



NSW POLICE SERVICE

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STATEMENT OF A POLICE/WITNESS

In the matter of:	James Patrick FLETCHER
Place:	Maitland Police Station
Date:	20 May, 2003

Name:	Desmond Stanley HARRIGAN	Tel. No:	0249 871888
Address:			<i>Mobile</i>
Occupation:	Catholic Priest		

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 to 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.
3. I am a Parish Priest with the Catholic Church. I first applied to the priesthood about 1960 & was ordained as a priest in 1968, the day after Jim FLETCHER. I have worked for my entire career in the Maitland Diocese including for a number of years in the Taree area. Over those years I knew Jim FLETCHER from the time we were training & in parish work, as we were generally in the same diocese.

Witness:

Signature:

Desmond Stanley HARRIGAN

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4. I kept in contact with Jim over the years & I do recall him mentioning AM's family to myself on a number of occasions. I recall that Jim was very proud of the fact that BE obtained the position, having come from Jim's own parish. I don't recall a lot being mentioned by Jim regarding BI + BJ's children at all, other than some references in the late 90's about AM. I do recall something being said at one time that AM had asked Jim to travel to Tasmania to perform his wedding, however Jim had suffered a stroke which continued to affect his health & for that reason he declined to travel to Tasmania.
5. I recall that on the 2nd of June 2002 I received a call from Jim FLETCHER. I remember the night, as there was a story on '60 Minutes' regarding Archbishop George PELL. I was aware of the programme but had made a decision not to watch it. It was some time after that programme commenced that I received a call from Jim, it may have been after some of the programme was aired or after it was totally finished, I cannot be sure now as to the exact time of the call. I was at the Lochinvar Presbytery when the phone rang & it was Jim pretty upset. Jim said, "I have had an awful phone call can you come up?" I said, "Okay I am coming." Not much more than that was said, I was able to hear the distress in Jim's voice & immediately made the decision to travel the 15 minutes to Branxton.
6. When I arrived Jim was a total mess. He was distress & crying. He was slumped in a chair & all I could do for a time was comfort him & try to calm him down. I was so concerned about his condition that the thought crossed my mind that he may have another stroke. I spent some time trying to settle Jim. He said, "I got a phone call & they have accused me of dreadful things." I said, "Do you know who it was?" He said, "No." I recall that he tried to tell me verbatim what had been said on the phone, but I honestly cannot recall nearly a year later that exact conversation. My major predominating concern was to settle Jim more than have him relay to me this conversation. I do recall that whilst Jim was talking to me he told me the caller had accused him of being child molester & of Jim molesting the caller when he was a child. I remember Jim was just having some wild stabs in the dark as to who the caller may have been. Even having the guesses as to the identity of the caller revolted Jim. I do not recall Jim mentioning the name AM to me at all that night.

Witness:



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7. I recall early on suggesting to Jim that this may have just been a prank call. I am aware of a number of prank calls being made to members of the church & for that reason tried to calm by Jim suggesting that this may have been one of those types of calls. Unfortunately Jim did not accept this as he felt the caller had disclosed things that he knew about Jim, which indicated he did know some things about Jim & was not just ringing at random.

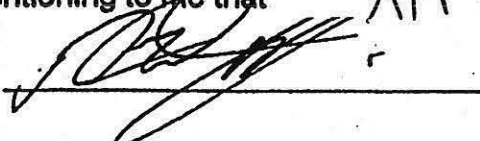
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Whilst this was all going on I telephoned a lady I knew to be a nurse. I cannot remember her name at present, but she & her son came around to help settle Jim & I also wanted her to check on his health.

8. Once we settled Jim that night & felt he would hopefully be okay, we left. I returned the following morning to check in on Jim & he was conducting mass. I left him & was glad to see him back at work but returned later that morning. When I returned Jim was speaking to Catherine BRIDGE & her sister-in-law Maureen. I remember that Jim had confided in both of them (Who were close to Jim & assisted with his work within the Parish). At some point Joanne HANCOCK (The housekeeper for the presbytery) arrived & was also told about the call. I recall that they all spoke to Jim & offered him their support. I discussed with Jim what we would do about the call & it was decided we would inform the diocese of what had occurred through Jim SAUNDERS, who is the Vicar General. We did not discuss whether the Police should be notified; we thought that was probably best left to Jim SAUNDERS & others within the diocese. I telephoned Jim SAUNDERS at some point after this & from that time on became more of a nurse & a person concerned with Jim's health, more than trying to get to the bottom of the call. Mentioning the call tended to upset Jim so I tolerated his mentioning of it but tried not to dwell on it, as I felt completely incompetent to deal with any legal aspects. I had already placed all that in the hands of the diocese & left all that side of the inquiry to them.

9. I became aware at some point after all this that Jim had discovered the identity of the caller being AM I do not know how exactly this came about but Jim did mention it to me. I cannot specifically recall having met AM at any time myself, that is not to say that I have definitely never met him, but I just don't recall him. Jim always refuted the allegation made in the call, especially after he learned of it being AM Jim commented to me on several occasions that he had helped this person through a lot of difficult periods in his life. I recall Jim mentioning to me that AM had attempted to take his life at one time

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