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Child sex scandal in two countries rocks Anglican church

by: *MICHAEL McKENNA, AMANDA GEARING, SEAN O'NEILL*

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Eli Ward, abused as a choirboy by the then Dean of Manchester Cathedral. Photographed in Olney, Buckinghamshire. Picture: Paul Rogers *Source: London Times*

A CHILD sex scandal involving victims in Australia and Britain has hit the top echelon of the Anglican Church, with allegations that some of its most senior clergymen failed to respond properly to complaints of horrific abuse.

The former archbishop of York, now Lord (David) Hope of Thornes, yesterday expressed regret over failing to report to police allegations in 1999 and 2003 about a former Queensland Anglican school principal, who rose to become the head of education for the church in Britain.

The late reverend Robert Waddington has been accused of beating and sexually abusing students during the 1960s at St Barnabas boarding school in Ravenshoe, north Queensland, and later, when he was in charge of the choir as dean of Manchester.

A joint investigation by The Australian and The Times newspaper in London has revealed that church officials, including Lord Hope, failed to report the 1999 allegations of abuse made by a former Queensland student and similar claims made in 2003 by the family of a choirboy in Manchester. The alleged victims were never told of the existence of the other allegations.

Waddington is accused of abusing at least three boys at St Barnabas in the 1960s. Two teachers hired by Waddington at St Barnabas, as well as his 1970 replacement as headmaster, Barry Greaves, have since been convicted of child abuse at other schools and parishes in South Australia and Brisbane.

One of those teachers, Peter Gilbert, has also faced an allegation of abuse relating to his time at St Barnabas.

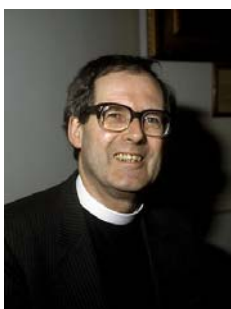
The allegations are the latest to emerge in a string of scandals involving the Anglican Church in Queensland, including the mishandling of child abuse claims at a Toowoomba preparatory school, which led to the resignation of governor-general Peter Hollingworth.

St Barnabas, which opened in 1953, was closed, mid-term, in 1990. North Queensland's Bishop Bill Ray, who took over the diocese in 2007, said yesterday he would launch an internal investigation and inform the Anglican Church's top decision-making body, the General Synod, for the allegations to be referred to the federal royal commission into child abuse.

Reverend Robert Murray Waddington

dean of Manchester.

Picture: UPPA/Photoshot *Source: Supplied*



Bishop Ray confirmed that many of the St Barnabas school files, including enrolment and staff lists, were now missing. The absence of the documents is understood to have hampered detectives from Queensland's child protection unit, Taskforce Argos, who were considering a court application to seek Waddington's extradition from Britain in 2005 after two alleged victims took their claims directly to police. "I have been told that it has been alleged that files were thrown down a disused well or an old tin mine shaft," Bishop Ray said. "Normally the documents would be held by our archivists. As these are new allegations, I will be sending them to the General Synod for referral to the royal commission and we will be co-operating fully." British police last year launched an investigation into Waddington after a former choirboy at the cathedral, Eli Ward, 39, filed a formal complaint and civil action against the Diocese of Manchester, alleging years of sexual abuse by the high-ranking clergyman.

It followed a 1999 complaint by Queenslanders Bim Atkinson, 59, who alleged Waddington physically and sexually abused him between 1964 and 1968 while he was a boarder and choir solo soprano.

His complaint was passed by

Australian church officials to Lord Hope, the then second highest-ranking clergyman in the Church of England, who confronted Waddington about the allegations.

In a letter to Australian church officials, Lord Hope said at the time: "He (Waddington) was clearly shocked and indicated to me that, whilst he may have acted at times in a way which could have been misinterpreted, he could not recall any incidents which were of the 'seriousness' which you describe in your letter.

"He said that he was deeply sorry for anything he may have done so to offend, and wished to extend an unreserved apology to the young man concerned and to make it very clear that there is no question of any such behaviour occurring again."

Mr Atkinson says he was told by Australian church officials in 1999 that Waddington was near death, after undergoing surgery for throat cancer. Waddington didn't die for a further eight years.

Lord Hope, who was involved in the handling of the allegations relating to both Ward and Atkinson, said that "with hindsight, looking back, you feel perhaps you could do more to investigate".

On the failure to report the allegations to police, Lord Hope, now a life peer in the House of Lords, said: "I didn't report to police. These days, however, you should be doubly careful about such allegations. We should have informed police."

Documents show the 2003 complaint, made by the family of Mr Ward, was initially withheld from the Church of England's child protection officers and that a church official had raised concerns about the failure to do so by the then Archbishop of York.

"He (the child protection officer) was not aware of the situation and thanked me for the info. He remarked that this was not an unusual practice by the Archbish (sic)," the internal church document said.

Both Mr Ward and Mr Atkinson were never told of the existence of complaints relating to the other's alleged abuse.

In 2005, two years after the allegations were raised in Manchester, Australian church officials rejected Mr Atkinson's push for an investigation into his case, saying it was "unlikely to produce any additional information".

Mr Atkinson accepted a \$75,000 ex-gratia payment.