



# Survivor Stories

**Kelso Lawyers' client case studies from victims of historic child sexual abuse.**

**Sydney:** (02) 8315 8900  
**Newcastle:** (02) 4907 4200  
**Free call:** 1800 650 707  
**[kelsolawyers.com](http://kelsolawyers.com)**



AustraLaw Pty Ltd is registered under the Corporations Act 2001 and trades as Kelso Lawyers

## Introduction

Now is the best time to come forward and speak about what happened to you as a child. The federal Royal Commission is in full swing; lots of institutions are saying sorry and trying to make up for the horrific things their people did to innocent children in the past.

Some State governments are trying to do the right thing and so are churches like the Catholics (priests, brothers and nuns), The Salvos and the Anglicans.

You need to get your breakthrough and feel set free from the dark thoughts that have been controlling you for so long.

Healing will be achieved. Justice is within your reach. This can be your year.

Read the stories of survivors who have put their trust in us and taken a step forward.

I hope you find inspiration in their words.

***Peter Kelso***

**Kelso Lawyers has helped hundreds of survivors of child sexual abuse receive an apology and compensation for their suffering. Here are some of their stories...**

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# 1 Tom's story

**Tom was born into a devoted Catholic family in 1950, starting high school at St Mary's Cathedral School Sydney in 1964. At the time, the school was run by The Christian Brothers.**

A short time later, Tom became a member of the Guild of St Stephen at St Mary's Cathedral School, A source of great pride for his family. As a member of the Guild, Tom was responsible for preparing for Mass and performing the duties of an altar boy.

Brother Patrick Timothy Farrell oversaw the Guild of St Stephen. Tom's membership with the Guild gave Farrell regular access to him. Brother Farrell targeted Tom after he joined the Guild and sexually and physically abused him relentlessly for a two year period. Farrell used his position of authority to repeatedly violate Tom. Farrell's atrocities condemned Tom to a life of chronic suffering.

Brother Farrell assigned Tom extra tasks after the weekly Mass. He used this time alone with Tom to commit the abuse. Farrell amended the Guild roster, replacing Tom's name with other boys to increase his access to Tom. He even called for Tom from his classroom, convincing the teachers that he required Tom to complete further duties.

The position Farrell held and the community's dedication to the Catholic faith shielded him from the suspicions of teachers, parents and the congregation at St Mary's Cathedral.

Kelso's negotiated a financial settlement of \$245,000 for Tom, as well as a formal apology from the Christian Brothers. ▶

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“ ***Although his wounds are far from healed, Tom now feels the Christian Brothers have taken responsibility for the crimes committed against him. He is closer to freedom from the guilt and shame he has carried for almost half a century.*** ”

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Tom knew that Farrell's position made it inconceivable for others to believe he was a paedophile. Only Tom's peers knew the truth of Farrell's true nature and his abusive sexual perversion. Brother Farrell sexually abused Tom in the most serious and significant circumstances.

He carried out his crime in the Church toilets and on school outings. While performing the abuse, Farrell would bang Tom's head so violently against the wall of the Church toilets that Tom often lost consciousness. Tom still suffers from tinnitus and migraines as a result. Despite Tom's desperate efforts, Farrell was always able to use his size and strength to overpower Tom.

Tom has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and social phobia. He has battled through life on a disability support pension since 1982. Tom began truanting from school in 1964 to try to escape the abuse. Unable to bare the abuse any longer, Tom left school at age 15. His family made arrangements for him to move to Brisbane to work in a family business. Tom never made it to Brisbane as he unraveled mentally. He spent the next 12 months homeless in Hyde Park fighting his demons with alcohol in a desperate attempt to block out his memories of the abuse. From the age of 15 until his 33rd birthday, Tom self-medicated with alcohol and drugs, with near fatal consequences.

This cost him his marriage and the chance to develop relationships with his four daughters and 11 grandchildren.

He has battled through life on a disability support pension since 1982. Tom continues to be haunted by nightmares, short-term memory loss and irritable bowel syndrome, all consequences of the abuse. He lives in a relocatable home in a retirement village.

For years Tom suffered in silence, consumed with shame. He feared for his family should his secret be exposed. It was not until after the death of his mother in 2003 that Tom told a close friend about Farrell's abuse. A short time later Tom reported the abuse to the NSW Police. In 2009, Tom was awarded \$45,000 by the NSW Victims' Compensation Tribunal (now the Victims Support Scheme for the abuse he suffered at the hands of Brother Farrell.

In 2013, Tom contacted the team at Kelso's for help. Kelso's approached Christian Brothers seeking an apology and compensation for the horrific abuse Tom had endured. Peter Kelso met with the head of the Christian Brothers Professional Standards Office and his legal representatives. Tom was awarded \$245,000 in compensation and a formal apology from the Christian Brothers.

Although his wounds are far from healed, Tom now feels the Christian Brothers have taken responsibility for the crimes committed against him.

He is closer to freedom from the guilt and shame he has carried for almost half a century. ◀



## 2

# Rick's story

**Rick\* was born to a devout Catholic mother and a violent, alcoholic father. Due to the violence, his mother left his father when he was 10 or 11 years old. As she was on the verge of emotional collapse, with no financial means at her disposal, Rick's mother had no choice but to leave him at an orphanage.**

From there Rick was taken to St Vincent's Home in Westmead run by the Marist Brothers. Here, Rick was subjected to brutal physical and sexual abuse.

Brother Laetus was the headmaster at St Vincent's at the time. He would regularly call Rick into his office where he was beaten by hand, or with a cane. This was done as an excessive form of discipline. For two years, Brother Laetus would also regularly sexually assault Rick. He would be called into Brother Laetus' office after swimming lessons, wearing only his speedos. In the adjoining restroom, he would be told to remove his speedos. Brother Laetus would then push his body up against Rick's back, reach around and

grab his genitals. While painfully squeezing his genitals, Brother Laetus would insert one or more fingers into Rick's anus. Rick is unsure if he was anally raped, all he knows is that it was agonising. Rick did not attempt to escape, as he feared he would suffer further if he did.

In putting Rick's case to the Marist Brothers, Kelso Lawyers gathered together an extensive report outlining the extensive and long-term trauma attributable to the abuse. We spoke to Rick's counsellor and organized for a psychiatrist's report about Rick's current condition. In addition to a securing a sincere apology from the Marist Brothers, we also negotiated a substantial financial settlement. ►

\* Name changed to protect privacy

“ Rick was able to tell a senior member of the Marist Brothers about the abuse that he suffered at St Vincent’s, and the long term impact this has had on his life. He received a heartfelt, sincere apology from the senior member of the Marist Brothers. ”

A teacher at St Vincent’s, Brother Jerome, would also beat and sexually abuse Rick. He would sit next to Rick while watching television, covering him with a blanket and then reaching under his pyjamas to fondle his penis. Similar behaviour occurred in the boys’ dormitory at night. If Rick complained or resisted, he and the whole dormitory would be severely punished.

When Rick tried to report the abuse to the police, he was assaulted. The police officer he spoke to, Sergeant Black, grabbed Rick’s hair, slapped his face and threatened to charge him with making false accusations. Rick never sought to formally report the abuse again.

Since this time, Rick has struggled in all aspects of his life. His education suffered dramatically, leaving school in year eight. Even before leaving school Rick believes he learned virtually nearly nothing there, leading to difficulties with literacy. He has abused drugs and alcohol, as have many of the other boys who survived the abuse at the home.

Rick was an alcoholic by his late teens, and turned to illicit substances in a bid to block out his memories. Relationships prove an ongoing challenge. He has not had a long-term relationship for more than 30 years, and he has lost contact with his children. He continues to suffer from extreme anxiety and depression and has attempted suicide several times.

When Rick gradually started to achieve stability in his life, he decided he wanted to do something about the abuse. With the assistance of Kelso Lawyers, Rick’s case was put to the Marist Brothers. We obtained all Rick’s medical records and spoke to his long-term counsellor.

We arranged a psychiatrist to provide a professional report about Rick’s current condition. We showed the Marist Brothers that Rick was still severely traumatised by the abuse and that he needed immediate help and compensation.

We arranged a meeting with a senior member of the Marist Brothers. We arranged travel and accommodation for Rick and his partner to attend the meeting. Rick was able to tell a senior member of the Marist Brothers about the abuse that he suffered at St Vincent’s, and the long term impact this has had on his life.

He received a heartfelt, sincere apology from the senior member of the Marist Brothers. Kelso Lawyers then negotiated a sizeable financial settlement, providing practical assistance in moving forward with his life. Rick looks forward to providing something to his children and grandchildren in his will. He is also going to buy a new car. ◀

# 3 Alex's story

**Alex grew up with devout Catholic parents in suburban Sydney. He attended high school at Marist Brothers, Eastwood in 1965, where Brother Patrick Lawrence was the principal. In his first year of high school he stole a bike from another schoolboy. The police told Alex's parents and his school of his mistake.**

Lawrence summoned Alex to his office to 'reprimand' him. Lawrence shut the door. He told Alex to sit on his lap. The principal proceeded to sexually violate Alex. Alex lost consciousness during the abuse, waking up sometime after the ordeal.

Alex told his parents when he arrived home from school that day. His parents refused to believe that a Catholic Brother would do such a thing. They told Alex they did not want to hear anything more about it.

Kelso's were able to negotiate an unreserved apology from the Marist Brothers for Alex. The settlement has changed Alex's life. Alex's life would never be the same. He changed from a happy, charming and studious youth, to a young man wracked by anger and rebellion.

Traumatised by the abuse, Alex could not maintain relationships and always felt uncomfortable around people. Alex was eventually admitted to hospital for psychiatric episodes during the 1990s. ▶



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**“ The settlement has changed Alex’s life. He began to smile again. Alex’s wife is still overjoyed to see Alex making jokes and laughing again. They shared a celebratory dinner the night of the settlement. ”**

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He attempted suicide on several occasions. During one hospital admission, he disclosed he was being haunted by the “face of the principal”.

Later, Alex received a payout from the Victims Compensation Tribunal (now called the Victims Support Scheme). The sum Alex received was grossly inadequate considering the nature of the abuse by Brother Patrick Lawrence. Alex contacted Kelso’s in 2013 to try to force Marist Brothers to take some responsibility.

Within six months Kelso’s had negotiated a substantial financial settlement from the Marist Brothers and their lawyers. More importantly, Alex received an unreserved written apology from the Provincial of the Marist Brothers in Australia.

The settlement has changed Alex’s life. He began to smile again. Alex’s wife is still overjoyed to see Alex making jokes and laughing again. They shared a celebratory dinner the night of the settlement.

Alex used his compensation to pay off his children’s debts and buy his daughter a new car. He has just come back from a resort holiday with his wife. Alex keeps in touch with the team at Kelso’s, dropping in to say ‘hi’ when he can. It has been a huge thrill for our team to be part of Alex’s life-changing breakthrough. ◀

# 4 Matthew's story

**Matthew\* was a happy child from a supportive, though poor, family. His family struggled financially to provide for his education at St Patrick's Marist Brothers Demonstration School in Dundas, but no doubt felt this was an important sacrifice to make for his future.**

For Matthew, however, this was the beginning of a life of illness, depression and a pervasive sense of worthlessness.

In 1976, Matthew was sexually abused by Brother Jerome Hickman, a teacher at the school. The abuse started at a school camp when Matthew was 10 years old. Brother Jerome was the only teacher with the group of boys at the camp. He would come into the boys' room each night after the lights had been turned out with a torch, to tell ghost stories. In the dark, Brother Jerome would sit on Matthew's bed, make Matthew sit on his lap, and insert his finger into Matthew's anus as he told the stories. Afterwards, Brother Jerome would take Matthew back to his room and forced Matthew to lick the finger that had been inserted into his anus. He would masturbate while Matthew licked his finger, and then force Matthew to clean up the mess that resulted. He would hit Matthew as he was cleaning. This happened on a near nightly basis while the boys were on their school camp.

With the help of Kelso Lawyers, Matthew was able to secure a meaningful apology from the Catholic Church. We were also able to negotiate a substantial financial settlement, which Matthew plans to spend on the education he missed out on as a child.

In the mornings during the camp, Brother Jerome would rub baby oil on Matthew before going to the beach. This would cause terrible sun burn and significant pain. One afternoon at the camp, Brother Jerome watched all of the boys having showers. He then herded the other boys out of the shower, ordering Matthew to stay back as he was "still a dirty little boy".

Brother Jerome proceeded to lather soap all over Matthew, take his own pants off and order Matthew to suck his penis. When he hesitated, Brother Jerome hit Matthew on his badly sunburned back. Brother Jerome then ejaculated in Matthew's mouth, ordering him to swallow it, which he ►

\* Name changed to protect privacy

“ **Matthew hopes to be able to move forward, no longer crippled by his financial circumstances, and begin a series of positive chapters in his life.** ”

did out of fear of being beaten. This made him feel like vomiting. That evening, Brother Jerome anally raped Matthew. Brother Jerome grabbed his throat, threatening him so that he would not tell anyone.

The impact of this abuse was immediate and life changing. Straight away, Matthew started experiencing constant migraines, stomach aches and vomiting. He would continue to be targeted by Brother Jerome, who would humiliate him in front of his classmates with violent punishments, including beatings with cricket bats, being kicked, whipped with a rubber hose and terrifying threats of further abuse.

In the medium term, Matthew's education suffered. He was determined that no one else would be abused as he was and so publically denounced behaviour of teachers that he considered to be paedophilic. If he saw another student being forced to be alone with a teacher, he would force his way into the classroom to ensure the student was not hurt. Matthew was punished for this behaviour by his teachers, who ensured he learned nothing and put him in the least challenging classes. He also developed chronic high-level anxiety, manifesting in constantly shaking hands and serious and painful bouts of diarrhoea. This diarrhoea had an impact on Matthew professionally, as he chose not to pursue opportunities that would mean he could not access a toilet if needed.

Throughout his life, Matthew has struggled with the repercussions of this abuse. A sense of worthlessness and self-loathing dominated him.

Matthew tried to confront his abuser and the Church in his youth and in adulthood. Both times he was left feeling abandoned and unsupported. This added to his sense of confusion and anger.

Throughout his life, Matthew has struggled with the repercussions of this abuse. A sense of worthlessness and self-loathing dominated him. To this day there are constant reminders of his abuse, including waking up on a hot summer's day, being sunburnt and many ordinary daily smells.

He has had multiple relationship breakdowns, difficulty with employment and has tried to commit suicide several times. The fact that Brother Jerome was never prosecuted for his crimes before he died compounded Matthew's trauma.

Working with Matthew, Kelso Lawyers arranged a meeting with a Church official and legal representatives, where he was able to explain directly what had happened to him and how the abuse had affected his life. The Church official provided him with a sincere and meaningful apology. Kelso Lawyers also negotiated substantial ex gratia payment as recognition for the abuse he endured.

Matthew believed the resolution of his claim would finally allow him to pursue the education he was denied as a result of the abuse. Matthew hopes to be able to move forward, no longer crippled by his financial circumstances, and begin a series of positive chapters in his life. ◀

# 5 Margaret's story

**Margaret came from a religious family in the southern suburbs of Sydney. She enjoyed a happy childhood with her parents and siblings. Receiving a Catholic education was an honoured family tradition.**

This all changed when Father Cox moved to the Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Caringbah, where he was assistant to the Parish priest. Father Cox would visit Our Lady of Fatima Primary School and also attend Church. As a religious family, Margaret's parents trusted the charismatic and engaging Father Cox, who befriended the family. They allowed him to take Margaret running at the local oval most school mornings.

Father Cox's sexual abuse of Margaret started in the same year he moved to the area, when Margaret was 11 years old. First there was touching: he would put his hands down the back

of Margaret's pants and touch her bottom, then moving them around to touch the outside of her vagina. This behaviour continued on a regular basis for about four years.

She remembers the first time that he inserted his finger inside her vagina, causing her pain, fear and alarm. In addition to this touching, Father Cox would take Margaret to a private place and remove her clothes. He would then fondle her breasts and vagina, rubbing his penis against her body until he ejaculated. This also began when Margaret was 11 years old. ►



“ **Margaret found the claim process difficult, and at times distressing. After it was over, however, she felt that she was really able to move forward with her life.** ”

As Margaret got older the abuse worsened. When she was 13, Father Cox took her to a private room, rubbing himself against the outside of her vagina until he ejaculated. He would bring brandy with him, and also force her to masturbate him. Margaret found this particularly terrifying due to the fact that there were people outside the room while the abuse occurred.

When Margaret was 15 years old, she was raped by a stranger. With her history of abuse by Father Cox, Margaret did not develop natural protective mechanisms to realise that, when the man pulled down her pants, he was doing something very dangerous and wrong.

She was shocked when the rape commenced, screaming for him to stop. She told Father Cox about what had happened to her. After this event, Father Cox also began to have intercourse with Margaret regularly, until she was 17 years old.

At this point, Margaret fell pregnant to Father Cox. Father Cox encouraged her to ‘deal with’ the problem, and paid \$200 for an abortion. Margaret had desperately wanted to keep the baby. After the abortion, Father Cox ignored and avoided Margaret, causing her extreme distress.

Kelso Lawyers supported Margaret in meeting with Church officials and gaining a meaningful apology and sizeable compensation payment. Margaret notified the Church of the abuse in 1996 however the response she received compounded her trauma.

After Margaret disclosed the abuse to the Church, Father Cox was put ‘on leave’, although he continued to be financially supported by the Church, living in a Church property. He was then ‘retired’ until his death in 2008. Margaret was referred to Towards Healing, but found the process confusing. Ultimately, it amounted to nothing for Margaret.

Margaret also reported the abuse to the police. This resulted in a criminal trial which was a harrowing experience. She felt as though she was the being treated as the perpetrator, being asked confronting questions regarding her adolescence and being accused of trickery in pursuit of compensation. Father Cox’s defence was funded by the Church.

He was accompanied by a priest, while her family was not permitted in the room. The guilty verdict, and sentence of two years periodic detention, was overturned on appeal, on the basis that the appeal judge found it improbable that the abuse had occurred with the regularity that it did. ►

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**“ Margaret was able to meet with Church officials and their legal representatives and explain what had happened to her, and the devastating impact this had had on her life. She received an unreserved apology. ”**

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This episode reinforced what Margaret had been told by Father Cox during the years of abuse: if she told anyone about what was happening it would only cause scandal for her. When Father Cox died in 2008, a glowing obituary was published by the Church. One of the Bishops concelebrating the service had earlier acknowledged that the abuse had occurred. Margaret felt this as yet another insult from the Church.

The trauma of this abuse – repeated and compounded over the years with the responses of the criminal justice system and the Church – has had a dramatic impact on Margaret. She has suffered constantly with feelings of guilt that the abuse was her fault, that she was bad, dirty, and that her feelings of loneliness and worthlessness were deserved. Her emotional development was halted when the abuse started, when she was 11.

This has caused significant ongoing challenges in maintaining relationships with partners and with her family. Margaret has a history of relationships

with destructive men and continues to fear physical intimacy. Situations that remind her of the abuse, such as her son's christening at the same Church, have resulted in severe physical reactions, including stress rashes, headaches and feelings of nausea. She has attempted suicide multiple times.

With the assistance of Kelso Lawyers, Margaret was able to meet with Church officials and their legal representatives and explain what had happened to her, and the devastating impact this had had on her life. She received an unreserved apology which was later reiterated in a written apology. Kelso Lawyers also negotiated a sizeable compensation payment in recognition of the abuse and injuries she suffered.

Margaret found the claim process difficult, and at times distressing. After it was over, however, she felt that she was really able to move forward with her life and was happy that she worked with Kelso Lawyers to achieve such a positive outcome. ◀



## 6 Kerry's story

**Kerry grew up on a family farm in the picturesque heart of the NSW Hunter Valley. Her family was Irish Catholic. Their local Parish Priest was Father Denis McAlinden.**

Father McAlinden was a trusted friend of Kerry's family. McAlinden would regularly call in to Kerry's family home for a 'visit'. Chillingly, he often arrived at the door armed with chocolates and lollies, asking to see Kerry. McAlinden began sexually abusing Kerry when she was just four years old.

His abuse was frequent and brazen. McAlinden chose to violate Kerry in different locations around her family's own farm. His gratification knew no bounds. As Kerry grew older, McAlinden would take her in his car to more secluded areas to carry out rape.

The abuse continued until she was 13 years old. For 10 years of Kerry's young life. The Catholic Church's chosen course of action was to move McAlinden to different parishes throughout Australia and overseas. Throughout this period, he remained officially listed as a priest of the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese.

McAlinden abused victims at every parish. On each occasion he abused little girls. In 2007 the Church publically admitted that McAlinden was a serial child sex abuser. The Church had known about McAlinden's regular sexual abuse for decades. They did nothing. ►

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**“ She has received a written apology from Bishop Bill Wright. Kerry has been able to pay off her mortgage and make plans for an overseas holiday with her son. ”**

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Kelso Lawyers pushed the Catholic Church to concede that it should have protected Kerry. The Church admitted that McAlinden was an evil criminal and unreservedly apologised to Kerry for the abuse.

Father McAlinden died in 2005, before a NSW Special Commission of Inquiry found that senior officials of the Catholic Church had failed to assist police and report suspected child abuse by McAlinden.

Kerry unravelled through adolescence, unable to maintain relationships. She could not bring herself to trust men. She struggled with her self-image. As an adult, Kerry had several violent relationships with men. She continues to deal with her feelings of worthlessness. Kerry was diagnosed with chronic post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. She lives through vivid flashbacks and nightmares. Kerry has self-harmed, attempting suicide on several occasions.

Kerry has been able to pay off her mortgage and make plans for an overseas holiday with her son. The team at Kelsos are proud to have played a part in changing Kerry's life for the better.

Now Kerry is a single mum doing her best to raise her young son. Kerry reached out to Kelso's for help in obtaining some sort of justice. We took on Kerry's cause with passion and commitment. Our team worked tirelessly, demanding compensation from the Church. Within six months, Kelso's had brokered a settlement for Kerry.

The Church acknowledged that they should have protected Kerry. The Church acknowledged to Kerry that Father McAlinden was evil, a criminal. Kerry received an unreserved apology. She broke down with emotion. She began to feel as if she had been set free. It was a turning point in her life.

Kelso's negotiated a substantial financial settlement for Kerry which was paid by the Church within seven days. She has received a written apology from Bishop Bill Wright. Kerry has been able to pay off her mortgage and make plans for an overseas holiday with her son. The team at Kelsos are proud to have played a part in changing Kerry's life for the better. This pride motivates us each and every day as we fight passionately for people like Kerry. ◀



# 7 Jennifer's story

**Jennifer Ingham went through the Catholic Church's Towards Healing process. She was awarded a record lump sum payment at her facilitation meeting in Brisbane in May 2013.**

Peter Kelso acted for Jennifer at the facilitation. Peter encouraged her to speak to the Royal Commission. Jennifer was asked to be a public witness in the Case Study 4 hearing in December 2013. Peter also represented Jennifer at the hearing.

We asked Jennifer if she would consider sharing her experience as a Royal Commission public witness to give some personal insights into the process. If you are unsure about what to expect if you decide to give evidence, Jennifer's story will help to ease some of your uncertainties.

My experience at the Royal Commission's Public Hearing was difficult and confronting. I felt I had been exposed to my core. I was able to put my fear to one side. Why? I knew this was my chance to tell the truth to everyone who needed to hear it. I am so glad I did.

"The experience was so empowering. I still remember the most amazing woman who gave her evidence just before me. Her grace and bravery was heroic. I drew my courage from the way she told her story. I could see her standing tall and she showed me that if she could do it, then I could do it.

I now feel so proud of myself for assisting the Royal Commission by going into the witness box. Hopefully I can encourage you to be brave and speak out. That's why I've decided to tell you my story.

During the Towards Healing process, I met a very kind and good man in my solicitor in Peter Kelso. I realised I was in the hands of a solicitor who absolutely understood my intentions. I knew I could leave Peter to take care of the legal matters so that I could concentrate on myself and my family. He propped me up when I needed it.

Peter's empathy is unquestionable. He understands how hard it is to speak about your abuse. Peter was informative, firm, accessible and above all, compassionate. Yes, Peter looked after the legal side of things, but I was so grateful that he looked after my spirituality as well. The latter was invaluable. Peter fought so hard on my behalf at the facilitation meeting to achieve a successful outcome.

Peter and his team are strong advocates for victims like you and me. Kelsos are passionate about the need to expose those criminals within institutions who violate and abuse children." ►

**“ I feel different now, in a good way. For the first time since I was 15 years old, I no longer have to look over my shoulder. I no longer have a secret. I no longer feel frightened to tell the truth. My friends are here to support me. ”**

When Peter encouraged me to write a submission to the Royal Commission to help others understand the process for a witness, I was grateful for the chance to help. Peter and his team are strong advocates for victims like you and me. Kelsos are passionate about the need to expose those criminals within institutions who violate and abuse children. They are even more passionate about assisting victims like me to seek redress.

Peter and his law firm want to make an impact, to make sure that the recommendations of the Royal Commission will lead to law reform. To make sure that victims receive the compensation they deserve. To make sure this era of depravity being exposed does not ever return. I now know that it is vital for victims like me to tell our story to make sure this never happens again.

I feel different now, in a good way. For the first time since I was 15 years old, I no longer have to look over my shoulder. I no longer have a secret. I no longer feel frightened to tell the truth. My friends are here to support me.

Even journalists at the Royal Commission commended me for my dignity, acknowledging the strength it must have taken to stand tall and speak the truth.

I cannot begin to explain the intense love and support I have received from my siblings over the last 12 months. The Royal Commission hearing has reunited us. Exposing yourself so deeply can

hurt those who love you. My husband and my child showed such unconditional love. Two very special friends never left my side. I knew they cared for me deeply. I knew they believed the truth of the depravities and cover-ups within the Church. They knew my story had to be told.

I wasn't prepared for the impact that the hearing had on my friends. Most of my friends had only limited knowledge of what happened to me. But after giving evidence at the Royal Commission, word travelled fast. The support I received was positively overwhelming. Even strangers sent me messages to say "you are doing the right thing ... be proud".

Sadly and surprisingly three good friends have abandoned me after hearing my story. I feel that they just don't know what to say. I am hopeful that time will heal the rift that has been caused. It is important for victims to understand the impact this decision will have on your life.

The staff at the Royal Commission were incredible. All communications and consultations were respectful. I was supported and informed about every detail throughout every process. The team were accessible at all times leading up to the hearing dates – just a phone call or an email away.

As well as appearing as a witness I also had two private sessions with Commissioners before the public hearing. The Commissioners and Peter's team put in so much effort to make sure I did not feel daunted before these meetings. ►

**“ I am very proud and satisfied that I went to the public hearing for the Royal Commission. I am extremely appreciative of the support I received from my family, my legal team and the staff at the Royal Commission. ”**

The level of care I received was heart-warming. I could not have dreamt of anything better. The Royal Commission took care of my expenses including my flights and accommodation. All of my arrangements were taken care of so that my attendance at the hearing cost me nothing.

I was scared, but only because I wanted to make sure my intentions to share my experience would come across correctly. I was wrapped in a blanket of support.

The staff from the Royal Commission allocated me a private room and any comforts I needed during my time at the hearing.

The most distressing experience of the hearing was being cross examined by the barrister acting for one of the Priests named in my statement. He challenged an aspect of my statement. This was horrifying. I knew he had a job to do but he could have been gentler in his approach. I became teary on many occasions in the witness box.

I was represented by my barrister Mr Richard Royle. Richard was extraordinary and I felt protected by him. He made sure my cross examination experience did not negatively influence my role at the hearing. I would recommend that anyone asked to be a witness at the public hearing be represented by a solicitor and a barrister. The Commonwealth Government pay for this and it is well worth it.

I found the other lawyers at the hearing very respectful. The Catholic Bishop in my hearing

reassured me privately that he did not support the treatment I had experienced in cross examination by the Priest's barrister. The Bishop commended me face to face for my courage. This meant a lot to me.

In general, there is an aura at the hearing. You get a feeling that the purpose of the Royal Commission enjoys wide public support. As a public witness you feel that you are supporting an organisation which is doing the right thing.

I have now left the intensity of last December behind me. I found the weeks after the public hearing draining. I kept to myself. I simply did not want to see anyone. I realised I just needed to ride out the sadness, the exhaustion, the anger, the relief and the "I'm so glad I did it" emotions.

Throughout the hearing, and afterwards, I leaned on the tools I had learnt from my psychologist. This helped me understand what I was feeling and why I was feeling it. I knew I needed to ride it out. It was not easy. But that doesn't matter now. I did it.

I am very proud and satisfied that I went to the public hearing for the Royal Commission. I am extremely appreciative of the support I received from my family, my legal team and the staff at the Royal Commission.

If you are thinking about giving evidence as a witness at the Royal Commission, I can tell you it won't be easy. But I know for sure that if I could do it, you can do it too. ◀

# 8 Jane's story

**Jane was the youngest of four children, born into a family devoted to the Catholic faith. Father Robert Hickman had been a close friend of Jane's parents for many years. Jane and her siblings regarded Father Hickman as family, even calling him 'Uncle Bob'.**

Jane suffers from a rare genetic condition, myoclonic dystonia, that is managed with various medications, some of which have sedative qualities.

Jane and her parents would regularly travel from their home in Cooma to Sydney for appointments with a medical specialist. Quite often, the family would stay with Father Hickman at the Presbytery in Bellmore.

On 23 January 1992 when Jane was 11, she and her mother travelled to Sydney to see her doctor. As usual, Jane and her mother arranged to stay with Father Hickman at the Presbytery. On this evening, Jane's mother had made plans to dine with her sister in the City. Jane was feeling unwell after seeing the doctor, so she stayed with Father Hickman while her mother went out.

As she prepared for bed, Jane took her medications, which included Mogadon, a highly sedative drug with significant motor impairing qualities. Just before taking her medication Jane was called on by Hickman who had just finished showering. He requested that she apply ointment to his back. After handing her a jar he lay face down, naked on the bed directing Jane to apply the cream.

Hickman instructed Jane to lie in his bed as he would carry her to her room after she fell asleep. Jane was anxious, but affected by the medication and although confused she obeyed Hickman's orders. Jane woke with terror as Hickman climbed into the bed and began touching her. Jane desperately told Hickman to stop, but she was trapped because of her sedative medication. After sexually violating Jane, Hickman told her to keep silent, stating that people would not support her claims of his sexual abuse because "I'm a Catholic Priest and you're just a kid, so they won't believe you".

Kelso's were able to negotiate a compensation settlement of \$200,000 for Jane, as well as ongoing counselling costs and a written apology.

The consequences of the abuse were irreparable for Jane. The symptoms of her myoclonic dystonia became worse. In 1997, Jane was referred to the school counsellor after a series of unexplained crying fits. At age 18, Jane disclosed the abuse for the first time, initially to a trusted teacher and shortly afterwards to her parents. They believed their daughter wholeheartedly, dumbfounded by Hickman's sexual abuse and betrayed by a friend they took into their trust. ►

“ ***The Catholic Church were finally able to understand the enormity of child sexual abuse. Payment of compensation is just one aspect of their duty to victims. A heartfelt apology delivered in a timely manner is often more important.*** ”

The following year, Jane and her father met with officials from St Patrick's Catholic Church in Cooma to report the abuse. Representatives from the Archdiocese revealed that Hickman had admitted to the abuse and other victims had contacted the police.

Jane was directed to the Church's Towards Healing program. Father Brian Lucas and the Church agreed to cover the cost of counselling and contributed \$1800 towards the costs of a pilgrimage Jane had planned. Father Lucas made it clear that "this is by no means an admission of guilt and this should in no way be seen as compensation". Nothing further was offered by the Church.

More than a decade later, Jane and her family contacted the Archdiocese to gain some sort of compensation. Jane and her family met with the head of the Professional Standards Office, Michael Salmon. The Church once again offered to cover the cost of counselling for Jane, but nothing more.

By this time, Jane had suffered for 17 years with chronic depression and anxiety. Her capacity to hold down a stable job was crippled by her mental health issues. In 2013, Jane registered her interest to tell her story to the Royal Commission. Just months later, Jane had a private session with a Commissioner.

Around this time, Jane reached out to Kelso Lawyers to approach the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney for compensation.

The Catholic Church were finally able to understand the enormity of child sexual abuse. Payment of compensation is just one aspect of their duty to victims. A heartfelt apology delivered in a timely manner is often more important.

In October 2013 Jane, her father and Peter Kelso met with Monsignor John Usher and his legal representatives in Sydney. Monsignor Usher was visibly distressed by the Catholic Church's inept response. Jane accepted \$200,000 from the Church and an agreement that they pay for ongoing counselling costs and issue a written apology. Monsignor Usher also told Jane that her family would be flown to Sydney to receive a formal apology in person from Cardinal George Pell.

The relief that came with the compensation and apology was significant for Jane. Although she received some semblance of justice, Jane still struggles with mental illness. Sadly, Jane attempted suicide in November 2013. She is now receiving regular psychological support to ensure that any problems are detected long before she feels so desperate again.

In Jane's case, the Catholic Church were finally able to understand the enormity of child sexual abuse. Payment of compensation is just one aspect of their duty to victims. A heartfelt apology delivered in a timely manner is often more important. The need to finance the victim's ongoing counselling costs is so crucial and Kelsos are proud to have played a part in affording Jane the medical care that she deserves. ◀

# 9 Brett's story

**Brett\* was born to a British merchant seaman who was in Australia illegally. When his parents separated, his mother took his sister, and his father took Brett. Brett's father was away for extended periods of time while working on the high seas.**

The Department of Child Welfare issued an ultimatum that he either care for his son, or Brett would be placed at Alkira Boys Home at Indooroopilly run by the Salvation Army (Alkira). At just five years old, Brett was admitted to Alkira, where he would remain for the next six years.

At Alkira, Major Victor Bennett was intimidating to the young Brett. He had a big husky voice, a large nose and curly hair. Major Bennett's favourite assault was to squeeze Brett's buttocks as he was walking past.

Brett was physically assaulted in other ways on many occasions. He was beaten for any minor misdemeanour. However, the assaults were not limited to disciplinary measures. Lt Rogers and Major Bennett would take Brett into their office and force him to take his clothes off. They said they were checking him for disease.

They would grope his genitals. Then they would take their own uniforms off. They would beat Brett in their underwear, or while naked.

They would use their hands, canes or a belt. Then they would take turns sodomising him. They would rape him as punishment for trying to run away from Alkira. After these beatings, there would be welts all over Brett's body. They would make Brett stand naked in front of the other children to show them the welts. This occurred on numerous occasions.

Brett believed there was no point in reporting the abuse to anyone in a position of authority because it would only result in more beatings. He was also embarrassed to talk about the sexual abuse by Lt Rogers and Major Bennett.

When Brett discovered that he was not alone in his abuse, he contacted Kelso Lawyers. We put together a comprehensive statement about his abuse and negotiated with the Salvation Army on his behalf. Brett's education suffered as a result of the abuse. ►

\* Name changed to protect privacy

“ ***He is going to grow himself a long grey beard and take up surfing. Brett is leading a carefree life with the sun in his face, the wind in his hair, and no more dark thoughts to worry him.*** ”

Brett later taught himself how to read and write during his time in prison. Brett was institutionalised at several other juvenile justice institutions and prisons.

At age 17, the Department located Brett's father in the UK. The Department paid half the airfare for his travel to the UK. When he landed in the UK, he discovered that his father was an alcoholic and the pair often fought. Brett struggled to keep a job and eventually turned to a life of crime and drugs.

When he was last discharged from prison he decided to return to Australia where he tried to get a job. He worked in various low-skilled and low-paying jobs, trying to eke out an existence. He tried to find his mother and sister but was unsuccessful. Brett decided never to get involved in drugs or crime again. Although, he never established a long-term relationship with another person.

Brett continued to struggle with his thoughts of the past, although he never had much success with counselling. He considered suicide over many years and once attempted to take his own life.

In 2013, when Brett saw news reports about other victims of abuse at the Salvation Army homes coming forward, Brett decided he would too.

Until then, he thought he was the only victim out there. Brett contacted Kelso Lawyers. In a sensitive and respectful way, we put together a comprehensive statement about his time at Alkira. We wrote to the Salvation Army on his behalf and demanded compensation.

Brett is a new man. He bought a caravan and set off on a trip around Australia ... Brett is leading a carefree life with the sun in his face, the wind in his hair, and no more dark thoughts to worry him.

We obtained his admission records from his time at Alkira. We explained to him that Major Bennett featured heavily at the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and that Brett was not the only victim. We obtained his medical records and showed the Salvation Army that Brett was still experiencing the trauma and required help and compensation.

We arranged a meeting with a senior member of the Salvation Army to meet with Brett in Sydney. The Salvation Army flew Brett to Sydney and provided him with accommodation for the meeting.

Brett received an apology, followed by a written apology. He received a substantial financial settlement to help him to rebuild his life. We negotiated with the Salvation Army to pay for some of Brett's long overdue dental expenses.

Brett is a new man. He bought a caravan and set off on a trip around Australia. He also bought a metal detector and intends to become the oldest Australian man to find a gold nugget.

He is going to grow himself a long grey beard and take up surfing. Brett is leading a carefree life with the sun in his face, the wind in his hair, and no more dark thoughts to worry him. He still cannot thank us enough for the new lease on life we have given him. ◀

## About Kelso Lawyers

Kelso Lawyers are specialists in historical child abuse cases. Founder and director, Peter Kelso was himself physically and emotionally abused as a child while a State ward.

Now a lawyer, Peter has made it his mission to provide compassionate and supportive legal representation to child abuse survivors seeking compensation. You can hear Peter tell his own story of abuse and recovery on our website [kelsolawyers.com/au/peter-kelso](http://kelsolawyers.com/au/peter-kelso).

Kelso Lawyers have offices in Sydney and Newcastle, but represent abuse survivors across Australia. Peter is supported by an expert legal team who share his passion for helping survivors to seek justice and compensation from the institutions that abused the children in their care.

***While no amount of money can erase the harm caused by child abuse, a compensation payment can ease the pressure and help to make life more comfortable in the here and now...***

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