

Friday, 22nd April, 2005

Rev B Brock PP
Catholic Presbytery
PO Box 14
BOOLAROO NSW 2284

Dear Brian,

Thank you for your letter regarding my commitment to supervise Jim Fletcher (and Vince Ryan) on their release from jail.

This is, I agree, a heavy responsibility to accept on behalf of the Diocesan bishop.

There are two schools of thought on this issue:

- a) the first would call for immediate laicisation of these offending priests. On their release from jail they have no further contact with the bishop and as laymen they fend for themselves.
- b) the second says that these priests should not be laicised. On their release from jail, while they cannot exercise ministry, they remain under the authority of the bishop.

In the first instance, the community where these priests lived would be very unhappy that "the Church" had washed its hands of them and provided no supervision. Were they to offend again we would be persecuted more than we have been.

In the second instance we at least maintain some control over them. The bishops of Australia and the Congregational Leaders have agreed to the second school of thought, and have drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding to help put in place a structure of continued supervision (copy attached).

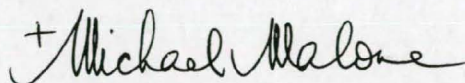
Of course, nothing is perfect and failure may happen. Were that the case we would need to be able to prove that we had adequate structures in place.

Ultimately, I am not responsible (in law) for another's behaviour. In accepting a supervisory role I undertake to try to prevent future mistakes. Please God I will.

I hope this may answer some of your genuine concerns. This is a potential minefield, I know, but we do have a continuing duty of care to the victim and perpetrator alike.

I remain,

Yours sincerely



Most Reverend Michael Malone
Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

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File: Clergy Personal\Brock, Brian – responsibility when offending clergy release from jail (Apr 05)