

STATUTORY DECLARATION

I, MICHAEL BOWMAN of

in the State of New South

Wales, do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. I was formerly the Director of Schools for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle between approximately January 1996 – January 2004.
2. I give this statutory declaration unwillingly and solely on the basis that, without exception, section 23 (2) of the *Special Commissions of Inquiry Act 1983* applies to restrict the use of this Statutory Declaration and the documents referred to in it. For the record, the same unwillingness applies to all evidence given by me in any hearings of the Commission, whether in public, private or in camera.
3. I have been requested by the Special Commission of Inquiry to provide a statutory declaration on certain matters.

Position and Responsibilities as at 1996

4. In 1996, I was the Director of Schools for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. My responsibilities involved the leadership, management and administration of Catholic schools within the Diocese.

Recollection of Conversations concerning Fr James Fletcher

5. I do not recall having a discussion with former Bishop Michael Malone prior to March 2003 specifically in relation to any concerns he had regarding Fr James Fletcher and inappropriate behaviour with boys. I am not denying that such a conversation took place but simply that I cannot recall it so many years later. Similarly, I do not recall any discussion with former Bishop Michael Malone in relation to any concerns held by Patrick Roohan, Jim Callinan, Jim Finucane and/or Colleen Timoshenko regarding Fr James Fletcher and inappropriate behaviour with boys. The only two conversations which I can now recall with Bishop Malone on the topic of sexual abuse are set out in paragraphs 9 and 10 of this statutory declaration.

Position and Responsibilities as at 2002 – 2004

6. During 2002 and 2003, I was still the Director of Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. I was responsible for the leadership, management and administration of Catholic schools within the Diocese. I resigned my position as Director of Schools at the end of January 2004.

Conversations with Bishop Michael Malone in 2002 – 2004 regarding standing down of Fr James Fletcher

7. I do not recall any conversation between myself and former Bishop Michael Malone in 2002, 2003 and/or 2004 regarding whether Fr James Fletcher should be stood down or remain working as a priest. I do not deny that such a conversation may have taken place, but simply cannot recall it some 10 years later.

Signed

18/7/13.

Signed

18/7/13

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Pastoral Message published by Bishop Malone in 2003

8. This pastoral message was prepared and released in May 2003 whilst I was on leave. My leave commenced on or about 7 April 2003 and concluded on or about 7 July 2003. I spent a period of this leave overseas and I do not recall having had a conversation with Bishop Malone about it nor any involvement in the preparation of that message prior to me going on leave.

Any other information that may assist the Inquiry

9. I can recall having had a discussion with former Bishop Michael Malone during one of our regular monthly meetings in 2002. These meetings were not minuted and were an informal means of me advising the Bishop of any current issues involving the administration of schools within the Diocese. I can recall that at the end of one such meeting, Bishop Malone informed me that a sexual abuse allegation had been made against a priest of the Diocese. Bishop Malone did not name the priest nor did he provide me with any details about the nature of the allegations. I was not told whether the allegations were current or historical, related to a child or an adult, or whether the priest was currently in a parish or not.

10. I can also recall one further conversation I had with former Bishop Malone in March 2003. At that time he informed me that allegations of historical sexual abuse had been made against Fr James Fletcher and that Fr Fletcher was to be removed from the parish of Branxton as he was about to be charged by the Police.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the Oaths Act 1900.

Declared at 3 Mary Mackillop Drive, Neongarah. [place] on 18/7/13 [date]
Signed
[signature of declarant]

in the presence of an authorised witness, who states:

I, Rabbi Murray [name of authorised witness],
a Justice of the Peace - 195606 [qualification of authorised witness],

certify the following matters concerning the making of this statutory declaration by the person who made it: *[please cross out any text that does not apply]*

- 1. I saw the face of the person.
- 2. ~~I have known the person for at least 12 months OR~~ *I have confirmed the person's identity using the following identification document:

NSW Drivers Licence [describe identification document relied on]

Signed 18/7/13 [date]
signature of authorised witness]