



Provincial's Response to The Age

The provincial of the Salesians of Don Bosco in Australia and Pacific, Fr. Frank Moloney SDB, has responded to the allegations made by The Age Newspaper's 'cover-up' to the Salesians with the following letter [Tuesday 30th August].

As this letter was not published, Fr Moloney wrote again on 31st August. That letter is reproduced below. It was not published.

Tuesday, 30 August, 2011

Dear Editor,

I do hope that I am permitted the space, in whatever form you regard appropriate, to have a right of reply to the article by Barney Zwarz on the Salesian "cover-up" which was published today in both *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

I regret the incorrect statement in the article that I did not reply to an email. There was no email, even though a person who would give no name or phone number contacted my office on Monday, 29 August, to inform me that the article was to appear.

He was given my correct email, spelt out so that there would be no confusion. I have thus had to wait until now to frame a response.

The Salesians are committed to do everything we can to eliminate the crimes of abuse that continue to take place at every level of society, including among the Salesians. I have been the Provincial of the Salesians for six years, and I have responded with honesty and openness to every journalist and Police inquiry that has been made concerning allegations against Salesians in those six years. There are several journalists and Police officers who can testify to my openness to their questions in our search for the truth. I share their passion to eliminate this affliction and would like to be credited with that good will.

One matter, however, I could not accept. The Catholic group, the National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS), an agency of the Australian Catholic Bishops and the Catholic Religious of Australia, without consultation with me, informed me in August 2009 that we had been reviewed by Professor Parkinson. We were to be subjected to a public inquiry and a Police investigation for three cases where, the Committee claimed, we had "hidden" Salesians from Police inquiry.

This was the basis to the “cover-up” reported in today’s *Age* by Barney Zwarz. It did not begin with Professor Parkinson, but with the NCPS. My legal advice was that this notification, where a negative finding was made against the Salesians by the NCPS, without informing us that we were being reviewed, constituted illegal process. The letter from the Chair of the Executive of the NCPS, Fr Tim Brennan, also included a copy of a letter that was to be sent to the Police, if I did not respond within a certain period. The NCPS was well ahead in its process by August 2009, but this was the first I had heard of Professor Parkinson’s review, sponsored by the NCPS.

There has never been a “cover-up” of these cases, as anyone with the capacity to use Google will discover. Simply type in Klep, Fox and Ayers. These matters have been in the public sphere for almost a decade.

Leaving to one side what is said in the newspaper article, what really happened? One Salesian, Klep, was in Samoa when allegations were made against him. Although no extradition agreement exists between Australia and Samoa, the then Provincial of the Salesians ordered him home. He returned immediately, was tried and convicted and has served time in jail. That episode was covered for many weeks in all media outlets.

The “cover-up” of the other so-called culprits is not true. Fox currently has no charges against him, and has always maintained his innocence. While I have been Provincial (the past 6 years) he has been back to Australia three times. I have informed the Police that he would be in the country, and they have told me that the Police have no issue with him. His regular passage through border control, of course, is further evidence that there has never been a “cover up.”

The third case is more complex. Ayers is an elderly man, in the Pacific well before allegations were made against him. The photograph in *The Age* must be about 40 years old. I have repeatedly encouraged his alleged victim to go to the Police, as there was nothing I could do to bring him home until the Police began an investigation. Eventually the alleged victim did go to the Police, with my support, and the case is ongoing. As such, that situation calls for care in media statements. Although this man is elderly, incontinent, semi-hospitalised and moves in and out of blackouts, the Police will confirm that I have assured them we will do everything we can to bring him to Australia, if that is required.

It is painful to support the efforts of the Catholic Church to stamp out all abuse and dangers of abuse, only to be subjected to an illegal and unjustified process by an agency of the Catholic Church that commissioned Professor Parkinson. I have made my position on the incorrect assessment of data clear on these issues at every turn, and I was glad to see that note appear at the end of the article. It is now up to the Victorian Government to decide if this matter calls for further attention. They, like everyone else, will receive my full collaboration.

Please credit me with that much integrity and good will. The Salesians, who remain committed to quality care and education, have been subjected to illegal process untrue accusations, further promoted by the recent media coverage.

Sincerely,

Francis J. Moloney, SDB, AM, FAHA

Provincial

Fr Moloney wrote again on 31 August. It was not published on the Age.

Wednesday, 31 August, 2011

Dear Editor,

I trust some space can be given to the other side of Professor Parkinson's attack on the Salesians. The National Committee for Professional Standards (NCPS), an agency of the Catholic Church, informed me in August 2009 that we had been reviewed by Professor Parkinson. We were to be subjected to a public inquiry and a Police investigation.

Professor Parkinson was commissioned by the NCPS. My legal advice was that this NCPS notification, where a negative finding was made against the Salesians without informing us that we were being reviewed, constituted illegal process.

What really happened in these cases? One Salesian, Klep, was in Samoa when allegations were made against him. The then Provincial of the Salesians ordered him home. He returned immediately, was tried and convicted and has served time in jail. He is no longer a Priest or Salesian.

Fox currently has no charges against him, and has always maintained his innocence. While I have been Provincial he has been back to Australia three times. I have informed the Police when he would be in the country, and they have no issue with him.

The third case is more complex. I have repeatedly encouraged the alleged victim to go to the Police. Eventually the alleged victim did go to the Police and the case is ongoing. Elderly, incontinent, semi-hospitalised, the Police will confirm that I have assured them we will do everything we can to bring Ayers to Australia.

It is painful to be subjected to an illegal and unjustified process by an agency of the Catholic Church that commissioned Professor Parkinson who now has the ear of the media. I have made my position on the incorrect assessment of data clear on these issues at every turn, also to the media. My full collaboration is assured to rid ourselves of this plague. Please credit me with that much integrity and good will.

Sincerely,

Francis J. Moloney, SDB, AM, FAHA

Provincial

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