

Royal Commission Case Study 43

Catholic Church Maitland Newcastle

TJHC update



Thursday 1 August – Day 2

The Royal Commission's hearing (Case Study 43) into the response of Catholic Church authorities in the Maitland Newcastle region to allegations of child sexual abuse by clergy and religious continued in Newcastle today.

Sr Evelyn Woodward, former leader of the Sisters of St Joseph's of Lochinvar, continued her evidence in relation to her knowledge and what she did about claims of sexual abuse by Ryan in the Hunter in the mid-1970s.

Paedophile priest Vincent Ryan has served 14 years jail for abusing boys between 1972 and 1991. He was released in 2010 and is currently awaiting sentencing on separate child sex offences.

Sr Woodward has worked as a psychologist from 1975 and has worked on the Australian bishops' committee for professional standards.

She said she spoke to Bishop Leo Clarke about Ryan in 1976 after allegations were made against him, and again in 1995 when Ryan was about to be charged by police.

While being questioned by Simon Harben, SC, for retired Bishop of Newcastle Michael Malone Sr Woodward conceded she might not have told Bishop Clarke that she knew of Ryan's offending prior to Ryan being arrested in 1995.

Survivor witness CNE gave evidence to the Commission about being abused by Ryan: "My childhood was taken away from me, as well as my innocence. As a result, I have had to spend time in jail. My marriage has failed. I have attempted suicide, suffer from depression and struggle to have normal relationships with other people. It is not just me who has suffered, but also those close to me who are also victims," he said.

Bishop Michael Malone gave evidence that he was ordained a Priest in July 1964. He was appointed Bishop of the Maitland Diocese following the retirement of Bishop Clarke in November 1995. He said that prior to his appointment had not had a good relationship with Bishop Clarke during the period that Bishop Malone was the Coadjutor Bishop. He told the Commission he had no prior knowledge of the offending by Ryan.

During the handover with Bishop Clarke, Bishop Malone asked if there was anything else he needed to know. Bishop Malone told the Commission that Bishop Clarke responded saying 'Oh no, you will find out. So I eventually found out.'

Bishop Malone told the Commission that after Ryan was arrested at Taree and charged with child sex offences he moved to address the needs of survivors of the abuse.

“Our primary concern must be the victims who have suffered such indignities, many of whom, if not all, still carry the scars of sexual abuse. Earlier when the problem in both church and society was poorly understood, such abusive behaviour was treated as a moral problem. We know a great deal more now than we did, of the complex nature of sexual abuse, and the assistance that all survivors and the community need in the healing process.”

The hearing will continue tomorrow

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