



Quality over quantity: Nearlyweds Ms Tument and Mr Barnes, in Sydney yesterday, say one partner is fine

Picture

CM 30.7.03

# Church leader backs child sex offender

Carol Altmann

A RESPECTED member of the Tasmanian Anglican Church is standing by his support for a confessed child sex offender he recommended to report on pedophilia within the church.

Retired minister Jim Young, a clinical psychologist, said yesterday he considered the crimes of Michael James Crowley to be "utterly inexcusable and reprehensible", but still respected him as an academic and friend.

Dr Young provided a written character reference for Crowley, 59, of Howden, after

he pleaded guilty this week in the Tasmanian Supreme Court to child sexual offences committed between August 1974 and May 1975. His victim, who became pregnant, was aged 15 and 16 at the time.

Crowley, also a clinical psychologist, was recommended by Dr Young to co-author a 1997 inquiry report by the Tasmanian Anglican Church into pedophilia in the clergy.

The report, *Not the Way of Christ*, was released in 1998, and its recommendations led to a restructure of the way the church handled allegations of abuse.

Dr Young is a respected

social commentator in Tasmania. He chaired the Anglican tribunal that defrocked former Tasmanian priest Garth Hawkins last year for child sexual abuse.

However, victims of sexual abuse in the church were outraged when Crowley's defence counsel told the court this week that Dr Young still considered Crowley to be "the best person" for the inquiry, despite his crimes.

Dr Young said yesterday his statement had been misconstrued, in that he still considered Crowley to be "eminently qualified" but that he would not have recommended

him if he had known of the abuse allegations.

"I had no hesitation in recommending him for the position, although if I had known what I know now, I might have made a different decision," Dr Young said.

Abuse victims said Dr Young's stand highlighted the church's insensitivity towards victims. "They still don't get it ... this underlines why they need to have a survivor involved in any new protocols," Survivors Confronting Child Abuse and Rape spokesman Steve Fisher said.

Crowley will be sentenced tomorrow.

# Sacked choirmaster lied about charges

Vanessa Walker

• Religious affairs writer

THE Catholic choirmaster who was fired for allegedly ignoring child sex abuse misled an independent church investigator by asserting sexual abuse charges against him had been proven false, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission heard yesterday.

In September, former Sydney St Mary's Cathedral choirmaster David Russell sent a letter to investigator

John Cooke, claiming charges that he had sexually abused 12-year-old choirboy Dan Buckley had been "conclusively found to be false," in a 2000 local court hearing.

Under questioning yesterday from the church's lawyer, John Murphy, Russell admitted that in fact charges had been dismissed because Mr Buckley, now 32, had failed to appear in court.

Asked to explain what he admitted was an inaccuracy, Russell said he was "presenting the positive".

"In any attempt to defend ourselves we present the positive ... and in my view, and (the way I was) advised, the charges were gone, couldn't be charged again and had been dismissed," he said.

Russell, 65, is fighting to be reinstated to his job as choirmaster at St Mary's Cathedral, a position he held since 1976.

He was removed in January by the Dean, Monsignor Tony Doherty, after an investigation found he had ignored a separate episode of abuse.

It found that in 1982 Russell had walked in on church sacristan David O'Grady abusing Dan Buckley and another 12-year-old boy, code-named X, in Russell's home.

Both victims allege Russell opened the door, said "oh well, I'll leave you to it then", and then walked away.

O'Grady was convicted of the crime. Russell vehemently denied he saw anything and said yesterday the two boys had never been to his home.

The case continues.

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