

# Two Professing Women tell their Stories

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This is a combined letter. Two women in their 50's, one from Australia, one from New Zealand. They are related by marriage and friends by choice, forever united due to csa in their past. Their stories should be rare, especially in an organisation where the whole purpose and ethos is centred around Godly things. Their stories should be rare even from just a human standpoint. Yet, as we all know by now, their stories have become familiar, they're almost the norm these days.

One of the children was about 12 years old when she jumped innocently into bed with her grandfather. It wasn't long before his hands were inside her underwear. She froze then managed to escape the further harm that had been done to her cousins and perhaps her sisters. Like the other perpetrator, this man was much respected, an elder, he even had a child in the work. No one suspected what was going on and even if they had, they would not have said anything as that is the culture of the church. Ignore it. It is not happening if we ignore it.

The other child was swimming in a public swimming pool with her family. The father of another family sat her on his knee and asked if she could feel "that". She had no idea what "that" was but an instinct deep in her soul told her this was incredibly wrong. He caught up with her again some time later and tried to pull her underwear down. Again she escaped before further harm could be inflicted. This man was the elder of a church, he had a meeting in his home and he was revered by all. None suspected what was going on and even if they had, they would not have said anything as that is the culture of the church. Ignore it. It is not happening if we ignore it.

One of these children experienced another trauma at the age of 18. She was touched inappropriately by a male worker. Maybe he doesn't even remember this interaction but she does. She had buried it deep in her memory until it came crashing back to her when she read a recent account of this same man. He is now out of the work due to his extremely disgraceful behaviour in a foreign country.

Through the years these women have tried to keep their experiences as children in perspective. They've told themselves that others were harmed worse, even by the men who harmed them. Yet those encounters have affected their entire lives. Choices they've made, the way they brought up their own children, their mental health and on and on. CSA continues to cause harm all throughout life. These women will not be silenced anymore. They both still attend meetings and they both are willing to do everything in their power to ensure that not one more child is harmed by powerful men within the church.