



# Professional Standards Risk Management Service

## Memo

To: Joseph Bucci

FROM: Laurie Rolls

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2007

Subject: Ballarat Diocese – Paul Ryan and **REDACTED**

*Sp Loken*  
*6/8/07*

Dear Joe,

Thank you for inviting me to comment upon the matter of the former Father Paul David Ryan with particular concern for the question of Church Authority's, in the person of Bishop Ronald Mulkearns, having prior knowledge of his propensity to abuse minors.

The persons against whom it is known Paul Ryan offended are identified in a report issued by Broken Rites, whose source we understand is the police brief prepared for the prosecution of Ryan. The information therein is quite detailed and we believe likely to be quite accurate. The list is as follows:

Pre Ordination  
That is pre 1976

Fellow seminarians aged 18yrs or more

Ballarat  
1976

University student aged 18yrs or more

United States  
1979

Three students aged 14 years to 15 years

Warrnambool  
1880's

One student aged 17 years

Terang  
1986

One student aged 16 years – 17 years

Penshurst  
1989-1990

One student aged 15 years –the present case  
An altar boy aged 13 years to 14 years

Ararat  
1991

“Sam” a boy kicked out of home presumably  
mid-teens  
“Peter” a student aged 15 years to 16 years

The persons targeted by Ryan are all males, generally speaking in their late teens. Anyone aware of the history of offending described above would correctly assume that he was of same – sex preference, disposed not to paedophilia but to ephebophilia.

We are seeking to determine what knowledge Bishop Mulkearns had of Ryan's activities at the time **REDACTED** was abused at Peshurst in 1989.

Paul Ryan commenced studies for the priesthood at the seminary in Adelaide in 1969. During 1971 he was asked to leave the seminary. He then took up a position as a teacher at St Joseph's College, Mildura. In October that year he applied to Bishop Mulkearns for sponsorship to study at the seminary in Melbourne. We assume the references from the Adelaide seminary were available to the Bishop, nevertheless he accepted Ryan as a candidate for the priesthood. One assumes then he saw nothing in the reasons given for his being asked to leave Adelaide seminary that dissuaded him from accepting Ryan. At that point then we must assume he knew no more than that Ryan engaged in some form of unacceptable behaviour.

Ryan was ordained in May 1976. The Broken Rites/Police Brief report we have before us reads: "about October 1976, according to seminary correspondence, the seminary authorities learned that Father Ryan had been engaged in sexual relationships with about six trainee priests during his seminary course".

Further, in the very week Ryan was ordained, a mother complained that her son, a university student had been sexually abused by Ryan.

According to seminary documents the seminary arranged for Ryan to see consulting psychologist Ronald Conway and psychiatrist Dr Eric Seal, both well known for their experience in assessing and treating clergy and religious. It was recommended Ryan be treated overseas. Father John Harvey, a known expert in the "treatment" of homosexuality in clergy and religious, based at De Sales Hall Maryland, was contacted. The seminary records reveal that Father Harvey enquired whether Ryan's activity involved adults or minors. The reply described activity confined to fellow seminarians.

If we assume Bishop Mulkearns had been kept informed of all this we must accept that shortly after Ryan's ordination, that is in late 1976, he knew only that, to quote from the seminary correspondence, "the man's sexual activity included mutual masturbation ... but it seems certain more serious acts occurred not infrequently".

The next occasion upon which we understand that Bishop Mulkearns may well have been given some information regarding Ryan's activities would have been in the course of an exchange of correspondence with his US supervisors.

Ex-students of a grade school gave evidence to the police that they were abused during Ryan's period of service as school counsellor. The informants were in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and likely then to be as young as fourteen years. None of these victims came forward at the time but in 1995, one wrote to his diocese to say "Although the general population of the church at Star of the Sea Parish was shielded from knowing the specific details for Father Ryan's removal, it was more or less common knowledge among certain known victims and their families".

While the revelations about "Star of the Sea Parish" Virginia Beach were not made until 1995, the report we have before us suggests: "Ryan's Australian superiors exchanged letter with his US supervisors throughout 1977 – 1980 and presumably his offences in the US were reported back to Australia." This comment would imply that the police are aware of the correspondence but not the content. We would need to know how the offences were described. Was it clear from what was said that Bishop Mulkearns was made aware that Ryan was offending against males as young as 14 years?

From 1980 through to 1989, when he was appointed to Peshurst, apart from a brief few months in the US during 1988, Ryan served at Warnambool and Terang. During this period there is no indication that any matters were reported to Bishop Mulkearns.

If one excludes the possibility of his having information detailing the ages of the boys with whom Ryan was involved in Virginia, we are left with the reasonable presumption that the most Bishop Mulkearns could have known or assumed is that Ryan was a man of homosexual preference whose interests lay with youths in their late teens. He presents as a typical ephebophile whose targets must necessarily be post pubescent youths.

As requested, I contacted Bishop Brian Finnigan, long time secretary to Bishop Mulkearns in the hope he could assist us with information regarding the Bishop's state of mind in this matter. He said that he worked closely and amicably with him but the Bishop was a man of "such a closed personality" that he would not have shared his opinion on such a matter. However, of his own knowledge Bishop Brian says that he was aware of it being said the Father Ryan was homosexual and that he engaged in such behaviour as "installing a large bath into which he would invite young blokes". This last expression would imply young adults.

There are no victims aged below 16 years about whom reports could have been made prior to 1989 except the US cases. Here, because of his appointment to a grade school, opportunity offered only students whose maximum age might be 14 years or 15 years. A well developed lad of that age could well appeal to an ephebophile. An offender of this nature would not seek out a male that young, but, in Ryan's case, opportunity was most likely restricted to the school at which he served. Many youths as young as 14 or 15 years appear more mature than the average and the senior boys of the grade school would be targets readily at hand.

The report we have says "it was discovered that Father Ryan was sexually abusing boys at the school in 1979". If this is so, it is hard to accept that the matters were not reported to Bishop Mulkearns. However, if nothing specific about age was contained in any report from the US Supervisors, Bishop Mulkearns would still be left with the opinion that Ryan engaged with adult males. It is interesting to note that when completing his proposal for ETL cover in 18th May 1991, Bishop Mulkearns reported a number of matters of which he had knowledge. Among them is a report that clearly refers to Ryan in which he says:

"Allegations of homosexuality. Priest sent to U.S.A. for treatment some years ago. Recently a complaint about advances to a sixteen year old youth. Family of youth satisfied that priest should be moved from parish and sent for counselling. There has been no involvement of police. Plans under way for counselling."

Subsequently, on 16<sup>th</sup> June 1994, two notifications relating Ryan were made to Catholic Church Insurances Limited. One refers to a Penshurst case concerning an "unnamed male child", said to have been reported in 1991 and the other to the Warrnambool cases of which the Diocese is said to have become aware on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1993. The Penshurst case mentioned will be "Anton" whose mother, according to the Broken Rites report "went to the Bishop's office in Ballarat and expressed her concern about Ryan". This same report describes "Anton" as aged 13 years or 14 years. However, Bishop Mulkearns appears to have understood the victim was aged 16 years. In his comment about the "large bath" incident, Bishop Brian refers to a "young bloke". This incident took place at the same time as the incidents involving RED and do not therefore ascribe any prior knowledge to the Bishop.

All this supports the view that at the time of completing these reports, apart from the general information about Ryan's homosexual activities, Bishop Mulkearns knew only of the offence at Penshurst affecting a victim aged 16 years.

On the other hand, it is my belief that, if there was a report from the US "Supervisors" and the precise ages of the victims were communicated to Bishop Mulkearns, notwithstanding the general view held about Ryan's propensities, it could not be said the event affecting REDA REDACT was an accident within the meaning of the public liability policy.

To determine this question it will be necessary to ask Bishop Peter Connors whether there is correspondence with the US diocese on Ryan's file and what it reveals. Bishop Peter did say at our meeting that the Diocese contributed towards compensation paid in the US, but presumably that will have been later, in 1995, when the victims at Virginia Beach came forward.

I presume that, having adopted the statutory age of consent as the point at which a victim is considered to be an adult, it will not be suggested this case involving a boy aged 15 years will be distinguished from the cases involving minors in respect of which indemnity has been granted.

Joe, it would seem the final test in this matter is whether Bishop Mulkearns received a report from the United States prior to 1989 that revealed the propensity of Ryan to abuse a male aged less than 16 years. This being the case, would you like me to enquire from Bishop Connors whether there is relevant correspondence on file, or would you prefer to do so?

Kindest regards,

Laurie