



PRESS RELEASE
issued by
BISHOP K.M.MANNING (28/12/93)

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I have read the press release issued by Ms Chris Wilding ,
convenor of Broken Rites , Australia and consider it a most serious
allegation to suggest that a magistrate is corrupt.

I was not the bishop of this diocese at the time so am not in a
position to say how the trial was conducted ; nor to comment on the
propriety of the magistrate.

That I leave to the proper judicial authorities.

I do know that the alleged offender was not committed for trial;
that a request was made to the Director of Public Prosecutions to
appeal the magistrate's decision & I understand that no such appeal
was made.

The priest involved in the case is not working as a priest and I
understand he is pursuing private studies at the University of New
England.

The Australian Bishops have well established procedures for dealing
with allegations against clergy and are firmly committed to ensuring
such allegations are dealt with decisively and in a way consistent with
the due process of law .

FROM : DANIELI STUDIOS

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P01



To the News Editor

*From Ms Chris Wilding, convenor, Broken Rites Australia,
PO Box 162, Carlton North, Victoria 3054*

Telephone [REDACTED]

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption is being asked to investigate a Catholic magistrate who heard a case involving a priest from his own local church. The magistrate discharged the priest, who was alleged to have sexually molested a 12-year-old altar boy.

Broken Rites, a Melbourne-based support group for victims of church-related sexual assault, has written to ICAC requesting an investigation. Broken Rites believes that the magistrate should have stepped aside from hearing the case because of a conflict of interest.

Broken Rites convenor Chris Wilding said that police charged the priest at Narrabri Local Court in February 1988 with indecent assault and also with sexual intercourse without consent. Police alleged that the priest had assaulted the altar boy at the Narrabri Catholic church in 1984. The priest and the altar boy had come from another parish to conduct a service for a Narrabri priest who was away.

"The magistrate who heard the 1988 case is a prominent Catholic layman in a northern NSW parish, where the priest served from 1984 to 1988," Ms Wilding said. "The priest was still in the magistrate's parish when police laid the charges.

"Nobody was surprised when this magistrate discharged the priest without a trial.

"The case should have been heard by a different magistrate not connected with the priest. A church should not be seen to receive preferential treatment in the judicial process.

"The public today is more aware of the problem of sexual abuse by clergymen. The 1988 decision is a time bomb waiting to go off," Ms Wilding said.

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