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Class Action Launched Over Alleged Severe Physical Abuse at St Virgil's College in 1970s and 1980s

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A class action lawsuit is being prepared against the Christian Brothers, alleging severe physical abuse at St Virgil's College in Hobart, Tasmania, during the 1970s and 1980s. Former students claim a culture of fear and harsh corporal punishment marred their time at the Catholic boys' school.

This legal action follows a recent settlement and seeks accountability for systemic failures, raising questions about institutional oversight.

The lawsuit, led by survivors like Callum (a pseudonym), targets the Christian Brothers, who ran St Virgil's College during the period. Callum's earlier case, settled mid-trial in March 2025, detailed brutal physical abuse by teachers and a volunteer sports coach, including beatings in a notorious "crying room," as reported by ABC News. Callum described a "culture of fear," with corporal punishment administered by figures like Brother Tom Edmunds, who he said was so violent he feared for his life. The class action, supported by Moody Law, aims to represent potentially hundreds of former students, alleging widespread physical abuse and institutional negligence.

St Virgil's, founded in 1911 by the Christian Brothers, was known for its strict discipline. Former students recall a "sadistic" element to punishments, with one, Jules Witek, describing teacher Bob Hamilton's use of the strap as particularly cruel, though others defended him as part of the era's norms. The school's response has been mixed; in 2024, it renamed a building named after Hamilton following a review, a move criticized by his family as unfair. Lawyer Angela Sdrinis, representing Callum, told ABC News the adversarial legal system retraumatizes survivors, underscoring the need for a class action to streamline justice.

The case highlights broader concerns about accountability in religious institutions. Posts on X reflect public outrage, with some calling for stronger oversight of schools like St Virgil's. Critics argue the Labor government's regulatory frameworks have failed to address historical abuses effectively, leaving survivors to fight prolonged legal battles. The class action could set a precedent for addressing institutional abuse,

ensuring victims' voices are heard while challenging the legacy of unchecked power in Catholic education.