

New South Wales Police

P.190
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STATEMENT in the matter of:

Father James FLETCHER

Place: Nelson Bay

Police Station

Date : 19th May 2003

Name: Father Robert SEARLE

Address:

Occupation: Parish Priest Nelson Bay

Tel. No.:

STATES:-

1. This statement made by me accurately sets out the evidence which I would be prepared, if necessary, to give in court as a witness.

The statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable for prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

2. I am 58 years of age. D.O.B. (

3. I have been the Catholic Parish Priest at Saint Michaels, Nelson Bay for the past five years. I reside at the Presbytery 43 Government Road, Nelson Bay. I arrived at this location on the 31st December, 1997 and have worked in the area since that time.

4. During my time at Nelsons Bay I have met many persons throughout the parish. About five years ago not long after I arrived I remember one evening I was in the Presbytery at Nelson Bay. It was a week day and it was about 7.30pm in the evening, I was watching television. I heard shouting coming from outside the Presbytery. I went out onto my balcony and I saw AM (he was standing across the road drinking a bottle of beer. AM was yelling out,
"Nobody loves me, nobody loves me."
I said,

Witness: D. Brown

Signature: Robert Searle

Page No: 2

p.190A.

STATEMENT (continued) in the matter of: Father James FLETCHER
Name: Father Robert SEARLE

" AM your family loves you, you come from a great family."
AM continued to yell out the same words over and over again.

5. I know BI through his parents. His father BI is
His father has performed this role for the Catholic Church for many years. BI
is highly respected by all of the clergy and I have never heard a
bad word about him from anyone.

6. AM appeared very drunk or under the influence of drugs at
the time. He appeared completely irrational and incoherent at the
time. I could tell he was well affected because he was unbalanced
and having trouble standing upright.

7. AM continued to yell out the same kind of things, I said
to AM,
"If you don't leave I will have to call the Police and your
parents."

AM then started to walk off up the road towards the Police
Station. AM was not walking very well he was staggering along
the footpath.

8. I then went inside and I decided to contact his father BI
and tell him what had occurred. I rang his father who was living
at at the time. I remember when I called him he told
me that he would have to get someone to drive him down because he
had been drinking red wine and was unable to drive a motor vehicle
for fear of being over the limit.

9. About one hour later may be a little longer BI
arrived at the Presbytery in company of another woman. BI
introduced me to her but I can't recall her name. This woman was

Witness: D. SwanSignature: Robert Searle

Page No: 3

P.190A.

STATEMENT (continued) in the matter of: Father James FLETCHER
Name: Father Robert SEARLE

about 40 years old and BI informed me that it was his neighbour.

10. BI spoke with me for a short time about AM and that he AM, had been drinking to much of late. BI stayed for about half and hour and then left. He told me that he was going from Presbytery to see his son that night. I did not see BI again that night but I remember him calling me a couple weeks later and saying that AM was okay.

11. I remember the next morning after this incident I spoke with Sister Paula REDGROVE and related the incident from the previous night to her. Sister REDGROVE was residing at the convent in Marooba Crescent, Nelson Bay.

12. I did not here anything further about this incident after this time. About one year later I remember receiving a phone call from AM. AM informed me that he was living in Tasmania and that he was going to get married. I remember that I congratulated him about getting married. I also remember AM apologising to me for his behaviour and the way he had carried on out the front of the Presbytery when he was intoxicated.

13. I have never heard or seen AM from this time on. The last time I heard of him he was living in Tasmania.

Witness:

D. Brown

D. Brown

D/S/c

19/5/03.

Signature:

Robert Searle