

# Professional Standards Office

Established by the Bishops and Leaders of Religious Institutes  
of the Catholic Church  
in NSW and the ACT

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5 October 2007

Diocesan Child Protection & Professional Conduct Unit  
Ms Anne Gleeson  
PO Box 714  
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Dear Anne,

**Re Fr Denis McAlinden (dec'd)**

I refer to your recent telephone inquiry of 3 October 2007 concerning information held on file at the Professional Standards Office relevant to the abovenamed Priest.

Anne, a summary of that information is as follows:

- There is some minimal intelligence that [AL & AK] made, relatively speaking, tentative steps to come forward in 1999 as they seemingly approached the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle at that time. However, the actual identity of those potential complainants is not known to this office. They have never made a formal complaint through *Towards Healing* and I am not aware as to whether or not, if at anytime subsequent to 1999, one or more of those potential complainants have made contact with the Police.
- Certainly, this information fits with anecdotal information held by this office that McAlinden had abused [AL and/or AK].
- The information in 1999 that [AL & AK] had issues with him was formally reported by the PSO to the NSW Police at the time, and this action was reported to the Bishop.
- The Professional Standards Office intelligence file shows that in subsequent communications the NSW Police informed this office that as of March 2003 the Police had on record three complaints against McAlinden. The first for sexual assault in 1953, plus complaints against him made in 1999 and 2000. It would appear that at this time (March 2003) none of those complainants known to the Police had been willing to make formal statements, therefore in all those instances at least up to that time charges were not made against McAlinden.
- The intelligence file informs that the Police situation had changed by August 2005 because at that time the PSO was advised by a Sergeant Mark Watters of the NSW Police that he had a warrant out for the arrest of McAlinden, apparently in relation to the 1953 incident. The Police were aware that McAlinden in 2005 was residing in Western Australia.
- The Professional Standards Office intelligence file also holds a letter from Fr Bill Burston (dated 10/8/1999) which, inter alia, informs that McAlinden had his faculties as a Priest removed in 1993.

- Anne, there have been two formal *Towards Healing* complaints made against McAlinden. Both complainants followed the process through and they ultimately participated in pastoral meetings with the Bishop.
- The first *Towards Healing* complaint was made by *AE* on 10/5/1999. The file was closed on 9/3/2001. In brief, her complaint related to McAlinden's time as assistant Priest at Raymond Terrace between 1953-1954. *AE* would have been about 11 years of age at the time.
- *AE* described multiple acts of sexual abuse including instances of full sexual penetration. She reported that McAlinden's modus operandi was to drive around in his car numerous children. *AE* was the last to be dropped off, thus providing the opportunity for the abuse to occur.
- I will not forget *AE* as demonstrably being one of the most damaged victims I have encountered in the context of my work dealing with clerical abuse.
- The other *Towards Healing* complaint was made by *AC*. The complaint was received on 12/6/2002 and the case was closed on 20/9/2002.
- *AC's* complaint relates to the mid-1950s when McAlinden was assistant Priest at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish at Taree and when she was living with her grandparents. At the time *AC* would have been about 7 or 8 years of age. She describes a similar modus operandi, that is, the Priest driving children around in his car and she being the one left to last. *AC* described the Priest passionately kissing and cuddling her on numerous occasions. She also stated that he used the Confessional to inappropriately question her about sexual matters.
- *AC* also recalled a time in Sydney (about 1963) when the Priest visited her after she had resumed living with her mother. She was alone, and about 14 years of age when she described the Priest's attempts to kiss her passionately and to fondle her through her pyjamas. Interestingly, she stated that on that occasion she was aware of other children waiting outside in McAlinden's car. They were, apparently, [ *AL* & *AK* ]

Anne, this is essentially what we know about Fr McAlinden.

I am not surprised that other victims are coming forward. I fear that there are many, many victims of this man.

I trust this information is useful. If either you or Helen have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards,



Michael Salmon  
Director of Professional Standards