a real. I've never told my mum that it hurts me that she still goes to the same Church, but it does hurt.
80. My cousin, who was also abused by Gerald told me that he has been told by family members that if he ever took any money or compensation from the Church for the molestation, then anything he ever bought with it would forever remind him of the abuse. One of my aunts that still visits Gerald in jail claims she does so in honour of her mother.
81. With the Church being such an integral part of my family's life, the fallout from revelations against Gerald has permeated every aspect of our family. The lack of understanding of the impact of abuse and the shame of Gerald makes it painful for them to discuss it. This inadvertently making me feel very much alone to deal with the damage it has caused me. I have become adept at hiding my pain and creating a strong persona as I don't like letting the bastards win.

My family's involvement in moving Gerald RIDSDALE

82. At my grandmother's funeral, one of my aunts said to me *'I'm so glad it's finally out. I've known for so long'*. I replied *'Sorry, what?'* She said *'Oh well, you know in Edenhope when it got too much and we got told about it'*. She then told me that she and her husband, who was a policeman at the time, had helped move Gerald quietly out of Edenhope. I reacted harshly towards my aunt as Gerald was abusing me at that time. My older sister was standing next to me. My aunt was very surprised at my reaction and became upset.

Signature: 

Witness: 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28

Page 15 of 17

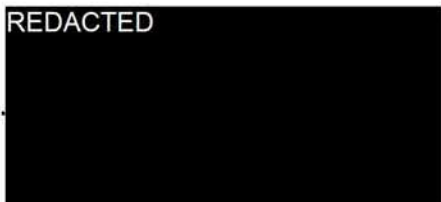
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

83. After this interaction I was standing there in the hallway alone being ignored. Everyone was saying to one another how hard it was on them. I suddenly put my hand up and said '*Excuse me everyone, I was the one fucking raped*'. I then walked out.
84. I confronted my uncle about his involvement in moving Gerald from Edenhope. He categorically denied any involvement. Other family members were told that I was lying about what my aunt had said at the funeral, until my sister reminded them that she was there and also heard it. This uncle then tried to excuse my aunt by saying she was not mentally well and had had a breakdown. This aunt was admitted to a clinic for treatment.
85. I've since found out that when Gerald was moved out of Edenhope this same aunt had a conversation with another aunt about suspicion of Gerald's inappropriate behaviour. From that day onwards, none of their children were allowed to be alone with Gerald. They both appeared to have known at the time about Gerald's behaviour but chose not to warn their siblings and rest of the family.

Personal impact of abuse

86. I have been asked when did the abuse stop, but my response is that it ever has stopped. What Gerald did was the result of a pathetic man unable to make correct choices. The combative approach from the Church and their efforts to paint me as a liar were just as painful to my life as the abuse itself. Discovering that the Church leaders were aware of his abuse of others has shattered my trust in social institutions.
87. The impact of my abuse has been a complete invasion of every aspect of my life. The upbringing I received in the Church ensured my naivety was so great I was unaware of what Gerald was doing to me. My fear of being different and a sinner in the eyes of the Church meant that I was sure it was me doing something wrong.
88. My personal sexual journey was completely disrupted and poisoned by the actions of Gerald. My inability to trust anyone enough to tell them was a result of the Church dogma and supernatural regard of its leaders. When I told my father this, he agreed and said that that sadly I was probably right and that no-one would have believed me back then.

Signature: 

Witness: .. 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28

Page 16 of 17

Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

89. It's hard to contemplate the dark space I was in during my teenage years. It's actually really difficult for me to even remember that disturbing time. I lived in terror of turning into Gerald and the continuing conflict inside of me ensured that relationships were difficult to maintain. Trust of others was non-existent.
90. The worst part was meeting other victims of Gerald at an event organised by Broken Rites that I attended. Name tags were provided to us and I was the only one to share his name making it very difficult to interact because I would be judged on my last name. Many of us were able to start putting our stories together and we quickly realised that sometimes on the same day Gerald would abuse one of us in the morning, another in the afternoon and a third in the evening. I have spoken to a couple of victims about the games he'd play, how he'd say '*You're the special one*'. One boy told me that he was jealous of me, and I in turn felt dumped when another boy came along. I couldn't even contemplate this perversity back then.
91. I now suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a number of ongoing interpersonal problems. I'm not receiving any support at the moment, but last year I did a PTSD support program in England, where I now reside, at my own expense. It was extremely good, but it has opened up a lot of wounds. The goal isn't suppression, its management. I need further and ongoing PTSD support.
92. I have become very good at fronting the world with a strong persona but you would only have to ask those close to me how much this affects me. I am very cautious and selective of who I let into my inner world. I am lucky to have people I can share the pain with no judgement.
93. When I tried to get help from the Catholic Church, my calls for help were ignored. I got the impression that the Church was more concerned with protecting their institutional structure than actually listening to me.
94. I was asked to sign a confidentiality agreement when I did receive money from the Church. This made me feel that the Church was offering to buy my silence. I decided to tell the truth, no matter what. I have lost a great deal from going public, but I know that my actions in 1993 and beyond have helped in a small way to lead to this Royal Commission, and for that I am grateful.

Signature: Witness: .. 

Statement in the matter of Case Study 28
Statement of David RIDSDALE continued

Signed: 

Date: 15-5-15

Witness: 

Mandy SUTHERLAND
Federal Agent 16414
Australian Federal Police

Date: 15/05/2015.