

Today is a big day for me.

It is the day that a group of strangers will try to put a price on my childhood.

It is the day that you get to tell me what amount of money will be able to compensate for the broken relationships I have with people I love, for the physical and mental health problems I still endure every single day, for the night terrors and flashbacks that I live through every single night.

I was born into a family who couldn't protect me from a violent and alcoholic father. My mother would have if she could, but she had a hard enough time keeping herself alive because of his relentless beatings. When DOCS took me away from my family, they were supposed to do a better job of protecting me, but instead I was exposed to a whole new world of sexual, physical and psychological abuse, as well as ending up in the grips of a paedophile ring.

I have an older sister Elizabeth, an older brother Kenny and a younger brother Kevin. Kenny and I were both victims of abuse, while Elizabeth and Kevin managed to escape it.

Elizabeth went on to become a Manager of McDonalds and a Manager of a Woolworths Petrol Station. She owned her own home before her divorce.

Kevin also found his way in life as a Manager of various Woolworth Stores. He owns his own place and has an investment property.

Kenny is on unemployment benefits. He doesn't own anything.

In 1996, I was happily married to Lorinda, a nurse. We had two children, and I was working as a Transport Officer for DOCS. We had plans to buy our own place.

When the first Royal Commission started I was asked to give evidence. From then on, memories of abuse flooded back and took over my life. My mental health rapidly declined and my relationships began to suffer.

What were you doing when you were 12 years old? Can you picture yourself at that age?

I can.

When I was 12 years old, a social worker appointed by DOCS taught me how to sexually please a man.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

*Because of your clients* I have attended two Royal Commissions.

I have endured approximately 30 interviews with Police.

I have seen 25 counsellors, psychologists and psychiatrists.

I have been admitted to psych wards four or five times that I can remember.

I lost my marriage and have fractured relationships with my two beautiful children.

I have felt helpless and grief-filled as countless friends who were also abused, sometimes by the same abusers, have taken their own lives or have overdosed on the drugs that were helping dull their memories of their abuse.

I have told my story over and over and over, having to prove time and time again that I have been telling the truth – each time reliving the abuses I suffered.

I have attempted to take my own life a number of times, and I have somehow managed to talk myself out of it many more times.

I call Lifeline regularly, sometimes several times in one night, or early in the morning when I wake up screaming and fearful following a nightmare of being gagged, bound and raped when I was as young as eight years old.

My nightmares aren't just nightmares. They are memories of the things that happened to me because of your clients, who had a responsibility to protect me.

I never got a proper education. You try learning how to spell when the teacher is raping you on the weekends and selling you to strangers who do the same.

I still struggle with reading and writing, and this limits what kind of work I can get and how much support I have been able to provide my children during their schooling.

It limits my income and my ability to own anything and have financial security as I head closer to my retirement age.

I haven't had the same opportunities that I would have had if your clients didn't play their roles in the abuse I suffered. I haven't known peace like normal people sometimes know peace.

There is no amount of money that can replace all that I have lost. And so I can only hope for a sum that makes a difference:

- that will ensure that your client considers very carefully before they allow this to happen to another child,
- that reflects a level of accountability and an acknowledgement of your client's failure to protect me,
- and that allows me to feel some financial security as I move forward with my life and continue to live with the effects of the abuse I endured.

I can only hope that you consider these things as you represent my abusers during today's settlement.

As a victim, I ask you to stop and think; if it was your son or daughter sitting in front of you today, what would you want for them?

Please accept this copy of my book, which details what I have suffered at the hands of your clients.

All I need to hear from you today are the words:

*Thank you for your story.*

Today is a big day for me, because today I finally get some acknowledgement of the hell I have suffered and its impact on my life.

*Raymond Leary - 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017*