

**Professor Patrick Parkinson**

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Dr Janine Bush,  
Executive Officer  
Family & Community Development Committee  
Parliament of Victoria  
Spring Street  
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Ms Bush,

*Re: Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations*

I am writing to provide some further information by way of a brief postscript to the evidence I was able to give to the Committee in relation to the Salesian issues.

**1. Fr Chambers' evidence**

I note that in his public evidence to the Committee of April 29 2013, Fr Chambers made the following statement:

We fully support the publication of that report. I would maintain that, despite what people have said in public, we have always supported the publication of that report. What Father Moloney and others have tried to do is to set the record straight in that document, to clarify certain facts and to correct certain anomalies in that document. Far from wanting to suppress it in the past or present, we have always maintained our right to at least contest the accuracy of certain statements and facts that Professor Parkinson has put forward.

**2. Did the Salesians always support publication of the report?**

I have not been asked for comment on this evidence; however I think it is appropriate that I put in writing the following.

1. Fr Moloney was, from the beginning, opposed to any publication of material that would cast the Salesians in a bad light. This is evident from an email exchange

on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010. Fr Tim Brennan, then Co-Chair of the National Committee, wrote to Fr Moloney, then Provincial of the Salesians as follows:

**Sent:** Wednesday, 27 January 2010 11:09 AM  
**To:** Frank Moloney SDB; Bill Morris  
**Subject:** Parkinson matter

Frank

Greetings and blessings for 2010. ...My last year as Provincial!

This morning Bishop Bill Morris and myself spoke about the contents of your letter to us dated December 22nd 2009.

We would like to suggest a way forward.

It is that you meet with Bishop Morris and myself and Professor Parkinson to see if we can reach a resolution acceptable to all of us.

If this is okay with you, we will take the proposal to Professor Parkinson.

If he gives the green light we would ask the National Office in Bondi to try and find a date that works for all of us. Hopefully we can bring some closure in the near future.

Regards

Tim

**The same day, Fr Moloney replied:**

**Date:** Wed, 27 Jan 2010 14:59:54 +1100  
**To:** Tim Brennan  
**Subject:** RE: Parkinson matter

Tim,

The same to you for a great New Year. It is my penultimate!

I would by all means be happy to have a meeting with yourself and Bishop Bill Morris and Professor Parkinson, if you think that may lead to a resolution.

My starting point will be, however, that there is to be no public exposure of the Salesians – funded by the Salesians and directed by Professional Standards!

Warm regards,  
Frank

2. In an appendix to my Submission last year I provided Fr Moloney's comments on the draft report, which was sent to him to give him an opportunity to challenge any findings or conclusions or to provide clarifications. He said little more by way of specific challenge to the text, findings or conclusions of the report than that the Salesians are not an "Order".

3. It was more than 12 months later, long after the report had been finalised and should have been published, that I received the first indication of any supposed 'anomalies' in the report or 'clarifications of fact' the Salesians wished to make. This was in a draft document written by Fr Moloney in May 2011, criticising a summary of

the findings of my report (he had previously objected strenuously to any release of the full version). The complaints were largely about process, and as I sought to show at length in my Submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry, these complaints were entirely inconsistent with the factual record. The matters of substance challenged some of the conclusions of my report but without adducing any new evidence to support those contentions. In some respects it criticised the summary, complaining of omissions, when the full text of the report dealt with those issues. That seemed to me to be somewhat disingenuous.

Having reviewed these criticisms, I concluded that those contentions were not supported by the documentary record which the Salesians had made available to me, nor by other sources. Other matters raised were irrelevant to the issues - for example, Fr Moloney indicated one of the three priests remained in Samoa because he was a confessor to the Archbishop, who valued him highly. That did not explain why he was not brought back to face his accusers at any stage, nor why the Archbishop had indicated publicly that he had no knowledge of the allegations against the two priests prior to the story being broken by an American journalist. Fr Moloney indicated that Fr C, the priest who was in Rome, had been brought back to Australia on several occasions. True, but only after the man who accused him of sexual abuse had died and the police had confirmed the case was closed.

4. It was at all stages open to the Salesians to agree to the publication of my report in full and to publish their own reply supported by whatever documentary evidence they chose to adduce. At the most, all they ever agreed to was to publish a summary of the report, and then wanted to criticise that summary.

5. To the best of my knowledge, at no point in the last three years have the Salesians or the National Committee for Professional Standards ever offered to publish the full report even with an accompanying document that might offer the Salesians' alternative version of events or which might provide specific challenges to any particular statements in the report. Indeed, in early July 2012, I offered the National Committee for Professional Standards a last opportunity to publish the Report, prior to writing my Submission to this Parliamentary Inquiry. The Co-Chairs declined. The full text of the email from Angela Ryan, dated 5<sup>th</sup> July 2012, is as follows:

Dear Patrick,

At our meeting the other day several possibilities were discussed and as we promised we have taken these options to the Co-Chairs. Their response is as follows: -

1. The Co-Chairs have considered the matter and believe that they are not in a position to release the report at this stage.

2. The Co-Chairs have been in contact with Fr. Greg Chambers of the Salesians. The Salesians are co-operating with the police regarding the allegations against [Fr C]. In fact this very day they have been working with the police and have assured the Co-Chairs of their full co-operation with the police.

With best wishes,

Angela and Tim.

Angela Ryan csb  
Executive Officer

It is apparent from this email that the Co-Chairs of the National Committee had been in recent contact with Fr Chambers, and this would have been another opportunity for the Salesian leadership to agree to the publication of the full report with whatever clarifications they sought to make in an accompanying document. That didn't happen.

In the light of this, I find it difficult to see what factual basis there could be for the statement made by Fr Chambers in evidence to the Committee that the Salesians "fully support the publication of that report". It was effectively published as an appendix to my submission in any event, so their 'support' came after the horse had bolted.

Furthermore, it is surprising that Fr Chambers should claim that the Salesians have not wanted "to suppress it in the past or present". Fr Moloney's email in January 2010 indicates a desire not to have any public exposure of the Salesians and that stance was consistently, and aggressively, maintained.

In 1996, The Catholic Church launched *Towards Healing* as the promise to turn over a new leaf. Amongst the many serious commitments it made was one to truth. "Concealing the truth" it wrote, "is unjust to victims, a disservice to offenders and damaging to the whole Church community". Indeed it is.

I believe the Australian people can have no confidence in those promises if we are unable to believe that the truth will be told even to a Parliamentary Inquiry. Apologies mean nothing without a commitment to truth-telling and an unflinching honesty about past failures, including the cover-ups of the very recent past.

Yours sincerely



Patrick Parkinson AM  
Professor of Law