NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

# Senior church officials in Australia under investigation

NCR Staff | Aug. 13, 2012

Three senior church officials in Australia are under investigation for ties to an alleged cover-up of a priest?s sexual assault of young girls, an Australian newspaper has reported.

According to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, an investigation by New South Wales police has named Fr. Brian Lucas, general secretary of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, as a person of interest in relation to an alleged concealment of the actions of pedophile priest Denis McAlinden.

Other persons of interest are Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide and retired Bishop Michael Malone of Maitland-Newcastle.

According to multiple news reports, the three allegedly had knowledge of McAlinden?s abuse in 1993, a decade before the church reported the matter to authorities. McAlinden, never facing charges, died in 2005, but two years later the Maitland-Newcastle diocese confirmed that he was a serial child sex offender believed to have targeted hundreds of girls -- ages 4 to 12 -- for more than four decades.

A brief of evidence and a report on the 15-month investigation into the church?s handling of the case is expected to be turned over to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the coming weeks, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported.

Politicians and advocate groups are calling for a royal commission of the church?s handling of abuse claims. A July 26 statement from Maitland-Newcastle Bishop Bill Wright said he was ?broadly supportive of public inquiries into these matters.?

*The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that from 1993 to 1995, Lucas, Wilson and Malone played a part in an attempted ?speedy? defrocking of McAlinden after evidence against him emerged.

A 1995 letter from then Maitland-Newcastle Bishop Leo Clarke to McAlinden assured him that despite his admission to Lucas, ?your good name will be protected by the confidential nature of this process,? and urged McAlinden to accept the defrocking for his own good and ?for the sake of souls and the good of the church.?

A second letter, from Malone, who succeeded Clarke as bishop of the diocese in November 1995, informed McAlinden the defrocking would proceed. Documents also revealed Wilson as the notary for the defrocking and recorded several victims? statements.

**Source URL (retrieved on *03/30/2017 - 18:49*):** https://www.ncronline.org/news/global/senior-church-officials-australia-under-investigation