

**Angela Kyriazopoulos**

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**From:** Thomas, Stephanie <stephanie.thomas@mn.catholic.org.au>  
**Sent:** Monday, 11 April 2005 4:40 PM  
**Subject:** Statement from Bishop Malone re Sentencing of James Fletcher  
**Attachments:** Statement from Bishop Michael Malone 11.4.05.pdf

Please find attached a statement from Bishop Michael Malone regarding the sentencing of James Fletcher today in Sydney.

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Catholic Communications  
Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

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# DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

## CHANCERY OFFICE

841 HUNTER STREET, NEWCASTLE WEST • P.O. BOX 780 NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

Telephone: (02) 4979 1111 Fax: (02) 4979 1119

Email: [chancery@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:chancery@mn.catholic.org.au) Web: [www.mn.catholic.org.au](http://www.mn.catholic.org.au)

ABN: 91 605 046 457

## Statement from Bishop Michael Malone re Sentencing of James Fletcher

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April 2005

James Fletcher was sentenced today after a lengthy investigation into allegations of sexual abuse and after a fair trial.

It is not appropriate for me to comment on the sentence which will be considered inadequate by some or too severe by others. I accept it as the judgement of the Court.

My primary consideration is the care to be extended to his victims. While some contact has been made, more needs to be done so that all those affected by James Fletcher's criminal activity receive proper attention.

Victims of sexual abuse and their families must be supported by their parish and community and not be subjected to victimisation or damaging innuendo. We must not let them be criticised or ostracised for coming forward; in fact they should be thanked for bringing abuse out into the open.

James Fletcher will never again exercise ministry as a priest. When James Fletcher is released from prison, it is the responsibility of the bishop of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle to ensure close supervision and careful monitoring of his behaviour.

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is establishing a diocesan-wide child protection unit to try to prevent instances of abuse within the Church. This unit will also offer support to all affected by abuse within the Church.

A toll free phone number **1800 234 050** is available so that people – either individuals or groups – can discuss their response to this situation with professional facilitators or counsellors.

I strongly urge victims of sexual abuse to contact the Police. Sexual abuse is a shocking aspect of human behaviour and must be eradicated.

**Most Reverend Michael Malone**  
Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

Issued by Catholic Communications, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

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