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**NSW POLICE SERVICE**

Local Area Command, Port Stephens.

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Newcastle City LAC

**ISSUE:**

Allegations of child sexual abuse and cover-up within the Maitland Newcastle Diocese of the Catholic Church.

**BACKGROUND:**

In 1999 Detective Mark WATTERS and I investigated priest Denis McALINDEN following allegations by AE that he had sexually assaulted her as a child. The Catholic Diocese disclosed that McALINDEN was believed to be in Ireland and we were given an assurance to be notified upon his return. Incredibly the church was not in contact with McALINDEN. We took the assurances on face value and swore a warrant for McALINDEN's arrest.

In 2002 I commenced unrelated investigations of priests James FLETCHER and Desmond HARRIGAN. In 2003 I interviewed priest Vincent RYAN in Junee Gaol regarding suspected links to FLETCHER, HARRIGAN and others alleged to be involved with paedophilia in the Hunter area.

Soon after commencing investigations I learned that Bishop Michael MALONE and Vicar General James SAUNDERS had alerted FLETCHER to the police investigation and disclosed the identity of the alleged victim. This negatively impacted on the investigation and was reported to the ODPP for consideration of charges for hindering a police investigation; however it was elected not to proceed.

Bishop MALONE then refused a request by me to remove FLETCHER from his parish or restrain him from visiting schools. In defiance of my request MALONE extended FLETCHER's parish to include both the Catholic High School and Catholic Primary School in Lochinvar.

I later obtained statements from MALONE, SAUNDERS, HARRIGAN and priest William BURSTON. All had met with FLETCHER following the allegations. All those statements were remarkable for their author's poor recollection of critical conversations and smacked strongly of collusion and concealment.

It was intended to execute a search warrant for pornographic images on FLETCHER's presbytery; however I learnt FLETCHER removed a quantity of homosexual pornographic videos and magazines before this could happen. I suspected this material contained some images of young boys as mentioned by a victim. Undoubtedly this happened directly as a result of MALONE and SAUNDERS' forewarning.

I was told by a source that FLETCHER passed the mentioned pornography to priest Des HARRIGAN. HARRIGAN was heavily intoxicated when I confronted him in the presbytery at Raymond Terrace. He admitted being given homosexual pornographic magazines and videos by FLETCHER, but denied it contained illegal images of children. He claimed he owned the items and had inadvertently left them in FLETCHER's presbytery. He also said he had destroyed all these items but could give no plausible explanation why he decided to do so.

As the investigation progressed a priest and nun approach me separately to provide statements and information. That nun was later ostracised by her Order of St Joseph at Loughinvar for assisting police and forced to leave. She has not returned to the church. The priest disclosed to me details of inner workings of the diocese and what he referred to as 'the old boys club' of Hunter priests and his suspicions. He was pivotal in having another victim come forward with critical evidence that was later instrumental in FLETCHER's ultimate conviction.

The assistance rendered by this 'good priest' led to a series of clashes between him and senior clergy including Bishop MALONE. This priest suffered considerable stress from his treatment and was moved to Sydney. He has since elected to leave the priesthood and return to another profession. I have remained in contact with both these individuals who are highly critical of the silence within the church concerning child sexual abuse.

I was aware that Bishop Leo CLARK and Priest Patrick COTTER had been interviewed by police some years prior concerning alleged concealment of Vincent RYAN's activities. Sufficient evidence existed against COTTER but it was decided not to proceed purely on the basis of his age and health. I understand that the evidence was not in question.

Detective Ann JOY and I also spoke to Leo CLARK during my investigation. We predominately discussed FLETCHER and RYAN and his possible knowledge of their activities. I then asked about McALINDEN who I still believed to be overseas. (I later learned he had already returned to Australia and was residing in a Catholic facility near Perth.) I asked CLARK, "An alleged victim of Denis McALINDEN has told us that she believes the church is aware of at least two other alleged sexual assault victims of this priest. Do you have any knowledge of that?" He said, "No. You would have to ask Michael MALONE about that."

Redacted at Commissioner's direction

I was becoming disturbed by the number of priests in the region alleged to have been involved in sexually abusing children. They were all in adjoining parishes and giving one another support. This was compounded by senior clergy interfering in investigations and potentially concealing their knowledge of crimes and admonishing those prepared to speak out. All of this caused me considerable concern.

I recorded most of this information in a number of COPS Intelligence Reports for dissemination to State Crime Command. I also forwarded two reports expressing concern that a paedophile ring possibly existed in the Maitland Newcastle Diocese and should be investigated. I have never been contacted in respect to my reports. Since that time Maitland Newcastle Priests NP3 Tom BRENNAN, NP4 and NP have also been charged with child sex offences. I understand that others may also be under investigation.

In 2003-4 I also forwarded a series of reports and complaints to Ann BARWICK of the NSW Ombudsman's Office which conducted an investigation. I have been told their report was critical of the church but the findings cannot be made public. Nevertheless this process finally saw FLETCHER stood down by the church and prevented from accessing schools.

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In late 2005 I was advised by the Catholic Church that Denis McALINDEN was critically ill in a Catholic Retirement Home in Subiaco, Perth. I made inquiries regarding his possible extradition but learnt he was not able to travel and he died two weeks later. Despite the church knowing McALINDEN's whereabouts for some time I was not informed until his death was imminent.

COMMENT:

Earlier this year Joanne McCARTHY of the Newcastle Herald contacted me. She indicated a woman; <sup>AJ</sup> had confided in her allegations of being sexually assaulted in the 1960's by Catholic Priest Denis McALINDEN. <sup>AJ</sup> allegedly had knowledge of a number of other women who had also been sexually assaulted including McALINDEN!

Although I had never met with: <sup>AJ</sup> I had come across her name in 2003-4 when investigating FLETCHER. I was told <sup>AJ</sup> was reluctant to speak to police as her knowledge implicated a number of high ranking clergy in 'covering up' known paedophile priests. She stated I was the only police officer she would speak with as she had apparently spoken to victims of paedophile priests and their families with whom I have dealt with. I agreed to meet with. <sup>AJ</sup>

REDACTED

REDACTED

REDACTED

<sup>AK</sup> is one of M. She provided me with a number of documents and a statement outlining McALINDEN sexually abusing her and her sister <sup>AL</sup> have also been sexually abused by McALINDEN and have never got over the trauma. <sup>AK</sup> still feels guilty at not being able to protect <sup>AN + AV</sup>.

REDACTED

Redacted at Commissioner's direction

Documents in possession of ~~AK~~ and the statement of ~~AJ~~ confirm without a doubt that retired Bishop Leo CLARK knew of a number of McALINDEN's victims. He knew of the serious nature of the abuse. He also knew that victims had complained of their suffering to various clergy under his direct supervision. When Detective JOY and I asked,

*"An alleged victim of Denis McALINDEN has told us that she believes the church is aware of at least two other alleged sexual assault victims of this priest. Do you have any knowledge of that?"*  
He said, "No. You would have to ask Michael MALONE about that."

Clearly he told us a blatant lie and concealed the names of victims known to the church. By doing so he concealed crimes that McALINDEN committed and his admissions of abuse. Worse still is the fact that CLARK knew McALINDEN was still at large and had returned to Australia with the potential to continue committing his crimes.

During my service I have had to speak to hundreds of victims of sexual assault. All of them are disturbing. Sexual assaults of children are the most abhorrent and abuse of children by the clergy is amongst the worst. To conceal such a crime is akin to condoning that behaviour. I do not believe such conduct can ever, or should ever be forgiven by the law.

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I have seen the pain of the victims of child sexual abuse within the Church. I have visited victims in psychiatric institutions and seen the damage it has caused their families. I spoke to a member of the Newcastle ODPP who broke down crying and was unable to continue reading a victim's statement, apologising to me when she requested to be removed from the case.

I took another statement from a mother who was unaware of years of sexual abuse her son was suffering at the hands of her family priest. As a teenager he came home in a drunken stupor. When he attempted to hang himself in the family barn his mother screamed hysterically trying to take the weight of his bending legs until another son arrived to cut him down. In desperation the family called their priest for the boy to stay overnight in his presbytery with the aim of counselling him when sobered. This priest took advantage of the situation and buggerised the boy again that night. This same priest, James FLETCHER is one of those whom fellow clergy went to such extraordinary lengths to protect.

Reprisals are another distasteful aspect of sexual abuse within the church. Some have reported to me having had their cars damaged and eggs thrown at their homes following guilty verdicts after a family member disclosed abuse. Most victims' families are devout Catholics who are surrounded by friends until someone comes forward with allegations of abuse. The family is ostracised within their community and particularly at church. They are no longer spoken to and made to feel unwelcome. They have backs blatantly turned on them until they no longer attend. Most believe this is silently condoned by other priests and perpetuates the silence of abuse in fear of speaking out.

### RECOMMENDATION:

I believe there is sufficient evidence to conduct a full and comprehensive investigation into the conduct of the Maitland Newcastle Diocese of the Catholic Church. There is more than enough evidence to put before the Attorney General under section 316 of the Crimes Act to prosecute a number of clergy based on evidence already cited. I strongly believe that further investigation will only enhance such a brief and possibly disclose other offences and or offenders.

AE revealed that in the 1990's she also told the church of her abuse but nothing was done and the police were not told until she decided to do so herself. Sadly AE died in 2007 after years of counselling and psychiatric treatment resulting from her abuse. Her husband, BD spoke to me this year and is more than prepared to assist with any police inquiry as the failure of the church to act has impacted negatively on the lives of his entire family. The damage done by such abuse and concealment is enormous. The passage of time should never preclude the New South Wales Police Force from protecting these families and bring persons to justice for such crimes. If we fail to investigate and prosecute such conduct the potential for it to continue remains unaltered.

Over more than a decade of investigating members of the Maitland Newcastle clergy I have built up an excellent knowledge base. I also have an extensive network of contacts within and outside the church. I have also built up a reputation and trust among victims and their families as evidenced by:

AJ approach to speak with me. I have spoken to Sister Paula REDGROVE who has also indicated her preparedness to speak with me and provide a statement of her knowledge. I remain objective but passionate to assist with any inquiry or investigation.



In view of the number of priests charged over the past decade within the Maitland Newcastle Diocese I am requesting consideration be given to the establishment of a task force to undertake a full investigation. I submitted similar reports in 2004 only to see more cases of abuse disclosed since that time. My own experiences coupled with recent evidence strongly indicates that paedophilia by the clergy is widespread in the Hunter and is being concealed by experienced and senior staff within the diocese. Without intervention these crimes are likely to continue.

In order to protect victims and put a stop to these ongoing crimes I respectfully ask that this request be given favourable consideration.



Peter R FOX  
Detective Chief Inspector  
Crime Manager  
Port Stephens Command

1. Port Stephens Commander. The recommendations of Det Chief Inspector Fox are supported. Given the nature of these allegations, these matters appear beyond the scope of an LAC investigation & could be more appropriately dealt with by a task force. Referred to region.

*John Steph. h/Commander*  
27/11/10

2. Operations Manager Northern Region

Newcastle LAC have been allocated to investigate allegations that Malone, REDACTED and others failed to disclose information relating to sexual abuse of AL and AK. 2. All material held by DC/I Fox should be forwarded to Newcastle City LAC Crime Manager for their information. Assessment as to appropriate resources for the investigation is to be made by Newcastle City

3. Commander Northern Region

Investigation should continue by Newcastle LAC to ascertain the extent of the allegations. Consideration will be given to additional resources at the appropriate time. To ensure all matters are considered it should be noted the Newcastle investigations are the lead role & are to continue. *Ops Manager Northern Region 31/2/10*

4. Commander Port Stephens L.A.C.

Notes: I have informed C/Insp Fox of this outcome. *27/11/10*

5. Commander Newcastle City LAC

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*Wayne D. Humphrey*  
27/11/10  
Detective Chief Inspector  
Crime Manager - LAC