

STATEMENT

Name: Philip O'DONNELL

STATES:

My name is Philip O'DONNELL. Police are aware of my address. I do not wish for any of my personal details to be given out without my permission. I am a former Priest attached to the Melbourne Archdiocese.

My family were devout liberal Catholics. The Catholic Church was an important part of our lives. During my upbringing I was exposed to many impressive, hardworking and dedicated priests. I liked the role and the work that they did and after completing HSC I decided to join the priesthood. I wanted to work with people and thought it would be a good vocation.

In January, 1976, Archbishop LITTLE appointed me as the Assistant Priest to Father Bill BAKER in Gladstone Park.

I had some previous experience with Bill as he had been a Chaplain at my school, St Kevin's, Heyington. I was a student there at the time. I had not been particularly comfortable with what appeared as his obsession with adolescent sexuality in his chaplaincy and confessional roles. However, there was nothing specific of personal concern from these school days.

As everything was new at Gladstone Park we did not have a presbytery. I started parish life with Bill by living in motel units at the Gladstone Park Hotel through the generosity of its owner and manager. After a while we moved out of the Motel to a rented property in Tullamarine.

At this time Bill and I would meet at a parishioner's home, have supper and return to our house in Tullamarine. This family was particularly hospitable and made their home

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our second home. I do not wish to disclose the identity of the family so I will refer to them as the SMITH's. Mr and Mrs SMITH had four young children, the eldest child I will call [BTO] was about 12 years old.

After a while I became concerned at the time Bill was spending in [BTO] room helping him with his home work. I was also concerned that Bill's conversations with me fixated heavily on [BTO]. As time went by I was concerned that Bill was cultivating [BTO] and I brought this to the attention of the parents.

Mr and Mrs SMITH did not immediately share my concern but a few weeks later Mr SMITH came to visit me. He told me that he too believed that there was an unhealthy relationship between Bill and [BTO]. He told me that Bill had taken [BTO] to Bill's parent's house in Maryborough, teaching him to drive sitting on his lap, and showering with him. I realised there was a big problem.

I got the permission of the child and the parent's to interview [BTO] and tape record it. This would save him having to repeat his story to others. [BTO] told me about sitting on Bill's lap to drive and Bill showering with him. [BTO] was obviously very traumatised and I chose not to ask any further explicit questions regarding the matter. I had heard enough to know it was a serious matter.

After a group discussion with the parents, the School Principal, a Stipendiary Magistrate (who was also Chairman of our School Council), and two of his friends who were a lawyer and a Canon (Church) lawyer, it was agreed that the parents should take this matter directly and personally to the Archbishop – which they did. With hindsight I realise I should have referred the matter directly to the police. At the time I thought I was doing what was right and that the matter would be dealt with appropriately by the Church authorities. I was not to know at the time the matter would not be dealt with properly and Bill was eventually transferred to the Eltham parish.

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(Phillip O'DONNELL)

Signature witnessed by me
at on at

Leigh ROSS
Senior Detective 28745

I hereby acknowledge that this statement is true and correct and I make it in the belief that a person making a false statement in the circumstances is liable to the penalties of perjury.

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(Phillip O'DONNELL)

Acknowledgment made and signature witnessed by me
at on / /2013 at

Leigh ROSS
Senior Detective 28745

