

This was far more than I could have expected in a million years from Ashton. For a start, he appeared to really empathise with the complainants. He seemed quite moved by their stories. For another, he was completely dismissive, as he should be, of the suggestion of any collusion between his taskforce and myself.

Ashton's use of the word 'victims' instead of complainants incensed Pell's supporters. Within days, News Limited commentators, including The Sydney Institute's Gerard Henderson, pointed out that it showed that Ashton was prejudging the matter. To me, it seemed more like a case of poorly used language. If the matter was being prejudged, Victoria Police would have charged Pell long before now. It's clearly a case it has carefully agonised over. You only get one shot at this sort of thing and you don't want to mess it up.

In those few days after the story went to air, we got a number of tips from people who said they had Pell stories. Many of them were 'a friend who knew a friend'-type stories. Some were dead ends.

Then another man came forward, leaving a telephone message for me. His name was Michael Breen. Breen, as it turned out, was another Eureka Pool complainant. But he had kept what he says Pell did to him secret for his entire life. He had never breathed it to a soul. Breen is just not that type of fellow—he's a man of few words. Breen had neither met nor heard of Damian Dignan and Lyndon Monument. He hasn't lived in Ballarat for three decades and he only saw the back-end of our program, so he knew scant details of what was alleged. But his story is eerily similar to those that Monument and Dignan told.

Breen knew that the 7.30 program on Pell was coming on that night—he'd heard it advertised and he was interested to see what it was all about. He says he recorded it, but the recording hadn't worked. Breen was interested because five months before, when the *Herald Sun* story had broken, he'd seen it in the news, seen that it included a reference to the Eureka Pool, and had tried to contact a

newspaper (he can't remember which one—he just saw it online) by sending an email through a 'contact us'-type link saying that he was at the pool and he had seen something. He'd never heard back. He has no record of that email now—possibly because it was automatically generated by the newspaper's site.

Michael Shane Graafmans was born in Ballarat on Anzac Day 1964, to a single mother and a father he never met. He later took the Breen surname after his mother married his stepfather, Terry Breen. Breen is five years older than Monument and Dignan. The family went to live in Melbourne for a few years, but returned to Ballarat when Breen was in his final year of primary school. They moved to Ballarat East, just around the corner from the Eureka Pool. During the hotter months, Breen would head to the pool usually about twice a week—once after school and once on the weekends. And that's where Breen says he met Pell. The maths put it at roughly 1976. Unlike the St Alipius kids who knew Pell from mass and confession, Breen was not brought up a Catholic. But he still knew who this towering fellow at the pool was.

'Everyone in Ballarat, let alone at the pool, knew George Pell,' Breen tells me during one of our phone conversations. 'He would arrive with his black suit and his white collar and he'd put his bag down and get changed in the change rooms.'

'He was a friendly person, so whether you bumped into him, or otherwise, he would talk to you. There was just that contact—you felt comfortable with him.'

Breen remembers Pell playing with the kids—bouncing and splashing around with a rubber ball. And, just as he did two years later, Pell would play the throwing game. Breen thought it looked fun. He says that Pell would 'always come from behind us kids, placed both of his hands under my armpits and threw me, or whoever was there in front of him, up in the air. I was usually thrown a good three feet out of the water.'

But after a few throws, Breen says Pell changed his launching technique. 'His hands seemed to move around so that he was pushing or lifting me up from my bottom, my buttocks. As he did this,

one of his hands moved around so that it would touch my groin area, my testicles and my penis.

'I was uncomfortable when his hands got down further,' Breen tells me, somewhat awkwardly, during that first phone call. 'He would fondle your backside and the front area and bounce you up and down on his knees.'

He says it was not exactly a firm grip. 'It was his palm on my skin, rubbing up and down. On the cheeks, on the entrance to the anal [canal]. I ask whether it was under the water or above. 'Oh, under the water, never above.'

'Sometimes he slid one of his hands around the front of my groin. It was a gentle touch or caress of my penis and testicles from the front. Again, this was a gentle caress and all done in a way so that no-one could see what he was doing, always under the water. There again was another version of that 'good handful' described by Phil Scott in the Southwell Inquiry. There again was the similar evidence. And as I later found out, Breen had never heard of Scott, had never heard of Southwell, and knew next to no detail about what Monument and Dignan had alleged.

'The other thing he did was pull me close to him when he was about to throw me in the air. I could feel his groin pressing or brushing against my bottom, but I cannot recall if his penis was erect or not

'First couple of times I thought nothing of it at all,' Breen says 'It was towards the end of having anything to do with him that I realised it was not right. You know, "this can't be an accident"? Yep.' He says for a while he ignored the 'wrong' feeling he had when the priest touched him because 'the thrill of being thrown into the air was so exciting that it made it all well worth the uncomfortable feeling of him touching me'.

He says it happened on many occasions, approximately once a week over the summer. Eventually, Breen decided not to play with Pell. The uncomfortable feelings usurped the thrill of the throw.

Like Monument a couple of years later, Breen also says he saw Pell naked in the change rooms at the Eureka Pool, but Breen did not make much of that fact.

In later years, he moved away from Ballarat and almost thirty years ago, he moved to Queensland. He's lived there ever since. He doesn't keep up with many Ballarat people and certainly before the *Herald Sun* story in February, had never heard anyone else discuss Pell behaving in this way.

Breen had until now never told a soul what he says happened to him. He says on a day-to-day basis, he rarely thinks about it and doesn't feel that it has had a permanently scarring impact on him. But he never forgot—it played like a super 8 film in his mind every time he saw Pell on television. 'It's always stuck in my memory—it never leaves. It never goes away. Never,' he tells me.

He decided to come forward, he says, to help the other complainants. 'I have been close to him. I know he's guilty. He can deny it all he wants.'

I spoke to Breen several times on the phone. He agreed to make a statement to Victoria Police and I put him in contact with Taskforce SANO. I told SANO I was the first person to whom he'd disclosed. A detective flew up to Queensland to take his statement. Being a heart-on-my-sleeve type of person, it was hard for me to understand how Breen could never have told anyone—especially given Pell's public profile. I felt I needed to go and meet him to better understand him.

When I meet him, Breen is fifty-two. He lives alone in a large brick-veneer 2-storey home on 7 acres of lush southern Queensland land, woven with orb spider webs, vibrating with cricket song. The property is littered with the truck parts he buys and sells at auctions.

Inside, his home is full of pictures of his children and grandchildren—he seems too young to be a grandfather. He has clipped grey hair, shining cornflower blue eyes, and is boyishly dressed in a cap and shorts. As he ushered me in, he apologised repeatedly for the mess—it wasn't messy—but he hastily swept up dust from the