

Summary statement – Saint John of God 29 April 2013

Brother Timothy Graham
Provincial, The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God

The Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God unreservedly accepts that some of our members physically and sexually abused children in their care, between 1954, when we set up the first of our institutes for people suffering from intellectual, behavioural and psychiatric disabilities, and 1990, when they closed.

The abuse was a serious betrayal of the trust of those in their care, and a betrayal of what our Church stands for.

Of 689 residents and students, we received 31 complaints of a sexual or physical nature against members of our Order relating to children. The majority of the complainants have reported their allegations to the Victorian Police – many of them in a police investigation that was initiated by the Order.

We have always urged complainants to report allegations of criminal abuse to the police.

The allegations in relation to the Victorian institutes were the subject of a rigorous police investigation in 1997 conducted by Detective Phillip Russell from the Lilydale Crime Investigation Unit.

The abuse allegations relating to Cheltenham and Churinga were investigated by Victoria Police between 1997 and 2004.

No criminal charges have been laid against any member of the Order in relation to these Victorian complaints.

At all times, the Order has pursued and provided procedural fairness, objective assessment of claims, a humble, compassionate and listening response and independent legal representation for each complainant in its handling of allegations of historical criminal abuse. The costs of a complainant's legal representation have been borne by the Order as part of any mediated, civil settlements.

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We have made all of our documents relating to these claims available to the Parliamentary Inquiry, as well as a report following an independent audit of our claims handling process commissioned in 2008.

We reject the allegations by Broken Rites (Australia) Collective Inc. If Broken Rites has evidence to support their claims then it should be immediately reported to the police.

The criminal abuse of any person, especially vulnerable children, is indefensible. It is totally contrary to everything we believe in. We shamefully acknowledge the great harm that has been perpetrated by some of our members and offer our sincere apology to all those affected. All of our Brothers daily live the shame of the devastating harm that has been wreaked by some of their number in the lives of vulnerable people in our care.

At all times we have sought to manage allegations of historical criminal abuse in a best practice, victim-centred manner so as not to re-traumatise victims. The Order has sought to support, heal and compensate victims compassionately and justly as their allegations have surfaced over the last twenty years.

We are grateful to the Victorian Government for undertaking this important Parliamentary Inquiry. We appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry.



Br Timothy Graham oh
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