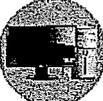


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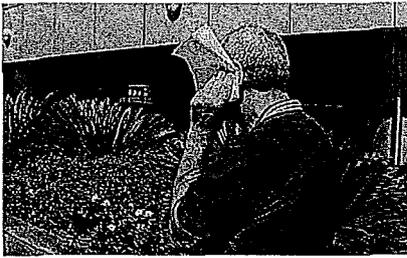
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Catholic schools' boss denies sex abuse cover-up

Madeleine Logan | 2nd February 2009

TOOWOOMBA Catholic Education director John Borserio has denied a primary school under his control covered up the repeated sexual molestation and rape of students by a teacher.



The Toowoomba Catholic school teacher accused of child rape charges leaves court in November. Peter Collins (Channel Nine)

A weekend report in a national newspaper alleged a nine-year-old victim told the school's principal in September, 2007, that she had been molested by the man who was its child protection officer.

She claimed the teacher started to touch her again a week after she reported the abuse, according to police sources quoted by the newspaper.

Mr Borserio confirmed a meeting between the girl, her parents and the principal took place.

But he denied the 59-year-old teacher was protected until he was arrested on November 14 last year and charged with 12 counts of rape and 34 counts of indecent treatment of a child under 12.

Mr Borserio said he "would not go into" the particulars of the meeting or comment on whether he was made aware of the allegations 14 months before police laid charges.

The accused man retired in the middle of 2008, but was re-employed at the same school as a relief teacher soon afterwards.

Police told Toowoomba Magistrate Kay Ryan during initial proceedings against the teacher that he was working as a relief teacher until his arrest.

At that hearing, Sergeant Morrie Turner said that if he had not been arrested, the man could have continued working at the school.

"I outright deny a cover-up," Mr Borserio said yesterday.

"There has been no protection of the alleged abuser and there never will be."

Police claimed some victims were molested in a classroom while other students were present. They were all aged nine or 10 when the offences were allegedly committed during the past two years.

Mr Borserio said he was assisting police with their inquiries.

"Under student protection legislation, we can't discuss matters while the court proceedings are continuing," he said.

"I'm disturbed by the article."

Mr Borserio said the 32 Catholic schools within the diocese adhered to uniform guidelines on the handling of sexual abuse allegations.

The Student Protection and Risk Management kit gives staff instructions to report to police if they suspect that a student under 18 years of age attending the school has been sexually abused by an employee.

Parents and students were offered counsellors after the charges were laid.

But Mr Borserio said the distribution of information had been restricted.

"Communication to parents has been constrained by legislation and continues to be so," he said.

"This experience has been a very difficult one for all involved."

At a further hearing last Wednesday, Toowoomba Magistrates Court heard the teacher was expected to plead guilty to the charges.

Under Queensland law, the defendant and the school cannot be named.
 He is due to reappear for mention in the Toowoomba Magistrates Court later this month.
 He is being held in custody.

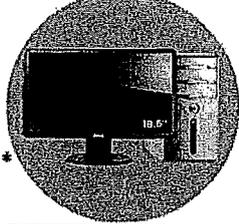
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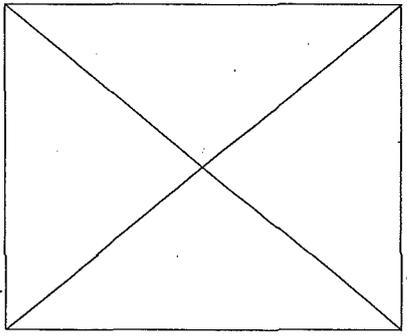
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