

National Victoria [Sins of the Seminary](#)

This was published 1 year ago

# Ground zero: How the Ballarat diocese exported paedophiles to the world

By [Debbie Cuthbertson](#), [Andrew Thomson](#), [Farrah Tomazin](#) and [Chris Vedelago](#)

Updated September 23, 2019 – 2.26pm, first published at 11.44am

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: The High Court overturned Cardinal George Pell's conviction for historic child sex offences in a judgment handed down April 7, 2020. In a unanimous decision all seven High Court judges found Victoria's Court of Appeal should not have upheld Pell's conviction. It found the evidence could not support a guilty verdict.*

“Brother Paul” still causes nightmares for Darren\*.

The Christian brother, full name Kenneth Paul McGlade, raped the 10-year-old Warrnambool boy at St Joseph's Christian Brothers College in 1969. Half a century later, Darren still bears a physical reminder.





\*Darren, now 61, says he was raped by a Christian Brother at St Joseph's Christian Brothers School in Warrnambool when he was 10. MARK WITTE/WARRNAMBOOL STANDARD

"The day after he attacked me I started chewing my fingernails, so bad I've got no nail on my left little finger," he said. "I used to hold it under my hand so no one would see it."

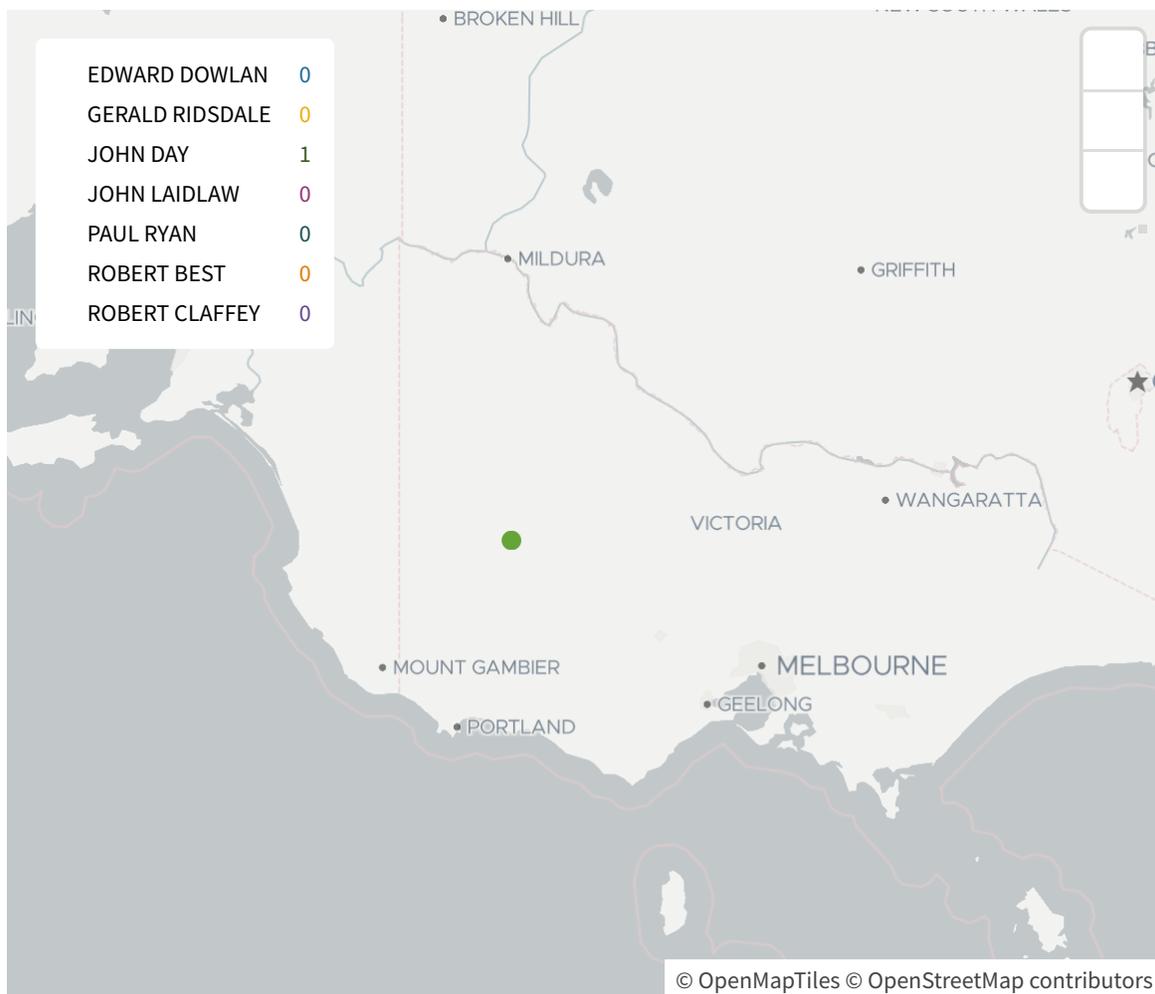
Now, at 61, Darren is finally feeling strong enough to tell his story in support of other victims. "If anyone asks now I tell them. 'I did nothing wrong. It wasn't my fault,'" he said.

Darren is just one of at least 140 people who have made claims of child abuse against the Catholic church in the Ballarat diocese – an extensive region covering 41 parishes in the western third of the state.

It's one of the epicentres of the Catholic child abuse scandal in Victoria.

## HOW PAEDOPHILE CLERGY SPREAD THROUGH WESTERN VICTORIA

You can pause the timeline and click on a point for details.



The map does not include locations outside of Victoria. Gerald Ridsdale and Paul David Ryan both spent time both in NSW and the US.

 A Flourish data visualization

While St Alipius Boys School and St Patrick's College in Ballarat are often viewed as "ground zero" for the crisis, less is known about how the paedophiles at the centre of these two hubs spread their abuse across the Western District, intersecting with other known sex offenders along the way.

*The Age* has found that in one coastal town alone – Warrnambool – McGlade was one of seven Catholic priests and Christian Brothers who abused children in an almost-continuous stream of paedophile clerics employed between 1963 and 1994.

One man, who was sexually assaulted as a teen in the 1980s, says thousands of boys at the town's Christian Brothers College alone were taught by paedophile clergy over more than three decades.

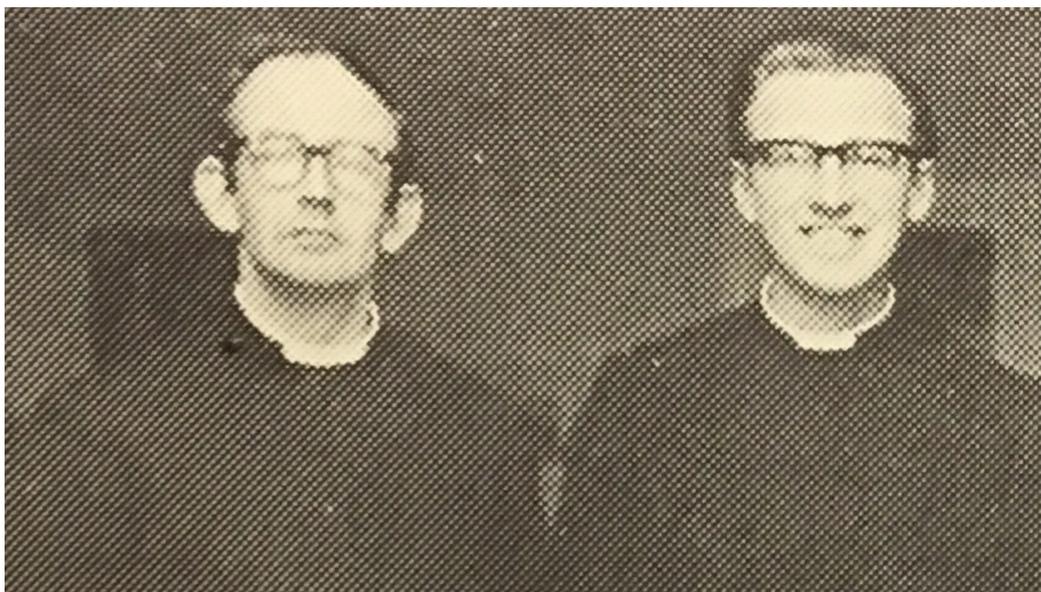
“I feel sick,” he said. “The gravity of that is outrageous.” He is suing the Ballarat diocese.

Now, new analysis of data by *The Age* reveals that, [as in the Melbourne Archdiocese](#), priests and brothers in the Ballarat diocese were sharing victims, passing on intelligence about vulnerable children, and keeping each others’ dirty secrets.

But the Ballarat diocese and Christian Brothers were doing more: they were also exporting known paedophiles to the US under the guise of “treatment”. And there, according to law suits only recently lodged in Connecticut, dozens more victims are seeking their own redress over the predations of Victoria’s Catholic clerics.

Notorious paedophile priests Gerald Ridsdale and Paul David Ryan, who molested boys at the same Warrnambool school as McGlade, were also sent to the US between the 1970s and early 2000s.

“Brother Paul” McGlade was another, sent by the Christian Brothers.



Brother Donald Paschal Alford, right (with Brother William Houston, later convicted of child sex abuse) at St Augustine’s boys’ orphanage in Geelong in the 1970s.

Lawsuits lodged over the past year by 24 former students from the Mount Saint John Academy in Deep River, Connecticut accuse McGlade and his fellow Australian Christian Brother Donald Paschal Alford of sexually assaulting children at a church-run boys’ home.

McGlade, who died in 2013, was a teacher and executive director at the academy between 1986 and 1996. Alford, who died in 2004, was a teacher and scout master.

In at least one case a victim alleges that Alford made a student perform oral sex on him in the presence of McGlade.

The legal suits have been reported by the media in Connecticut but never in Australia. Alleged victims are seeking compensation from Connecticut’s Norwich

Roman Catholic diocese and a former bishop.

Bishop Ronald Mulkearns approved both Ryan and Ridsdale’s travel to the US for treatment and study, where both are alleged to have sexually assaulted children.



○ **TIMELINE**

**PAUL DAVID RYAN**

OPEN TIMELINE

Ryan made seven trips to the US. His first was to Maryland in 1977, just a year after his ordination. He was sent to Father John Harvey, who specialised in “ministry to homosexuals”, at the De Sales Hall school of Theology in Hyattsville.

Harvey later founded Courage International, a Catholic apostolate that urges same-sex attracted people to “pray away the gay” and live celibate lives.

On Ryan’s second trip to the US, to Virginia Beach in 1979-80, he is alleged to have sexually assaulted two boys at Our Star of the Sea parish in the diocese of Richmond, Virginia.

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The two victims had pushed for Ryan to be tried in the US after learning of his first conviction in Australia in 2007. The church paid the two men \$37,000 each –

from a Ballarat diocese bank account – but did not admit liability.

Ridsdale was sent to the US in 1989, decades after the diocese was first made aware of complaints against him. While there, he attended a retreat run by a Catholic order called the Servants of the Paraclete, who provide “spiritual and psychological renewal” to priests. He later admitted to police that he had molested children while in the US.

The Paraclete order’s founder, Father Fitzgerald, had complained decades earlier to the Vatican and various US bishops about priests’ sexual offending while at his retreat.

Despite the warnings, the order was still receiving and treating clerics until the 1990s who, like Ridsdale, had been accused of child sexual abuse.



Christian Brother Kenneth Paul McGlade.

## Nightmare in the Western District

Darren said he was in grade five when McGlade attacked him while his classmates played footy outside.

"This Thursday morning Br McGlade called me into his office for flicking stuff around in art on the Wednesday," he said. "I thought I might get the cuts."

The large Christian brother, who ruled his classes by fear, then told Darren to repeat a line 50 times – 'I must do as I'm told'. Now I know it was a type of grooming," he said.

"Halfway through he pulled me up to the front of the classroom, pulled down my pants, bent me over the desk and raped me.

"I still get flashbacks ... I bled for a week."

Darren, then 10, was his father's blue-eyed boy.

"My main concern was that if I said anything to anybody, Dad would have done 25 years in jail for murder. I didn't say anything for 43 years."

By the time he did come forward to tell the police, McGlade was dead.

"I lived with it for a long time. It would come up at all sorts of times during my life, often when I should have been at my happiest. I told my wife what happened the week before our daughter got married in 2012," he said.

"My wife thought I was having an affair because I was acting so strangely building up the courage to tell her. I went to the royal commission in 2016. I'm now getting help through a clinical psychologist and I'm taking civil action against the Christian Brothers.

"It feels like I've ripped the top of a scab. I'm having cold sweats and wake up dreaming he's on top of me."

Darren said he always knew McGlade would have other victims. He was right - he was just one of many.

Data analysis conducted for the royal commission on offending in the Ballarat diocese – which takes in all of western Victoria, including Warrnambool and Mildura – identified 20 priests and brothers subject to one or more claims of child sexual abuse.

On average, there were 7.7 claims of child sexual abuse per accused. At the time of the commission's final report in late 2017, 140 people had made a claim of child abuse in relation to the Ballarat diocese including 56 complainants against Christian Brothers alone.

Since then there have been more reports, and a number of further convictions. Six of the seven priests and brothers who sexually assaulted children in Warrnambool, mostly at St Joseph's Christian Brothers College, are now in jail.

Three of those convicted of molesting children in Ballarat and Warrnambool also abused children in Geelong, including at St Augustine's Orphanage and St Joseph's College.

*The Age* is also aware of credible allegations of sexual abuse by at least eight more Christian Brothers of boys at St Augustine's, which closed in the 1990s.

They include accusations against Paschal Alford, McGlade's co-accused in the US, before the pair were sent to Connecticut. The church has paid out of court settlements to two of Alford's alleged victims from St Augustine's via the Towards Healing protocol, according to victims' group Broken Rites, on the condition they did not pursue civil action.

Victims are also increasingly pursuing civil action against the church. In a case that could open the floodgates for victims seeking compensation, [the Ballarat diocese recently accepted legal responsibility for the sexual abuse of a nine-year-old boy](#) by Ridsdale.

Neither Ballarat bishop Paul Bird nor the Christian Brothers Oceania responded to questions from *The Age*, the latter saying it did not comment on matters that were before the courts of subject to litigation.

Ridsdale and Ryan are now both imprisoned in Ararat, at Hopkins Correctional Centre. Ridsdale, who has been there for 25 years, will likely die there.

They are joined there by convicted Warrnambool and Ballarat paedophiles Robert Charles Best, John Laidlaw and Robert Claffey. (Their former colleague Edward Dowlan – now known as Ted Bales – is in jail elsewhere in Victoria for molesting children in Ballarat, Warrnambool and Geelong.)

They will [likely soon be joined](#) by another well known figure from the region: disgraced Cardinal George Pell.

\*Not his real name.

### With the Warrnambool Standard

If you or anyone you know needs support, you can contact the National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service on [1800RESPECT](#) (1800 737 732), [Lifeline](#) 131 114, or [beyondblue](#) 1300 224 636.



**Debbie Cuthbertson**



Debbie Cuthbertson is a senior writer and Saturday chief of staff at The Age.



**Farrah Tomazin**



Farrah Tomazin is a senior journalist and investigative reporter with interests in politics, social justice and legal affairs.



**Chris Vedelago**



Chris Vedelago is an investigations reporter for The Age with a special interest in crime and justice.