

Church goes public on child sex abuse

Emma Swain



In his 15 years as Archdeacon of Maitland, Fr Peter Rushton christened hundreds of babies, married hundreds of couples and serviced hundreds of funerals.

But behind closed doors Fr Rushton was an alleged serial paedophile accused of abusing at least four altar boys.

The Anglican Diocese of Newcastle this week issued a public apology to those who suffered at the hands of the priest.

The men, who served as altar boys throughout the Hunter, were abused in their prepubescent years during the 1980s.

"I am deeply saddened by these events," Bishop of Newcastle Dr Brian Farran said.

"The church is supposed to be a place where people can go to feel safe and secure, but in these circumstances this was not the case.

"I have met with the four men and heard their stories and that was a hard thing to do, but I do believe the men now feel validated in their actions of coming forward."

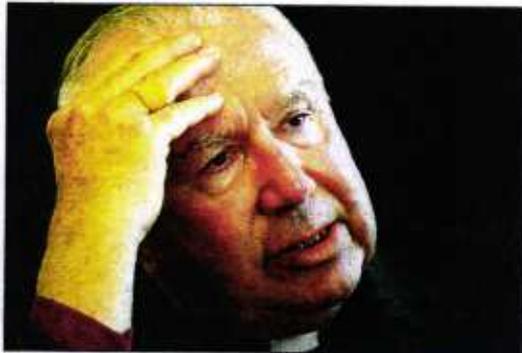
Following his death in 2007, significant allegations and information of concern were brought forward in relation to Fr Rushton's involvement in the sexual abuse of minors.

In recognition of the situation, Dr Farran held a service of recognition and reconciliation at the parish of St Luke's, Wallsend, earlier this year.

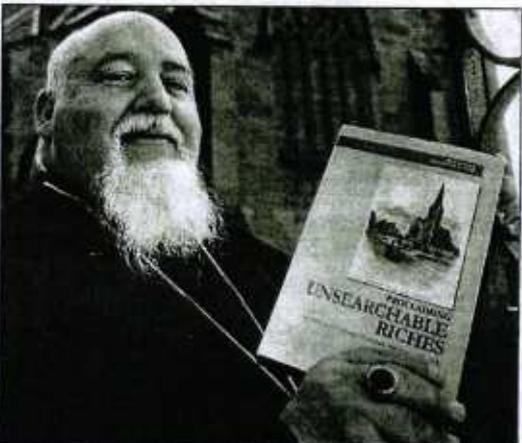
In recent times, the Catholic Church has largely been at the fore of child sex scandal cases throughout the district, this time the Anglican Church has come under fire.

At the 2004 General Synod, the Anglican Church of Australia took a proactive approach to the issue of child protection and put in place a number of strategies to improve policies and practices concerning child protection around the country.

As part of this effort, the Professional Standards Commission requested a report on the nature and extent of reported child sexual abuse by clergy and church workers, including volunteers, since 1990.



SADDENED: Bishop of Newcastle, Dr Brian Farran.



ACCUSED: The late Father Peter Rushton is accused of paedophilia.

The report

In May 2009, Professor Patrick Parkinson and Emeritus Professor Kim Oates, from the University of Sydney, and research assistant Amanda Jayakody released the Study of Reported Child Sexual Abuse in the Anglican Church.

The report analysed 191 alleged cases of child sexual abuse, reported from 17 dioceses throughout

Australia between 1990 and 2008.

The cases occurred throughout Australia and in dioceses with different ecclesiastical traditions and accused clergy had been trained at a range of theological colleges.

Key findings of the study reported that, unlike patterns of abuse in the general population, three quarters of complainants were male and most were between the ages of 10 to 15 at the time of abuse.

The report also found that most accused people were either clergy or were involved in some form of voluntary or paid work. Ongoing abuse lasting three years or more was significantly more common among male complainants.

The report revealed there were long delays in reporting offences to the church by the complainants, with an average of 23 years.

Over half of the complainants were under 14 years at the time of the alleged abuse.

"There is a general consensus that paedophilia, that is, sexual abuse of prepubescent children, is not related to sexual orientation towards adult partners," the report stated.

"Many men who abuse prepubescent boys are heterosexual in their adult sexual relations."

The report also revealed that "it is often only many years later, as adults in their late 20s and 30s, that children who have been sexually abused are able to deal with it and seek help".

As is the case with Fr Rushton's four Hunter victims.

"It has been extremely important for these men to come forward with their stories and it's imperative that others do the same if the same thing has happened to them. This is an extremely important part of the healing process," Dr Farran said.

The report states that the best way to prevent child sexual abuse in church communities is to eliminate the opportunities for abuse.

"That in turn means restricting the opportunities for adults and children or young people to be alone together in contexts that would allow for sexual activity to occur without discovery," the report said.

Fr Rushton was priested on December 19, 1964, after completing his training at St John's Theological College, Morpeth.

As a new priest he was sent to Cessnock where he spent four years. He later ministered at Wyong, Weston, Wallsend, Lake Macquarie and Maitland where he was based at St Mary's Church.

During his time at Weston, Fr Rushton adopted a boy from St Alban's Home.

Fr Rushton became Archdeacon of Maitland on August 1, 1983 and resigned 15 years later.

He died in 2007.

Synod begins: future direction to be decided

The 49th Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle will begin with a Eucharist in Christ Church Cathedral on Friday night and will continue during the weekend.

Bishop Brian Farran will present the presidential address and items of the agenda include a presentation from the Samaritans Foundation on homeless issues affecting the region.

Beginning in 1865, the Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle convenes to make decisions affecting the laws, policies and activities of the church in this region.

The word "synod" means journeying together.

Its main business is to arrange the administration of the church and its relationship with the community.

The synod is made up of clergy, which includes the rector of every parish in the diocese, as well as the bishop and archdeacons.

It also includes chaplains to industry, schools, juvenile justice, universities, hospitals and three representatives from each parish.

The synod is elected for three years and meets annually. This is the final session 49th Synod, with a new body to be elected for 2011.

Two dogs maul cow, calf then turn on woman

from page 1

"I then went after the bitch, but when I came back the male dog had stumbled to its feet and went straight for my friend, who was looking after the cows.

"Lucky she had a star picket post in her hand or she was gone."

Mr Etchells said they managed to catch the dogs and call the owners after finding a number on their collars.

The owners then came around to collect the dogs before the council ranger arrived.

"What if they weren't cows but children?" Mr Etchells said

"Thinking back on it now I should have killed the dogs.

"They were savage, they wanted blood ... people need to be more responsible with their animals, lock them up or tie them up."

Mr Simm said the council was gathering information about the attack.

"We are still gathering the necessary evidence to decide whether we proceed to prosecute the owner of the dogs or issue them with a warning," he said.

"This decision will be made in consultation with the owner of the cattle."

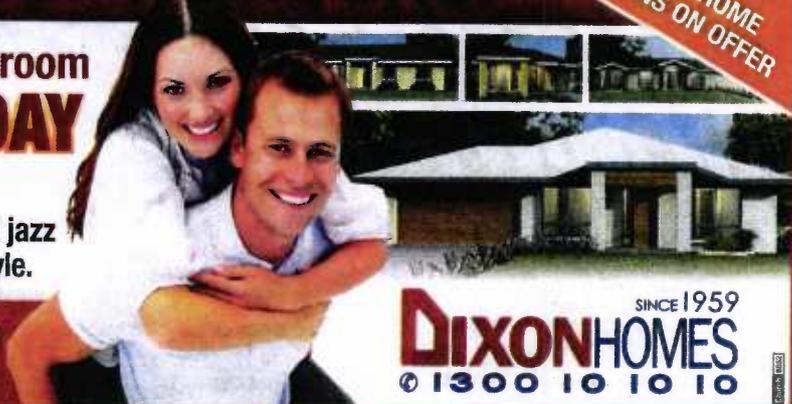
Mr Simm said all dog owners should ensure their pets are tied up or secured in their yards.

IT'S YOUR ONE STOP HOME SHOP

The All New Dixon Homes Showroom
OPENS THIS SATURDAY
10am - 2pm

Join us for a free Sausage Sizzle, balloons and jazz band as we celebrate our Grand Opening in style.

2/140 Lambton Road, Broadmeadow
www.dixonhomes.com.au



SINCE 1959
DIXON HOMES
1300 10 10 10