

# Joanne McCarthy – Change Instigator for the Common Good

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For journalist Joanne McCarthy the start of 2006 was a foretaste of a drama she would never forget.

With the temperature reaching 44 degrees, New Year's Day 2006 was Sydney's hottest start to the year on record. A total of 44 fires were burning across New South Wales and some on the Central Coast north of Sydney were not far from where Joanne lived. Reporting on these fires would keep her busy for days to come.

What the 45-year-old mother of three didn't know was that this year would be the start of the most difficult but also the most rewarding time of her career at the *Newcastle Herald*. She would find her work condemned by powerful people, praised by those without power and would lead to her being awarded the 2013 Gold Walkley – Australia's version of the Pulitzer Prize for outstanding journalism.

Newcastle is located on the central coast of New South Wales, some 160 kilometres (100 miles) north of Sydney. It is Australia's seventh largest city and is the gateway to the Hunter Valley – the Hunter being the largest regional area in Australia. Steel has been the lifeblood of industry for the last 100 years but this is winding down as coal mining and other new industries take up the slack.

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Joanne McCarthy was born in Gosford, Australia, in 1960, the eldest of eleven children. Gosford is a city located on the Central Coast of New South Wales, about 76 km (47 miles) north of the Sydney. It is known for ocean beaches, parks and natural attractions and is a popular holiday destination.

The McCarthy's are well known members of the Gosford community. Joanne's now-retired father, Jim, was a bricklayer and her mother, Barbara, was a physical education teacher. McCarthy says "we grew up with no money but a very strong sense of family." Both parents are staunch Catholics and are active in church affairs even to this day.

McCarthy attended local Catholic primary and high schools, and obtained her Higher School Certificate at the end of 1977 from a state High School.

Upon leaving home to train as a nurse in 1978, she decided that a male-dominated religion was wasn't for her. However she says her upbringing was the foundation for her moral compass and that seems to be more important to her than an organised religion.

By the end of her second year of nursing training she had decided that nursing didn't suit her and thought librarianship was her future. There was no desire to be a journalist. But Steven Jury, her boyfriend at the time and later to be her husband, pestered her into applying for a cadetship at the *Gosford Star* newspaper. Her crudely written application was accepted and so, somewhat reluctantly, she commenced work there in February 1980. She later joined the *Central Coast Express Advocate* and moved to the *Newcastle Herald* in 2002. She also studied at the University of Newcastle, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2003.

By 2006 this 'accidental' journalist was relishing the role and was a major contributor to the newspaper. In the period since having her first article published in the *Herald* in October, 2002, she had written more than 1,400 stories and contributed to other major feature stories.[1]

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St Pius X Catholic High School, situated in Adamstown, a suburb of Newcastle, was initially opened in 1959 as a Catholic boys' school in nearby Tighes Point. The move to a larger site was completed in 1961 with the purchase and refurbishment of the Lustre hosiery factory. The factory had been built only ten years earlier but the coming of synthetics meant the business was struggling to survive.

Instead of being staffed by trained teachers, such as the Marist Brothers or Christian Brothers, the teachers were secular priests from the Diocese of Maitland. While they were well educated, they were not trained teachers. It wasn't until 1984 that the first lay Principal was appointed.

When 13-year-old Tim Smith (not his real name) came to St Pius X as a student in 1978, the headmaster was Fr Tom Brennan. Fr John Denham was one of the teachers. Denham had joined the college staff in 1973, his first appointment after becoming ordained to the priesthood. Denham's behaviour was no secret within the school. Students would pass the message amongst themselves to steer clear of Denham saying, "Keep your back to the wall", not always realising that some of their fellow students were being sexually abused. One day in late 1979 Tim Smith's mother overheard her son passing on a warning to another student about Denham. After quizzing him, she contacted the school administration who promised to take care of it. Fr Brennan, the headmaster, seemed to do nothing about it and so John's mother moved him to a state High School for the start of the following year.

Denham remained at the school until January 1980 when he was moved to Charlestown, then to Taree in December 1981 and to Waverley College in May 1986. He was employed in these locations as assistant parish priest or a teacher. In 1994, the Newcastle-Maitland Diocese directed that he no longer work with children but no one was informed and he was free to continue to act as a priest. And he continued to abuse.

In 1997, some twenty years after being at St Pius X, Tim Smith contacted the New South Wales Police and made a complaint of sexual abuse by Denham when he was a student at the school. The complaint was investigated, charges were laid in 1999 and in 2000 a jury convicted Denham of two counts of indecent assault. The judge gave him a two-year jail sentence which was suspended.

The case was not reported in the media. It's not uncommon for suppression orders to be made in cases such as these so as to protect the privacy of victims and sometimes to protect the perpetrator from harm. In this instance it appears it simply escaped the notice of the media and as a result the case went unreported.

McCarthy first heard about this when Tim Smith called her early in June 2006. He had found out that Denham was still a priest at large and wanted to know why his conviction of two child sex offences in 2000 had not been reported in the media. He was concerned about the danger of Denham being let loose in the community.

McCarthy promised to follow up on what Tim Smith had told her.

This wasn't the first time she had written about sexual abuse of children already this year. In the prior January she had written two articles about the ongoing pain and suffering to victims and their families as a result of the sexual abuse of paedophile priest, Fr James Fletcher, sixteen years earlier. In April she wrote an article about being contacted by a mother of two sons who had been sexually abused by a sporting coach over many years and how they were still traumatised with the knowledge that he was about to be released from jail after serving a ten-year sentence. And one of her colleagues at *The*

*Herald* had been writing up cases of sexual abuse by clergy since 1995. *Herald* journalist Jeff Corbett, had written articles back in 1997 and 2001 questioning the role of bishops in the Newcastle-Maitland Diocese for allowing a priest, Fr Vincent Ryan, to abuse children over a 20 year period. Ryan was eventually convicted in 1997 sent to jail for 11 years, later to be reduced after an appeal to the High Court of Australia.

McCarthy set about responding to Smith's call by confirming that, indeed, there was no mention in the media of Denham's conviction with the only article being a brief report in the *Newcastle Herald* that simply said "a Catholic priest charged with the indecent assault of a Hunter high school student has had his case adjourned until February 11."

She then did further research and called Fr Denham to hear his side of the story. He said he had already suffered enough. He also said he had a lawyer. "Do I have to get my lawyer now if this [story] is going to damage me in anyway?"

A long article entitled, *In the Name of the Fathers*, was published as a cover story in *The Herald* on 10 June 2006. It not only mentioned Denham but covered the issue of secrecy with two other priests as well. Tim Smith, the ex-student, was quoted as saying:

They knew all about it 28 years ago when my mother first raised it, and they failed to do anything but move him on. Their basic procedure was to move the problem on to somewhere else, and obviously it takes some time to raise its ugly head again, and then they move it on again.[2]

Tim Smith was right to be concerned. Two years later, in August 2008, Denham was charged with 30 sex offences involving 18 boys. By December the number of charges had been increased to 134 involving 39 boys over two decades. Denham pleaded guilty to some of charges and was sentenced to jail for a maximum of 20 years in 2010. But that wasn't all. In 2015 he was convicted of a further 18 charges. A judge remarked, "No safeguards were ever put in place to protect the community from this obviously dangerous individual." [3]

McCarthy had no idea of the impact her 2006 article would have. To her this was just another story. She had no particular axe to grind with the Catholic Church – it was simply to put out the facts of the matter and point out injustice and cover-ups wherever it might occur – in big business, governments or institutions. Her approach as a professional journalist was not simple to report an event, but to link it to related matters and present it in an interesting way. She already written four other articles on various topics that were published the same day. Her next article would be an analysis of the Queen's Birthday honours list where she found a distinct lack of representation of women in the list.

But unbeknown to McCarthy her article had planted seeds in the minds of other victims of clergy abuse to tell what happened to them. At first it would be just a trickle of people telling their families and making complaints to the police but eventually it would be a flood of complaints. This would some considerable time to become apparent. In the meantime, several of the families of victims of child sexual abuse were contacting McCarthy to tell their stories.

It frequently takes many years before a victim discloses what happened as a child. In the book, *Holy Hell*, Patricia Feenan tells the heart-breaking story of how her son was groomed for sex by a trusted family friend, Fr James Fletcher, from the age of 11.[4]

As their three boys were growing up Pat and her husband, John, couldn't understand the behavioural problems Daniel was having as a teenager and later his self-destructive behaviour as a young adult. Pat even saved him from a suicide attempt at their home in September 1995. Over the years they had sought advice about these issues with Fr Fletcher and when they were at their wits end this time Fr Fletcher said to bring Daniel to the presbytery so he could have a talk with him. They did so and left him overnight in the care of Fletcher.

It wasn't until the year 2000 that Daniel admitted his mother he had been abused but at first he wouldn't say who. Later he told her Fr Fletcher had abused him on the night he tried to hang himself. Daniel's parents couldn't understand how this could have happened suddenly to someone of that age. Finally, he told them it started when he was an altar boy. His parents were devastated at the betrayal by Fletcher and the way he had groomed their son. Daniel finally went to the police in June 2002 – some 14 years after the abuse first started.

Why does it take so long for victims to disclose what happened to them as children? Why do they even as adults sometimes continue to be abused?

The Committee for Children (CFC), a global nonprofit dedicated to fostering the safety and well-being of children, list the typical reasons for not telling:

- They've been taught to obey adults.
- They've promised to keep the abuse secret.
- They've been bribed to keep it a secret.
- They've been threatened by the offender to keep it a secret and are scared to tell.
- They feel guilty because they believe that the abuse is their fault.
- They're ashamed to tell.
- They're confused because the offender is someone they know and trust.
- They've been convinced that the abuse is normal or okay.
- They're too young to know that the abuse isn't appropriate—especially if it's done by someone they know and trust.
- They haven't been taught that the abuse is not okay.
- They don't know the words to use to tell.[5]

Daniel Feenan's police statement would take more than 50 hours over 11 months to complete and amount to 50 pages. Pat Feenan describes this difficult period of his life:

He would spend hours with the police and then come home exhausted and upset. His statement was taking considerable time to give because it involved details of his whole association with Fletcher from the initial meeting, the grooming period and then the years of abuse. Daniel was very drained and needed to go slow with breaks to recover. He was having counselling arranged by the police and he said at the time it was helping him to just get through his days. He suffered from a post traumatic stress disorder and was hospitalised for a time for his own safety.[6]

Daniel's father, John Feenan, happened to be the business manager working at the Maitland-Newcastle diocese Chancery (Bishop's office). He was on close terms with Bishop Michael Malone and early into the investigation naïvely told the bishop what had happened to Daniel. Malone then went to Fletcher to "offer pastoral support to a brother priest."

The news of this disclosure to Fletcher infuriated the investigating officer, Detective Sergeant Peter Fox. Observing the reaction of an offender when being confronted with an allegation is an important tool for police. They could no longer use this. It also meant that Fletcher had plenty of time to remove any incriminating evidence he might have in his possession. Which he did.

Taking and dealing with these statements of victims is not easy on police and prosecutors either. Peter Fox described it some years later:

Listening to their stories, typing their statements, I relived their pain. I haven't blocked those images and they still haunt me. I visited them in psychiatric wards and saw the damage to their families. A solicitor from the DPP (Department of Public Prosecutions) broke down reading one of my statements. The abuse was so abhorrent she asked to be relieved of the case. Is it any wonder people don't want to hear and turn away?[7]

From Daniel's statement there were over eighty occasions of offences over a five-year period. In the end the prosecution used only nine of these as they believed these had the most weight to bring about a conviction. Because Fletcher pleaded not guilty to all charges it meant Daniel, followed by his mother, had to endure days in the witness box going through the sordid details of the events and being cross examined by the defence barrister. This was traumatic for both. Pat Feenan also found it hard that she was shunned by people she knew – even though Daniel's name had been suppressed.

The jury's verdict was guilty on all nine charges and Fletcher on was sentenced to ten years jail on 11 April 2005. The first appeal was dismissed. Fletcher suffered a stroke and died on 6 January 2006. His death didn't stop Fletcher's supporters from making a trip to the High Court of Australia with some of the expenses paid from church collections – unbeknown to the donors. This second appeal was also dismissed.

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McCarthy continued to report cases as they came up. Sometimes it got personal. In October 2006 she reported 19 charges of sexually assaulting four teenagers in the late 1980s brought against Fr Paul Evans. He was later to be convicted and jailed for 15 years.

Evans was a personal friend of the Barbara and Jim McCarthy and had married their youngest daughter and husband. Barbara was shocked. "I'd worked with Paul Evans, with the youth groups within our parish," she said. "It was beyond my comprehension that he could live this double life." [8]

The McCarthy family knew many of the priests who were convicted of child sexual abuse.

Others in their parish were not always impressed with what their daughter was doing. "It's history, leave it alone", they would say. Or, "These people who are making claims are just after money" and "Why do these so-called victims leave it so long - they're making it up." Her parents supported Joanne fully, even though the disclosures and the comments from people they knew were often hurtful.

For the period January to September 2007 McCarthy was busy writing some 250 articles on various topics with no stories on clerical sexual abuse. This was about to change dramatically.

Up till this time the media in Australia was reporting horrific cases of sexual abuse as they came up sporadically, one after another. However the Broken Rites organisation in Melbourne had been tracking clerical sexual abuse cases since the early 1990s and had built up a large database. They had obtained information in 1996 that Monsignor Patrick Cotter had covered up the crimes of one of Australia's worst paedophile priests, Father Vincent Gerard Ryan. This report was noticed by McCarthy when it was eventually placed on the Broken Rites website in 2007.

McCarthy wanted to know more. Her *Herald* colleague Jeff Corbett had already written about Ryan with the accusation that the Church hierarchy allowed him to move from parish to parish and not be reported to police. This time she was put in touch with a lawyer who had represented some of the victims of abuse by Ryan. That was when she gained access to the 1996 police interviews of Ryan, and senior church leaders Monsignor Patrick Cotter and his successor Bishop Leo Clarke. These documents confirmed that the Maitland-Newcastle diocese not only knew about and failed to report the crimes of Ryan going back to the 1970s but also allowed Ryan to continue to abuse children. McCarthy also discovered that in 1996 the police had recommended that Monsignor Cotter "be prosecuted for concealing a serious crime but the charges never proceeded, in large part because of his age." Cotter was 82 at the time and died in August 2007.

McCarthy didn't waste any time. On 22 September and in the following week *The Herald* published a collection of articles on clerical sexual abuse and the effect on victims and their families with the lead article under the headline, "I decided to say nothing", referring to the Cotter's behaviour. [9]

Michael Malone, the bishop at the time, was incensed with the exposure. These are three excerpts from what he wrote under the heading *Trial by Media*:

Even for "The Herald" (Newcastle) described recently by one of our priests as "that grubby little rag", the concerted attack on the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle commencing late September 2007 has been quite extreme.

It was not the fault of the Diocese that Monsignor Cotter failed to be charged for his alleged complicity in the Vince Ryan matter. Nor was it his age at the time of his interview with police. The truth is that Monsignor Cotter did not believe he had committed a crime and therefore had nothing to be charged with.

"The Herald' has been quite irresponsible in its reporting of these matters. It is within its rights to report faithfully and objectively - it is not within its rights to distort, to manipulate, to play on the susceptibilities of vulnerable victims and to be judge and jury to deceased prelates. [10]

This response was not published at the time and only came to light in 2013.

What McCarthy was now trying to do was to focus on the institution and the system that allowed these crimes to continue. She wasn't doing this to convict anyone – that was up to the police and the courts.

After the appearance of the series of articles about the Ryan-Cotter disclosures, McCarthy received a tip-off suggesting she should check out a fellow by the name of McAlinden. She had never heard of him but quickly found out that Fr Denis McAlinden had been acquitted in a Western Australian court in 1992 of three indecent assault charges involving a 10-year-old girl.

McAlinden came out from Ireland as a 26-year-old priest to Newcastle in 1949 and some of the offences he has been accused of date back to that time. As complaints mounted he was moved from Newcastle to Western Australia and back again. He also went to New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and England despite church knowledge of his offending over four decades

In 1993 a warrant was issued for the arrest of McAlinden, then aged 76. Even though he was attached to the Maitland-Newcastle diocese they didn't know where he was. They said he might be in

Ireland. It wasn't until October 2005 that the police were told by the diocese that McAlinden was in an aged-care facility in Perth and was dying of cancer. He was interviewed by police but died shortly after without being charged.

In an article dated 29 September 2007, McCarthy identified Philip Wilson, the Archbishop of Adelaide, and previously Maitland-Newcastle vicar-general, as one of three senior clerics who knew about McAlinden. McCarthy wrote: "Archbishop Philip Wilson confirmed yesterday that he had been involved with the Father McAlinden matter but declined to give detail." [11]

According to Geoffrey Robertson, the Australian human rights lawyer based in London, this is an important case because it asks questions about the Vatican's knowledge of McAlinden's movements and offending. [12]

Publication of this new information was a public relations disaster for the Maitland-Newcastle Catholic diocese. Six days later an apology was issued admitting the "distress and lifelong impact of Father McAlinden's actions on all those affected has not been publicly acknowledged until now." The statement went on to say, "However, the diocese has been co-operating fully with the authorities regarding Father McAlinden for some time." [13]

This was a big change as previous articles in *The Herald* had either been ignored or branded as an anti-Catholic propaganda.

It was after her piece about McAlinden was published in *The Herald* that the calls came in. Only then did McCarthy begin to appreciate the extent of McAlinden's crimes:

I was overwhelmed. And it was women and some of them mature women, sobbing. It quickly became apparent that McAlinden was a completely opportunistic child sex offender with victims and his target age range was little girls aged between about five and 12. And he was a piece of work. He had a terrible temper. He liked to push his weight around. And he molested hundreds of little girls over four decades. And so many of these women had lived with that all their lives. And there was this trail of destruction after Denis McAlinden: women with alcohol problems, women just leading these quietly desperate lives. [14]

No one knows the full extent of the offending by McAlinden against young girls.

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World Youth Day (WYD) is a big event for the Catholic Church. It was initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985 and is held internationally every two or three years. In 2008 it was Sydney's turn. Running from July 15-20, it culminated with an open-air Mass celebrated by Pope Benedict XVI on the last day. There were 3,000 priests in attendance at the Randwick Racecourse and an estimated audience of 400,000 pilgrims, many from countries around the world.

For the Church to be celebrating youth was ironic to McCarthy since the many victims and the families she was in contact had nothing to celebrate. In the lead up to the event McCarthy received calls saying the Pope should apologise for the sexual abuse by priests and religious. McCarthy was behind *The Herald's* campaign that followed, called 'Say Sorry'. [15]

Other calls for an apology came from around Australia. Bishop Malone from the Maitland-Newcastle diocese stated publicly there should be an apology and an opportunity for victims to be able to meet with the Pope. McCarthy personally phoned or emailed 14 bishops. Including Bishop Malone, there were only three who in support. The other bishops remained silent.

In her opinion piece before the Pope arrived she had said:

The Catholic Church has to take responsibility for that if it wants to survive. It has to stop blaming "relativism" and "modernism" and clamping down on any dissent, and accept that it destroyed the traditional relationship between church and faithful.

That is why an apology to Australians is needed, and it's why it is not enough.

The Pope needs to instruct his bishops to stop fighting victims. [16]

On 7 July revelations were made on the ABC *Lateline* TV program that the Sydney Archbishop, Cardinal George Pell, had misled a man who had complained of being abused by a priest and was seeking redress. [17]

In a 2002 letter to the victim, Anthony Jones, Pell said that his request was refused because the Church had not received any other complaints against the priest, Fr Terence Goodall. This was in

spite of the fact that Pell had received a report a few days earlier that Anthony Jones' complaint of abuse had been substantiated.

The other problem for Pell was that a second letter was cited that showed he had written to another victim on the same day acknowledging abuse by Fr Goodall. Goodall would later be convicted of indecent assault against Jones. The correspondence had taken place six years earlier, so it is highly likely this revelation on *Lateline* was timed to damage Pell's reputation ahead of the Pope's visit – and it succeeded.

Jones did receive a letter from Pell on 11 August 2008. It said, "I do apologise to you for my (2002) letter ... which was poorly drafted and, I regret, open to interpretations which I did not intend." [18]

The next fiasco involved the coordinator of WYD, Bishop Anthony Fisher, making an unfortunate statement about Anthony Foster.

For many Australians the Foster's tragic story was well known. Two of their daughters were repeatedly raped by the Parish Priest at Oakleigh, Victoria, when they were pupils at Sacred Heart Primary school.

It deeply affected them from then on. Katherine developed a heavy drinking habit and was hit by a drunk driver in 1999. She was left physically and mentally disabled, requiring 24-hour care. In 2008, Emma Foster committed suicide at the age of 26.

That was bad enough, but it was the way the Church treated the parents that frustrated and disappointed them. This story was told in Chrissie Foster's book, *Hell on the Way to Heaven*. [19] The Fosters were frequently in the media saying the Church had to change its ways in dealing with offending priests and victims and to apologise for past failings.

Melbourne-based Chrissie and Anthony Foster heard the reports about the Pell revelations while they were holidaying in Scotland and decided to return to Australia and try to meet with the Pope to tell their story. On their way back Anthony Foster was interviewed in London by ABC *Lateline* and expressed a desire to meet with the Pope in Sydney.

The WYD program was underway when Bishop Anthony Fisher spoke with journalists about the distraction to the festival. In answer to a question about Anthony Foster, Bishop Fisher said, "I think most of Australia was enjoying, delighting in the beauty and goodness of these young people ... rather than dwelling crankily, as a few people are doing, on old wounds." [19]

The response to these remarks was anger from many quarters. Bishop Fisher later explained that his comments were directed at the media and not the Fosters but this didn't wash with many people. To them it was just confirming that the Church hierarchy was out of touch.

On 19 July the Pope did make an apology in St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney to a congregation of bishops, priests, seminarians and novices:

I am deeply sorry for the pain and suffering the victims have endured, and I assure them that, as their Pastor, I too share in their suffering. These misdeeds, which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation. They have caused great pain and have damaged the Church's witness.

I ask all of you [priests] to support and assist your Bishops, and to work together with them in combating this evil. Victims should receive compassion and care, and those responsible for these evils must be brought to justice. It is an urgent priority to promote a safer and more wholesome environment, especially for young people.

As the Church in Australia continues, in the spirit of the Gospel, to address effectively this serious pastoral challenge, I join you in praying that this time of purification will bring about healing, reconciliation and ever greater fidelity to the moral demands of the Gospel. [20]

The apology was delivered without any victims present. It was kept a secret at the time but after the Pope had left the country it was revealed that the Pope had met privately and celebrated Mass with four hand-picked victims – two men and two women. The Fosters were not invited.

The WYD was meant to be one of the greatest moments in the life of Cardinal Pell and for the Church and in many respects it was a triumph for both.

But McCarthy believes the combination of these three events – the lack of public support by all bar three bishops for an apology by the Pope, the Pell letters and the Fisher comments – was the turning point in the way the public viewed the Church's behaviour in dealing with sexual abuse.

At least now there was one bishop that had broken ranks and was speaking out. Over several articles McCarthy praised Bishop Malone for his stand in supporting the call for an apology, for the changes he was putting into place and for his acknowledgement that he had 'stuffed things up' in many ways in the past. He said he had moved from a focus on defending the Church to feeling empathy for the victims. And while he didn't like what *The Herald* had printed, he said he needed to see it because it helped him to do more than he would have done otherwise.[21] Coming from someone who had previously considered *The Herald* to be "irresponsible" in its reporting, this was an amazing change of heart.

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After the hectic period of the Pope's visit in 2008, things were relatively quiet regarding stories in *The Herald* of sexual abuse and the Church.

Bishop Malone believed the Pope's words during the apology was a clear message to bishops and priests for change. He had shown an example in his own diocese by giving a personal apology and asking forgiveness for his own failings. He had also taken the initiative of establishing Zimmerman House child protection unit.

In a lengthy piece written by McCarthy, Bishop Malone confessed his frustration with his fellow bishops for their silence and inaction. He said bishops did respond when issues with priests were discovered but he challenged the bishops to be more proactive. "Get out there and you can do a lot better than you've been doing. Be more compassionate, be more understanding, more empathetic with victims, and make sure you bring the perpetrators to justice," he said in the interview.[22]

Malone's confirmation that nothing had changed in the Church hierarchy's approach to sexual brought forward the first calls to McCarthy for an inquiry to be held.[23]

McCarthy also reported on one important case which may have sent a quiver of fear into some senior clergy. It involved Tom Brennan, the headmaster at St Pius X Catholic High School, later to become the Vicar General of the Maitland-Newcastle diocese. He was convicted in March 2009 for making a false statement to police in which he said he knew nothing about John Sidney Denham, a teacher at the school.[24]

On 1 May 2010, McCarthy wrote a feature piece which reviewed the apparent lack of action of Philip Wilson, the then Maitland-Newcastle Diocese Vicar-General, in allegedly ignoring complaints by parents and other teachers. It painted a grim picture of systemic failure dating back decades even before Wilson.[25]

One story that kept popping up during the 2010-12 period was the question of what the police were doing in following up on the alleged cover ups by senior clergy. McCarthy had supplied relevant information to the police as she came across it. This information included a letter from a former bishop urging Fr McAlinden to agree to be defrocked. The letter from Bishop Leo Clarke concluded:

Finally, I beg you for the sake of souls and the good of the Church to cooperate in this matter so that it may be speedily resolved. A speedy resolution of this whole matter will be in your own good interests, as I have it on very good authority that some people are threatening seriously to take this whole matter to the police.[26]

Wow! The disclosure was dynamite.

McCarthy continued to write articles on a regular basis as calls for an enquiry came from victims, family members and lawyers on a regular basis. McCarthy herself joined in the call with regular opinion pieces.

By April 2012 even some NSW politicians were calling for an inquiry since the Victorian Government had announced a parliamentary inquiry into the 'Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and Other Organisations'.

However influential parties such as the Australian Lawyers Alliance said this was an issue going beyond state borders. A national inquiry was needed.[27]

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It was now six years since McCarthy had been delving into the issues of child abuse. And the articles weren't all about the Catholic Church. The Anglican Church in Newcastle were part of it as well. Later the Salvation Army would be in the spotlight.



In a revealing interview with journalist Matthew Knott, McCarthy explained why she became so involved:

Is it reasonable to stand by and say, 'I'm a journalist,' and not get involved? I think that's where my Catholic upbringing comes into it in a weird way. You have to leave your ego behind and think: what is the right thing to do here? If you're just sitting there wallowing in it with them, you're part of the problem. That's where the impulse to be an advocate comes from.[28]

Bruce Shapiro, executive director of the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma in New York, says stories that spring from a journalist's sense of injustice is the future for investigative journalism. He contends this form of journalism "can make a difference and change the world." [29]

The Dart Centre also helps journalists deal with trauma. Like emergency workers and counsellors, journalists are not immune to trauma and stress from the work they do in covering tragic events such as road deaths, murders, suicides and child sexual abuse. Each person has to deal with it in their own way. For McCarthy her way to relieve stress was marathon running and walking her dog, Lloyd.

One of the most disturbing series of stories McCarthy wrote about in this period was that of a couple in the Hunter region who were charged with sexual abuse of two of their four children – a son, 12, and a daughter, 11. Their mother, 30, was arrested and later charged with "16 offences including seven counts of aggravated sexual intercourse with her son and daughter." [30]

The children's father, 50, faced charges of child pornography, plus "four counts of using a child under 14 to make child abuse material, disseminating the material, procuring a child under 14 for an unlawful sexual activity and inciting a child to commit an act of indecency."

A second man, 43, was charged with "inciting the boy to an act of indecency, committing an act of indecency with the girl, producing child abuse material and appearing in a child pornography video with the boy."

This was only the start of the police investigation. McCarthy would follow this case for another three years as the investigation revealed this was part of a world-wide network of parents who had sex with their own children. Further charges were laid against the couple and the second man.

After a tip-off from police in Australia, UK police were shocked to discover 2,000 pages of web chat logs as well as 14,000 indecent images and 300 videos of children being abused. Five people in the UK were arrested and later jailed. The prosecutor said after the case concluded, "This was a horrific case of systematic child abuse where the defendants subjected children as young as four to atrocious acts of sexual abuse and encouraged others across the world to commit similar offences."

All three Australians were given long jail terms.

All the same McCarthy found some stories were just too horrifying to print. "There are some awful, awful and incredibly sad stories here, some that will never see the light of day in the newspaper because you just would not do it to people," she said. [31]

The work was taking its toll. It would have been much easier if she had not become absorbed to such a degree. But she couldn't walk away from it. Victims and their families were trusting her with their stories and she was retelling them with dignity but at the same time pointing out the systemic problem behind these stories. She estimates she's interviewed 200 victims. Many of them said she was the first person they had spoken about it. In such instances she would connect them with support people who she knew could help - lawyers, police officers and support groups. [32]

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The first *Herald* readers read that 45-year-old man, John Pirona, was missing was on Tuesday 24 July 2012. It was reported that police were concerned about his welfare and were desperately seeking information from the public about his whereabouts. His description and the make of his car were given and anyone with information asked to contact Lake Macquarie police.

On the following Thursday the smiling photo of John was on the front page of *The Herald*. The opening lines to the article by Joanne McCarthy read:

On Saturday night Tracey Pirona hugged her husband as she has done many times before, and reassured him: "We'll get through this." On Sunday morning she found the letter she had feared for years, and rang police. [33]

In the letter he said he didn't want to be a "depressed and negative influence" in their children's lives. The letter ended with the ominous words, "Too much pain."

McCarthy's article went on to explain that John, as a 13-year-old, had been abused at school by a priest "who cannot be named for legal reasons." The legal reason at the time was because the priest, the notorious Fr John Sidney Denham, was in jail facing further legal proceedings on numerous charges of child sexual abuse. And the school, which could not be named either, was St Pius X Catholic High School in Newcastle.

"The lack of prosecutions against those responsible for moving paedophile priests and hiding their crimes ate at her husband," Tracy said. She explained her husband had a difficult time throughout his life in dealing with the aftermath. The couple had separated only a short time before but they were still close and he had been with family for dinner on the Saturday night.

On the same day the paper also conducted a poll of readers, "Do you support calls for a royal commission into the Catholic Church's handling of child abuse cases?"

The next day the results were published: YES 92.1%, NO 7.9%, TOTAL VOTES 1434

McCarthy's article also brought an immediate response from readers. Emails flooded in to *The Herald* with messages such as, "This story breaks my heart. That poor man and his poor family." Another said, "Shame on the Catholic church. My heart goes out to these men and families. Stay strong!" And, "Oh, what a crying shame. This poor man has suffered all these years and is at breaking point. A royal commission is needed." Finally, "I hope and pray for the safe return of John to his family."

Early on the Friday police found the body of John Pirona in a car in bushland north of Newcastle. He had ended his life overnight after having dinner with his family.

Normally the media statement says "there were no suspicious circumstances" and it's left to family and friends to grieve and no more is heard. This case would be very different, the reason being that John was only one of many of Denham's victims. The extended Pirona family believed they owed it to the other survivors for John's story to be shared and to expose the truth about the Catholic Church's handling of child sex abuse issues over decades. In fact, John's suicide was one of 30 suicides of victims of sexual abuse by church institutions in the Hunter region. At least 12 of these were former students of St Pius X.

John, known as Joey to family and friends, was described by them as "funny and articulate" and who "led a full life." How could it be that he felt he had to desert his loving wife and two beautiful, talented children, Siennah, 11 and Lateisha, 7? His action was difficult for many people to comprehend. John's family was determined to help them to understand and to do something about it.

One suggestion that came from a Catholic who had been following the story of the Pirona tragedy was for *The Herald* should organise a petition for a royal commission. So that's what they immediately did. But that was only the start.[34]

John's death had a bit impact on many people in the region and it was no different for McCarthy. Over the previous year John had called her several times to chat. They knew each other well. They had something in common in coming from big Catholic families.[35] John was one of eight children of Pamela and Louis Pirona – four girls and four boys. Louis was a well-known Newcastle solicitor. The parents had already experienced the loss of one son, Matthew, to cancer. Now they faced another tragic loss.

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It was at 2 am on an August morning that McCarthy found herself unable to sleep. She couldn't get out of her mind what had happened over the last 10 days. She then started to write from the heart and the words came tumbling out explaining why a royal commission into church sex abuse was needed. This piece would be recognised as one of the most outstanding pieces of journalism for 2012. She submitted it to the paper electronically with the date-stamp showing "3.58 AM 3 August 2012."

The article printed in *The Herald* on the following day was called *Too much pain to ignore any more*. [36] In the article McCarthy summarised the many years of inaction by the Church hierarchy and what the Herald was trying to do about it:

The child sex abuse crisis has demonstrated why a critical and responsible media is vital in democracy.

The *Herald* has been reporting on this issue in a sustained way since 1995 when Vince Ryan was charged. From 2007 it has exposed the cover-ups.

It has been the voice of the Hunter – but not of the powerful. On this issue, it has been the voice of those silenced by a church that committed crimes against them.

She then went identified the target for the next part of the strategy – the gatekeepers, the politicians.

I've been accused many times over the past six years of trying to bring down the church, or having a vendetta against the church.

Far from it.

My aim has been to restore faith in institutions including the church, by allowing people to believe in them again. The aim of this newspaper is to uncover any injustices that may have occurred and learn the truth. To speak up for the victims. To shine the light on criminals within the clergy and those who protected them, or failed to protect the most vulnerable of their flock.

The *Herald* has not followed the typical short media cycle on this. It has mounted a sustained campaign of support for victims and families, and a determination to expose the truth.

It has highlighted outstanding work by police, and acknowledged attempts by people within the church who have tried to change the institution from the inside.

And now it is time for government to recognise this is an issue of "substantial public importance".

McCarthy always had the support of *The Herald* editors even if she had at times yelled and screamed abuse at them to get her way – which was simply her way of trying to obtain justice for victims. The three editors she had worked with over the years had the difficult task of facing threats of legal action over the disclosures, of not alienating the many Catholics readers of the *Herald* and finding space for her stories. But this time, Chad Watson, the recently appointed editor was so moved by the article that he instituted the campaign called 'Shine the Light'. The purpose of the campaign was to gain public support for a royal commission into child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and other institutions.

This was no longer a solo effort – it was a team effort involving, among others, *Herald* journalists Ian Kirkwood, Jason Gordon and of course Joanne McCarthy and Chad Watson. All four would later be presented with a Walkley award for their Community and Regional Affairs reporting.

Over the twelve months of 2006 McCarthy had written eight articles on sexual abuse out of a total of around 400 articles. Six years later the 'Joanne McCarthy' by-line would appear on some 135 articles in the *Herald* on the subject of sexual abuse in institutions out of a total of around 387 articles she would write in 2012.

A profound change had happened to McCarthy along the journey. She was no longer the journalist writing stories in her usual professional and detached way – she was now clearly at the activist end of the journalism spectrum and part of the story.

Ian Kirkwood, one of her colleagues at the *Herald* described McCarthy's dogged determination and position of trust she held in the community:

Where others - myself included - have too often accepted the non-responses that organisations often use to deflect probing questions, Joanne has kept reloading the evidence and victim testimonies that have been her ammunition and fired them back at the authorities until they had no choice but to act.

She has acted as counsellor, advocate, muse and battering ram for God knows how many people whose lives have been ruined by the very church that promised to protect them.[37]

On 31 August the front page of *The Herald* broke the news of further charges laid against local priest Tom Brennan.[38] He had been alerted by students and parents as far back as 1979 that Fr John Denham was abusing children at St Pius X school and, as headmaster, he failed to do anything about it. He had previously been convicted in 2009 for making a false statement to police.

Brennan was the first Australian Catholic clergy member to be charged with concealing child sex crimes by another alleged offender. On top of that Brennan was charged with eight counts of sexually assaulting an eight-year-old boy in 1984-85 and with physical abuse of two students who reported Denham's assaults. Two months later he would die in hospital of cancer just before his case was due to be heard.

Without *The Herald's* disclosures these criminal charges would most likely not have been made.

The next move by *The Herald* was to sponsor a public forum in Newcastle on the need for a royal commission. On 16 September more than 400 people attended and heard moving speeches from John Pirrona's widow, Tracey, and from his father, Louis. Upper House Member of Parliament, David Shoebridge, chaired the meeting.[39] Other speakers included Peter FitzSimons the columnist,

author, and former Australian rugby union player. Victims' advocate Peter Gogarty, himself a survivor of abuse, spoke – as well as Sydney barrister Andrew Morrison. Joanne McCarthy spoke of the consequences of the Church's failings. The consequences were being borne by victims and their families, not by the church. This had to change.]

The meeting was then opened for others from the audience to speak. Two women spoke about their experiences of abuse.

Detective Chief Inspector Peter Fox had come to the meeting just to listen. He had no intention of speaking as to do so without authorization was forbidden for members of the police force. He was reflecting on the words Peter FitzSimons had used in quoting Edmund Burke, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." He suddenly jumped to his feet and came up to the microphone.

Peter Fox, like Joanne McCarthy, was not a native of the Hunter region. He is the eldest of four children of a World War II veteran, and grew up in a housing commission estate in Busby on the western outskirts of Sydney. In the 1960s and '70s it was a rough place to grow up in and it toughened him up. "I had a couple of teeth knocked out at school," he said.[40]

Fox joined the New South Wales police force in 1978. His talents were quickly recognised and he was in training to be a detective a year later. In 1983 he moved from Sydney to the Hunter Valley where he has remained ever since.

Fox became somewhat of a celebrity cop in Newcastle. His name appeared numerous times in the local newspapers as a result of his work in investigating major crimes ranging from drug busts, sexual assaults, thefts and murders. He was also the main character in John Suter-Linton's true crime novel, *Murder at Anna Bay*. [41] This is a story of how Fox's persistence and tenacity gained a conviction of the killer of Judith Brown, a mother of three, who was murdered in her Anna Bay home, just north of Newcastle, on 2 June 2000. One of the episodes of the 2006 television series, *Forensic Investigators*, had Fox describing how he and his team went about solving this case. [42]

In 1999, Fox had inherited case file Father Denis McAlinden, of Maitland-Newcastle Catholic diocese. The number of complaints grew over the years that followed. He had also been the investigating officer in the case of Fr James Fletcher who was jailed in 2005.

He was promoted to the rank of Detective Chief Inspector in 2007.

By the time he came to speak at the meeting calling for a royal commission Fox had spent 34 years in the police force and around 20 years in building up an understanding how the Catholic Church was dealing with the criminality of certain priests. He told the meeting he was sticking his neck out by speaking, but he said he was aware the Church was alerting offenders, destroying evidence and moving priests to protect the "good name" of the Church. He also surprised the audience by saying the police did not have it "under control" as was being stated by the then Premier of NSW, Barry O'Farrell. He said he had lots of information he could disclose at a royal commission. Fox received a standing ovation at the meeting for his forthrightness. [43]

In an open letter published in *The Herald* on 8 November 2012, Fox appealed directly to the state Premier, Barry O'Farrell to initiate a royal commission. [44] In the letter he didn't criticise the way police had handled the investigations. When Fox was interviewed on the *Lateline* television program by Tony Jones that same night he revealed he had been cut off from continuing the investigations he had started in 1997 and gave reasons why he should still be involved. He again said he was not critical of the investigating team, Strike Force Lantle. However he was now airing internal matters on national TV and this would cause him problems. He added:

I don't think I'd be lying if I said that a lot in the police force would consider me rather outspoken. I'm sure that some hierarchy in the police force won't be wanting to put me on their Christmas card list after the letter today and after speaking here tonight. [45]

Peter Fox would indeed pay a heavy price for his comments.

Now, while Fox hadn't directly commented on the conduct of police investigations into the Catholic Church hierarchy, McCarthy had been doing so for some time. In 2011 she had written a damning article which said in part:

The police investigation of an alleged Catholic Church cover-up of a Hunter paedophile priest has been branded a "disgrace" after nearly a year of delays, including the loss of a three-member strike force charged with investigating it. [46]

Senior police had no love for McCarthy either and so it was no real surprise that, when Premier Barry O'Farrell next day announced the appointment of a Special Commission of Inquiry, a major part would be devoted to the investigation into collusion between Fox and McCarthy.

In the media release O'Farrell stated:

I have full confidence in Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione and believe our police serve us with great integrity. However, concerns have been raised about both the police handling of investigations as well as possible interference by the church in those investigations. These matters have been raised by a senior serving officer, and deserve to be fully investigated.[47]

When the inquiry got underway a year later the barristers for the NSW Police Force were relentless in trying to "stitch-up" both McCarthy and Fox. McCarthy was in the witness box for five days of questioning. Fox had to endure 14 days of interrogation. As Fox said later:

From my first contact with the Special Commission, behind closed doors, I was attacked. Material I considered relevant and tried to present was rejected. Much of my original submission was redacted with instruction from the Special Commission not to raise certain matters at the public hearings.

Throughout the Special Commission I felt more like a criminal on trial than a witness.

This hostile treatment continued over an unprecedented and oppressive 14 days of repetitive cross-examination. During the hearings my wife and I were subjected to intimidation and harassment within and outside the court. Threats of physical violence resulted in a local court issuing a personal violence order to protect us, the offender being an ex-police officer and associate of senior police present at the hearings.

The Special Commission knew I was receiving treatment for stress before subjecting me to a final day of five and a half hours of cross examination ending at 7pm. That final onslaught left me mentally and physically broken.[48]

Commissioner Margaret Cunneen's findings were published on 30 May 2014 in a four-volume report. McCarthy was exonerated:

The Commission considered a contention raised by the NSW Police Force to the effect that McCarthy had been involved, in league with Fox, in concealing evidence from police and hindering the Strike Force Lantle investigation. As noted in Chapter 8, McCarthy first brought the church concealment documents to the attention of police by providing them to Detective Senior Constable Shaun McLeod at Lake Macquarie LAC. She later provided further information to Detective Inspector Waddell and subsequently to Detective Chief Inspector Tayler at Newcastle City LAC, Inspector Townsend at Northern Region and Detective Inspector Parker for Strike Force Lantle. Thereafter, McCarthy agitated in a number of media articles for a proper investigation of the church concealment allegations. She even took the step in April 2011 of filing a complaint with the Police Integrity Commission because she believed the investigation was not progressing. She made her complaint as a journalist and a citizen but not on Newcastle Herald letterhead and without the knowledge of her editor. Later, when she was satisfied the matter was being properly investigated, she turned her attention to other things. The fact of McCarthy's filing a complaint with the Police Integrity Commission was never referred to in any article she wrote.

The Commission finds no evidence that McCarthy was involved, in league with Fox, in concealing evidence from police and hindering the Strike Force Lantle investigation. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that McCarthy was generally determined to provide to police as much information as possible so as to assist with the investigation of the church concealment allegations.[49]

The findings against Fox meant it was the end of the career for one of the best investigators in the NSW Police Force. A report on ABC News gave this summary:

The Commission finds no credible evidence to support the notion that there are senior police in Northern Region Command of the New South Wales Police Force, including Newcastle City Local Area Command, who were prepared to take steps to try to ensure that alleged child abuse offences involving Catholic church officials were not investigated or not properly investigated.

The Commission considers that by at least 2010 Fox had lost the objectivity required of an investigating officer regarding such matters. While he remained passionate about things

involving the Catholic Church, he no longer possessed the detachment necessary for properly investigating such matters. In short, he had become a zealot.

He provided sensitive information about police investigations (including an internal police report and a victim's statement) to a journalist, McCarthy."

Fox gave evidence to the Commission that was implausible.[50]

The findings were in spite of the fact that the head of the NSW Sex Crimes unit, Superintendent John Kerlatec, had agreed under cross examination that an internal police email dated early May 2010 revealed there was little urgency from a senior officer to investigate serious allegations of child sexual abuse cover-up. He also agreed it appeared the officer, inspector Dave Waddell was trying to shut down the investigation.[51]

NSW Member of Parliament, David Shoebridge believes the commission report was flawed for another reason. "The Cunneen inquiry rejected the key evidence about the culpable arrangements between the police and the church," he said. "In rejecting that, it rejected Detective Chief Inspector Fox's conclusions. The report is fundamentally flawed." [52]

Peter Fox resigned from the NSW Police Force the following November. Fox admits he did 'cut corners' and accepts this criticism. McCarthy has sympathy for Fox. "You're dealing with really serious offences – distressing, devastating offences – against children," she said. "You work in that area for too long, you get views about it and it is easy to lose objectivity. I am not making any excuses for that but I certainly do understand how it can happen." [53]

The final volume of the Commission's report was not made public because it contained findings that may lead to charges against a senior Catholic Church official.

On 17 Mar 2015 Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson became the most senior Catholic clergyman in the world to be charged with concealing child sex abuse perpetrated by Fr James Fletcher. This was five years after Strike Force Lantle was launched to investigate allegations of concealment of serious offences related to child abuse by clergy in the Maitland-Newcastle Diocese of the Catholic Church. Following an unsuccessful attempt to have the charges dropped, Wilson is due to face court in 2016.

The question remains why did it take a commission of inquiry before police finally acted when Premier Barry O'Farrell was so adamant the police had these investigations "under control"?

It's useful to remind ourselves of the words of the late Dietrich Borchardt, librarian, scholar and author of *Commissions of Inquiry in Australia*:

Royal commissions and similar investigations are in the first place political instruments used by the government of the day for its own ends. Be that to exculpate itself, to nail political enemies ... or to clean up an Augean stable in a government bureau or department.[54]

While this inquiry had achieved what it set out to achieve in discrediting Peter Fox, in actual fact it was an enormously expensive exercise in irrelevancy. To see why, we need to go back to the week NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell announced the special inquiry.

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Johanne McCarthy normally works from home down the coast and rarely visits *The Herald* offices. On the day she was meeting with the editor, Chad Watson, someone said, "Take a look at the TV." On the screen was Prime Minister Julia Gillard. McCarthy didn't know what was going on but then heard the words, "child sexual abuse." She broke down and cried. The six years of work had at last paid off. There wasn't a dry eye in the place. It was a bittersweet moment, though, because that same day many staff at *The Herald* were being made redundant.

Julia Gillard's announcement of the creation of a national royal commission into institutional responses to instances of child sexual abuse on 11 November 2012 was a watershed in that, for the first time, the issues would get the attention they deserved.

This inquiry was not to be just about the Catholic Church but would examine cases of abuse in all institutions. State-based inquiries, such as the NSW inquiry and the parliamentary inquiry into church sex abuse already underway in Victoria, had narrow terms of reference with limited resources and they could not look at the problem across all institutions nationally.

When McCarthy interviewed the Prime Minister a few weeks later, Gillard acknowledged that *The Herald's* 'Shine the Light' campaign was the trigger for the decision to initiate the Royal Commission. "When we look back, one of the things that will be most important, and most remembered in this part

of the nation's history, will be the royal commission into child abuse," she said. "It will be nation-changing." [55]

This would be the largest royal commission in Australia's history. The funding allocation was \$285 million for the period 2102-2016. A staff of 150 personnel was initially required, later to increase to 250. Headquartered in Sydney, other commission offices were opened in key areas around Australia.

On 26 June 2013 Julia Gillard sent this letter to McCarthy:

Dear Joanne

I am sending you this letter in the very final moments of my last evening as Prime Minister. I do so with enormous pride.

Joanne, you are a truly remarkable person.

Thanks in very large measure to your persistence and courage, the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry and the federal Royal Commission will bring truth and healing to the victims of horrendous abuse and betrayal.

Please know that in your remarkable struggle to tell the story about this shameful chapter in our nation's history, you are not alone. Thousands of Australians share your passion for justice - I'm one of them. [56]

The Royal Commission held its first public hearing on Monday, 16 September 2013, exactly twelve months to the day the Newcastle forum had met to demand a royal commission.

Although McCarthy is widely acknowledged for being responsible for bringing about the Royal Commission she doesn't agree. She says the credit is due to the bravery of the victims and their families who came forward with their stories that brought it into the open, not just in the Hunter, but throughout Australia. The books written by Chrissie Foster and Pat Feenan were valuable in explaining firsthand the suffering of victims and families. The response of the community to the suicide of John Pirona was significant in bringing on the demand for a royal commission. And finally, Peter Fox was a key player in convincing the NSW government on the need to hold an inquiry.

In 2013 McCarthy received the 2013 Graham Perkin Award as Australian Journalist of the Year, the NSW Gold Kennedy Award and the Gold Walkley Award [57] for her work on child sexual abuse within institutions including the Catholic and Anglican churches and the Salvation Army.

There is no question that McCarthy was the sustained voice of victims in their search for justice. She learned from listening and reflecting on what each survivor told her. She lived with the heartbreak of their stories and persevered without wavering in her strength. And she led with compassion and empathy in translating their stories into the demand for recognition and justice.

Joanne McCarthy still writes for *The Herald* and is still her down-to-earth self.

When she saw the movie, *Spotlight*, a few weeks ago she couldn't help being moved by what she saw. "Watching *Spotlight* was like watching my life for the past 10 years," she said. To her, the parallels of the Boston experience and Newcastle were amazing:

*Spotlight* is a movie about real events in Boston. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse is not theatre for our entertainment or a show trial, but a constant reminder that each and every one of us has a responsibility to protect the most vulnerable in society. If we don't, there will be abuse. [58]

We will remember Joanne McCarthy as the accidental journalist and the model for what a change instigator can achieve. With the result of her work being for the common good, it also ticks all the boxes as a modern-day example of individual wisdom in action.

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