

I have no memory of when the abuse started but my father had been raping me for many years. I was aware this was also happening to the sister older than I and the sister younger. He was also abusing the youngest girl but I was not aware of this as a child. The abuse continued through secondary school and a horror year when I was forced to leave boarding school at [REDACTED] and return to [REDACTED].

I lived for the day when I would tell my mother and she would protect me. I also thought there had been some mistake and I would soon be rescued. I always knew this was very wrong and detested any contact with him. I wrote to him twice telling him it must stop but the consequences were terrifying. I was told if my mother knew it would kill her. She had asthma and was either resting in bed or visiting her parents in the city.

Even now at [REDACTED] years of age I am distressed to write this. The sense of powerlessness and being different has never left me. I will often feel all wrong and have to leave. I cannot join in conversations as I do not have a shared experience with others. I am deeply ashamed and try so hard to remember how it started, perhaps I am somehow to blame. I can remember when I started to menstruate and he said we now had to be very careful. I still have this sense we were somehow in partnership.

The year on the farm after school was just dreadful. My elder brother was banished and then the eldest sister. We pretended we didn't see them. My elder sister simply bought a boyfriend home. I think if nothing else I want the commission to see that incest is devastating, there is no happy ending. I am appalled when I read newspaper reports of "sexual abuse" by a family member. Rape in any form is abhorrent but when it is by a family member the child has no-one. No loving family to support and no foundation of self-worth. I have even read of a case recently where the father got a suspended sentence.

I went [REDACTED] and still he raped me. I went to the police and he admitted he was raping his [REDACTED] daughters. He was sentenced to four years. One year for all the misery and horror I endured for so many years and now still feel there is something wrong with me.

Of course there was no happy ending. I have no memory of when I saw my mother after he was arrested. My sister told me she states it was between our father and us, nothing to do with her. I certainly felt she was angry with me and we no longer had contact. I have tried to reconnect to my [REDACTED] brothers but it has become very clear they blame me and I have had to leave very quickly as I feared for my safety with two of them.

It has also been impossible to have a relationship with any of my sisters. One who is very close to our mother seems to not recognise the abuse. I have not been able to form a relationship with my eldest sister. I have [REDACTED] brothers and [REDACTED] sisters and I am estranged from them all since my reporting to the police and know I will die feeling it is somehow my fault.

I was cleaning out the wardrobe some years ago and came across some document. It was my parent's divorce papers which named me as the co-respondent. This I also wish to stress to the commission. I have no memory of how I received these papers, again I have a tremendous feeling of shame. We are gaining insight into repressed memory but I think it is so important to recognise this during interviews and take account of feelings.

Thank-you for the opportunity to write this submission. Please consider from the child's point of view and realise not all mother's and families act in the best interests of the child.



Part 2 of submission by [REDACTED]

I have two documents relating to my abuse. One is my parent's divorce paper where I am named as co-respondent and the other is the court paper relating to my father's trial.

It is evident in both papers that my sister's and I were not considered at all. Our mother in court simply stated her daughters were settled and she wished to care for her husband. The effect of a mother wishing to care for her daughters' rapist was not questioned and to this day distresses me. I was therefore, at [REDACTED] years of age, alone. There was no one to speak for me, no mother, grandmother or aunt. I had endured over a decade of abuse and after my disclosure it was decided I was "alright"

Our mother never spoke of the abuse and I was [REDACTED] years of age before I saw a woman on television speaking about incest and so at last I was able to try to come to grips to why I felt so different and distressed. I became estranged from the whole family and when I tried to reconnect with my sisters' it was very clear my brothers' blamed me and two threatened my life.

I then endured an extremely distressing period when I was aware my father was trying to find me.

Even now at [REDACTED] years of age it would be such a comfort to know some-one was concerned for me or even recognised the enormous harm.

I have [REDACTED] adult children and they know my family was abusive and that is why we do not have contact with their many uncles, aunts and cousins. However I have never been able to tell them specifically what occurred. I have this nightmare that they will find these two documents and also conclude I was some-how at fault. Perhaps they will connect with their cousins in the future and hear that it was my choice to distance myself. How can I explain that I simply could not accept the silence.

I would never want these documents destroyed, it is how child victims were regarded at that time. However, I have a dream these legal and court documents of child victims could be some-how rectified to reflect the innocent role of the child. It is a grave injustice, in this day of freedom of information, to have documents which reflect so poorly on child victims. I do not wish, on my death bed to be distressed about how my descendants will view me.

Thank-you again for the opportunity to express my on-going distress.

[REDACTED]