



WHISPERS & LIES: An Inappropriate Response

Part 1: The clergy and lay leadership of Figtree Anglican Church, among others, have been telling their parishioners, senior clergy of the diocese and now, ten years later, the current Anglican Archbishop Dr. Glenn Davies, that they dealt in an appropriate manner with a complaint by a Mrs. Lee Nicholls, who was not a parishioner, that her daughter, who was also not a parishioner - the then 20-year-old woman Emma Nicholls - had 'fallen in love' with Dr. Scott Dobbs. I don't think so. Let us look at how they dealt with it.

Louise Greentree

Figtree Anglican church v. the Dobbs family

FOREWORD

What do you think when a Church commends and protects those who do evil and persecutes and denounces those who do good?

This is one such story.

It is the story of a good man who refused to do nothing when he discovered corruption. It is the story of his wife and children who were mercilessly tormented by the leadership of Figtree Anglican church in retaliation. It is the story of people from, high diocesan officials down to the ministers and members of a “flagship” parish who behaved wrongfully and hated what was right and good.

Dr. Scott Dobbs is a truly good man. He is devout Christian and he was a strong parishioner of Figtree Anglican church for 12 years. He was a lecturer at the University of Wollongong (UOW). When a female student who called herself Anika Rose suggested an affair he bluntly refused. When he uncovered evidence of a culture of bribery and soft marking being operated in his Faculty of Business at UOW he reported it to his superior, little realising that this (female) superior was in a domestic arrangement with one of the more senior persons who failed to do anything about it.

Naturally one is outraged but not surprised that in a university, steps were taken to silence him. He had been teaching on contract: then he applied for permanent employment. A female PhD student, Corinne Cortese, whose research was being supervised by Mary Kaidonis and Helen Irvine, amazingly decided to make an “informal” complaint of sexual harassment against him, to be passed on to the committee considering his application the very next day. Being “informal” he was never informed of it, nor was any investigation of facts undertaken by UOW, in fact it quietly disappeared after the application was considered by the committee. But it was enough for the committee, discussing it behind his back, to reject his application.

Helen Irvine, Figtree Anglican church’s senior minister’s wife was a senior lecturer in the same department. Dr. Dobbs and his wife Machel thought that she, being a minister’s wife would stand up against corruption. They asked her to help with exposing the corrupt practices Dr. Dobbs had uncovered and support him in his efforts to stamp it out. She refused. Then she did worse – she joined in silencing Dr. Dobbs. Helen pulled levers behind the scenes and later openly to have him put ‘on trial’ before a Diocesan church court. Yes, a church court! They stooped to the utter farce of claiming that as Scott made coffee after church, he could be *disciplined* as a “church worker”! Of course, at the end of 2 tortuous years, the diocesan personnel involved had to admit what they had been told from the very beginning: that they did not any have evidence to give them jurisdiction in the case – that means that they should never have been involved at all, because Dr. Dobbs was not a church worker.

Helen spread gossip of the harassment “informal complaint” that had served to have Scott lose his application for permanent employment at UOW. She found out in late 2005 about the female student ‘Anika Rose’ who spun the story the other way around. Helen spread that too. Helen tipped the wink to the female member of church staff who ran the “children’s protection” program, Yvonne Gunning, to look for “dirt” on Scott even though there had never been any complaint about him for the 12 years he and his family had been attending Figtree Anglican church.

Yvonne knew the mother of a mentally and physically ill 20-year-old woman, Emma Nicholls, whom Machel and the Dobbs children had tried to help over some years. The mother, Lee Nicholls, wanted Emma to leave home. In 2006, she had hoped Machel would take Emma in. She had refused. Emma had confessed to friends to having a girlish crush on Scott. (He was tall and handsome, she was at the mercy of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and anorexia.) Dr. Dobbs had ignored her and not suspecting her crush had rebuffed her attempts at proximity. He was never alone with her but for twice, once not complained of, and the other complained of by her mother, both when she was aged 20 and she herself initiated contact.

Emma herself never made a complaint against him but Yvonne Gunning and Lee Nicholls cooked up supposed incidents. But they themselves had not seen these or indeed any incidents between Emma and Dr. Dobbs, and were supposed to be reporting what Emma Nicholls had told them. Except that when Emma Nicholls made a statement she flatly contradicted their sexed-up versions. It was all too clear that the case had collapsed, not least because Emma Nicholls suffered from OCD, and her perceptions were not reliable and could be delusional as, much later, was confirmed by her doctor, Dr. Richard Schloeffel.

None-the-less, on this basis Dr. Dobbs was charged under church law and the parish told he was a sexual predator. Jump two years forward and we see that every one of these "charges" were dismissed and withdrawn. The archbishop then ordered the parish to announce this from the pulpit but the parish leadership and the new Senior Minister Ian Barnett refused to obey their archbishop.

Another thread is this: Dr. Dobbs was outspoken. When, early in 2007, he heard that there had been an attempted rape of a 14-year-old girl at a Figtree Anglican church function, which culminated in the girl's mother being punched out by the attacker, but that the church leadership had done nothing, he went privately to the Executive Minister Bruce Clarke and told him off in no uncertain terms. Bruce Clarke became another dominant force in pushing the diocese to continue with the charges, and in spreading slander about him, his wife and their children, which I call the clandestine lie, discussed later.

These events could explain Bruce Clarke's and Helen Irvine's vindictive attack on him, but not extending to tormenting his wife and children. That surely had a cause of its own.

There are more kinds of child abuse than sexual, though it is the worst. Some people's sick minds go in the direction of the subtler shades of sadism. These three: Yvonne Gunning, Helen Irvine and Bruce Clarke perpetrated a calculated, sustained and vicious cruelty towards Mabelle and children, and worse, forced the whole congregation into joining in. This was evil. It was all the more wicked for being perpetrated by church leaders. And just like the child sex abusers of times past, they were able to groom the diocesan hierarchy into protecting them and facilitating their continued abuse.

Watch the interviews on YouTube and your blood cannot fail to boil at what these church leaders and people did.

Nearly a decade later: Rod and Helen Irvine left the parish and returned to live in Brisbane, where Helen Irvine is a Professor at Queensland University. Bruce was promoted by the then Sydney Anglican Archbishop Peter Jensen to lead a big parish. The members of the leadership of the parish of Figtree Anglican church still refuses to recant the lies they so willingly spread, and it has shown itself to be indeed a control cult. The current Archbishop wants to make some amends, but is prevented by the same ilk of church official that persecuted victims of church sexual abuse in times past. The same culture of cover-up and abuse of a complainant still prevails.

Dr. Dobbs and his family are still suffering terribly because of what was done to them by the people they trusted.

These things are being publicised in the hope that, just as public opinion forced churches to deal with sexual abuse, the public may force churches to deal with the other forms of abuse, especially the spiritual and psychological abuse of children.

The clergy and lay leadership of Figtree Anglican Church, among others have been telling their parishioners, senior clergy of the diocese and now, ten years later, the current Anglican Archbishop Dr. Glenn Davies, that they dealt in an appropriate manner with a complaint by a Mrs. Lee Nicholls, who was not a parishioner, that her daughter, who was also not a parishioner - the then 20-year-old woman Emma Nicholls - had 'fallen in love' with Dr. Scott Dobbs.

Let us look at how they dealt with it. At the end of the article is a list of who 'they' were, who developed the spurious allegations and forced Emma Nicholls into making a statement she did not want to make and to be associated with the persecution of the family, and especially the father of that family, all of whom she loved.

The Chronology of What They Did.

First: what prompted their behaviour? New readers start here:

On the 3rd December 2006: Emma Nicholls, a 20-year-old woman still in the grip of an adolescent fantasy of love for Dr. Dobbs and delusional about her perception that he loved her in return (fuelled by Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and other physical and mental issues), acted on her own initiative to seek him out in his home office and get up close to him while he worked on his computer in the dark room. She was not asked to do this, she was a guest for the evening meal in the home, and she had to go downstairs, across the TV room and through the master bedroom, skirting around the double bed to get there. When he realised it was Emma standing so close and bending over him to look at the computer he got up, ran his chair back almost over her foot in his haste, and ran away upstairs from her.

Emma went home and wrote an ecstatic email to Lance Wearmouth and, two days later, to Sandra Hedwig, both internet friends through a prayer website. This email laid out the extent of her delusional perceptions which led to this inappropriate action. She told her mother Lee Nicholls that Dr. Dobbs loved her and she loved him.

Emma had known the family since she was 14, visiting and having meals there, borrowing clothes from the daughters (the oldest of whom was 4 years younger) and even staying overnight although her home was merely 10 minutes away. But she had been banned from staying overnight since about 5-6 weeks before this event for going into one of the boy's bedrooms in the middle of the night, falling asleep there and staying there all night. Mabelle felt Emma had behaved very inappropriately, and although nothing happened, she started keeping a close watch on her and insisting that Dr. Dobbs, always with one or more of his family with him, drive her home at the end of each visit.

Mabelle instructed her four daughters to keep Emma away from Dr. Dobbs because for some weeks she had been indulging in behaviour to seek his attention, telephoning the house and asking to speak to him (he did not answer the phone and whoever did was instructed to say that he was not available), and 'lighting up like a lighthouse' whenever he came into the room, even breaking off her conversation with someone else in mid-sentence to concentrate on him.

And yet, there was absolutely no evidence that he took any notice of her other than as one of the numerous people that came in and out of the house – friends, homestay students, friends of the six children and various others who enjoyed a warm welcome in this lively and loving Christian home. Before she took it upon herself to try some clumsy sort of seduction, all that the parish staff could try to put together to accuse him of child sex abuse and adult sexual harassment was three isolated incidents – a hug at age 14, another hug at age 16 and a compliment (in a teasing tone of voice) at age 19. There were people around on each of these occasions, and yet the parish could not produce any witnesses to support the allegations that these three incidents over a period of 5 years, somehow, made up a course of grooming. None of these survived the Sydney Anglican church investigation/Professional Standards Committee process. And so, most likely by her mother Lee, Emma was encouraged in her delusion to seek Dr. Dobbs out alone. He fled from her as she tried some clumsy form of seduction, leaning over him to look at the computer screen that he was consulting.

But that meant that the first 'incident' that they wished to rely on as evidence of sexual abuse or harassment was the one brought about by Emma's own actions, which, having taken place when she was aged 20, would have to be dismissed on the basis of her consent. The same difficulty applied to the very few later, still non-sexual incidents, that survived that process, because even her written attempt to withdraw her consent before her final encounter with Dr. Dobbs initiated by her did not actually say that, and in any event, it was effectively overruled by her own actions seeking him out on the next (and last occasion) she had a chance to talk to him, and hanging around him and getting in his way.

For an in-depth examination of the spurious grounds for the case see “A Cautionary Tale” on www.churchdispute.com

Now read on:

Some date before 17th December 2006: three things happened -

Firstly, on one or two dates, this is obscure, Helen Irvine told Yvonne Gunning about alleged complaints against Dr. Dobbs in the Faculty of Business at the University of Wollongong where he was a Lecturer until December 2005. These were untrue, and one, set out in a Record of Interview was signed by Corinne Cortese, a PhD student supervised by Helen Irvine and Mary Kaidonis. Apart from the triviality of the complaints, there were no allegations of any form of relationship at all other than as a student of his seminars among 16 other students in second semester 1999. It was a fabrication. The purpose of the Record of Interview was to ensure that Dr. Dobbs’ application for permanent employment would be rejected, as duly happened in November 2005. It was never shown to Dr. Dobbs and he was never allowed to know that it existed, the complaints were never examined in a proper UOW process, and he was denied the opportunity to defend himself. This is discussed in full in “*The First Stone Revisited*” and “*The Evolution of a Lie*” on www.churchdispute.com

Secondly, on some date on or before 17th December 2006 Yvonne Gunning told Lee Nicholls. Now, why would she do this if she did not already know that Emma Nicholls was harbouring an inappropriate and delusional perception that she was in love with Dr. Dobbs and he with her? Yet she implied to Ken Taylor that the first she heard of the complaint was 1st February 2007 when Lee Nicholls, by appointment, came to see her at the Figtree Anglican church office and told her all about it. This patent lie also is discussed below.

Thirdly, on some date on or before 17th December 2006, Lee Nicholls told Lance Wearmouth. Again, why, if it was not to enlist his aid to get Emma out of the family home where her behaviour was driving her parents to ‘their wits’ end’ as Emma’s OCD specialist, Dr. Schloeffel tells investigator Ken Taylor, by getting Figtree parish (and perhaps Sydney diocese) to provide money and means for this to happen, and take general responsibility for her?

On 17th December 2006 Lance Wearmouth told Emma Nicholls by email. He told the author that he had been told either by Lee Nicholls or Emma Nicholls, but it is clear from the wording of the email that he did not think that Emma knew about it. He advised her to go to Mabelle to stop what was happening, according to Emma’s unreliable perceptions. She did not do so.

Emma saw the family on 10th December 2006 for the Figtree church Community Carols, when as she said, “nothing happened”, and then not until early January 2007. In the meantime, Mabelle had introduced her to Mrs. Goodhew. In December 2006, she telephoned Mrs. Goodhew leaving a message, but she was not available to speak when Mrs. Goodhew rang back. In early January 2007, Emma wrote to Mrs. Goodhew asking her to help her find accommodation and someone who could take her to all her appointments with medical and allied health professionals. As Mrs. Goodhew was to be away for 2 or 3 weeks in January she handed the letter to the Figtree pastoral care team.

Meanwhile, in January 2007 Emma had started seeing the family again, but never to stay overnight.

Some unidentified evening in January 2007, at least a week before Monday 22nd, the Dr. Dobbs family showed a DVD of the film “*A Beautiful mind*” to family and friends. During the film, Emma went upstairs and telephoned her mother to come and get her, as none of the family were available to drive her home. While she was telephoning she saw Dr. Dobbs blow a kiss which she interpreted that he was blowing it towards her. This was not the case: he was blowing it to one of his daughters (which he was in the habit of doing).

Some unidentified evening in January 2007 Dr. Dobbs drove Emma home. She said that he got out of the car and she started walking along the driveway of her parent's home when he called her back and kissed her on the neck. After Dr. Dobbs denied this and pointed out that he had one or two of his daughters with him every time he drove her home, who would have seen it had it happened, she agreed that this was the case. The unlikelihood of him doing this in front of his daughters did not seem to have occurred to her.

Monday 22nd January 2007: first Emma said she had stayed the night. As she had been banned from staying the night since the incident with her going into the son's bedroom late at night and staying there overnight, and she admitted that Mabelle would not allow her to stay overnight during Summerfest (which started the Sunday just past,) this was untrue. Then she said she witnessed an argument between Dr. and Mrs. Dobbs. Dr. Dobbs apologised told her and blew her (another) kiss.

At first Emma said that down at Figtree Anglican church, in the foyer, where Dr. Dobbs was serving coffee to all comers to the Summerfest sessions, she went up to him and he gave her a hug. He pointed out that there were a large number of people coming and going through the area, and yet no-one had witnessed this. After his response was received, her story changed.

She said that after everyone had left the house she remained behind. This was also untrue as Mabelle would simply not have allowed it even if she had been there at that time of day. Remember, this was a time when Mabelle was highly suspicious of Emma, and barely tolerated her presence at the house (which, in a strange way Emma herself acknowledged). The daughters were on high alert to keep her away from their father. Emma's story had been drafted by someone who did not know the Dobbs' home, such as her mother who had never been there. Therefore, the details were wrong. Emma simply transferred the hug from the busy church foyer to when Dr. Dobbs returned and he and she were alone in the house. She added that the hug was accompanied by a rub on her back. That was all.

On 26th January 2007 Lee Nicholls helped Emma write two little letters, one to Mabelle apologising for going into the son's bedroom, and another to Dr. Dobbs saying that the way she had been relating to him recently had not been appropriate (her description of the content), and Lee put them in the Dobbs house's letterbox.

On 28th January 2007 Lee Nicholls took Emma to the Figtree evening service (FUSE). Emma went over to where Dr. Dobbs had set up his espresso coffee machine ready to serve people after the service was over, and was otherwise listening to the service piped into the church lounge where other parishioners were doing the same. She wanted to talk to him about her letter in the naïve belief that it, and her letter to Mabelle would make her welcome in the Dobbs home as before. The fact that this could not possibly be the case because of her inappropriate behaviour seems not to have crossed her mind. In one of her statements she said that one of the Dobbs' daughters was present until the service started. Although Lee went into the worship space, Mabelle did not but remained outside, not far away from them also listening to the service. Emma hung around him, but still under observation during the service. After the service ended, and one of his sons came out of the service to help his father make the coffee, they were inundated with other parishioners seeking a cup of espresso and then sitting at the tables in the 'café' area and on the lounges in the huge foyer of the church. Here we are talking about hundreds of people. Emma continued hanging around and getting in the way of Dr. Dobbs and his son as they served coffee. Lee watched them for about an hour after the end of the service and had to confess in her signed statement that nothing happened. She was happy to leave Emma with the Dobbs family to bring her home later when Lee wanted to go home earlier and Emma didn't.

Week 1 of Lee's 'formal' complaint:

On 1st and 4th February 2007 Lee Nicholls made a 'formal' complaint to Yvonne Gunning. She asked Yvonne to keep the complaint anonymous from both Dr. Dobbs AND Emma. Yvonne did NOT discuss with Lee that the Discipline Ordinance 2006 did not allow the acceptance of an anonymous complaint, nor that Emma Nicholls, being aged 20 was needed to make a formal complaint and cooperate with the process.

What did Yvonne Gunning do with it? She discussed it with Figtree staff and clergy. She told Phillip Gerber that she had discussed it with her brother, a criminal lawyer, who said that Dr. Dobbs could get two years gaol. One can only wonder what Yvonne told him to produce such an incompetent assessment of the case.

What did Phillip Gerber do with it? He wrote back that he was surprised that she was discussing this with her brother, and that criminality is not so obvious in this case and Emma's consent is a problem.

At or about this time, that is, even before Emma Nicholls had been coerced into making a statement, and therefore Dr. Dobbs' defence was not known (because of the stupidity of the first meeting with Leigh Roberts and Rob Grimmet – see the next paragraph), Phillip Gerber also advised that Dr. Dobbs' 'coffee ministry' should be suspended, but not to make any general announcement, just to tell anyone who asked that the leadership had 'lost confidence' in Dr. Dobbs (a rather problematic statement considering that all he was doing was making espresso coffee usually with a son to assist him, in the public lounge area under the eyes of staff, clergy and up to several hundred parishioners). He also said that they should be told that Mabelle and the children were still welcome to attend Figtree Anglican church. This was neither said nor observed and the cult practice of shunning Mabelle and the Dobbs children was instituted very quickly, not just at church, but on the streets and beaches of Wollongong and even reaching into the Anglican church school, The Illawarra Grammar School (TIGS) where certain teachers were obedient to the Figtree leadership's call for shunning.

Week 2:

On or about Tuesday 6th February 2007 Dr. Dobbs was in Sydney at a conference. He was contacted by the Assistant Minister Leigh Roberts who insisted that he come to see him and a warden Rob Grimmet at the Figtree church office on his way back home after the conference. Yvonne Gunning issued strict instructions that they were not to tell Dr. Dobbs who had made the complaint nor what the details were, and just ask him was it true. They did not point out to her what she and they should have known, that the Discipline Ordinance 2006 had a strict process for dealing with complaints, namely –

- obtain a statutory declaration from the complainant/victim; and
- 'serve' a copy of it on the respondent advising them that (a) they have 28 days to prepare and lodge with the Diocesan Registrar a statutory declaration in response; and (b) warning them not to make any admissions without first seeking legal advice.

This did not happen. What they did was to follow Yvonne Gunning's instructions (Dr. Dobbs hit the roof over this). They also warned him not to tell Mabelle about it. According to Dr. Dobbs they implied that this could all be resolved without troubling her. They told him that his 'coffee ministry' was suspended.

Dr. Dobbs left Wollongong with his new 'boss', parishioner David MacNeice, for a lengthy interstate road journey meeting clients of David's accountancy practice.

The following is drawn from less direct evidence:

School commenced for the new year at the beginning of February: Bruce Clarke told his daughter Rebecca about the complaint.

Bruce Clarke's daughter Rebecca was in the same year as the eldest Dobbs daughter at TIGS. Bruce told Rebecca that there had been a complaint made against Dr. Dobbs of child sex abuse and sexual harassment. He admits this in his interview with Ken Taylor without telling when he told her, but it is not unreasonable to think that he would want to get her primed with the story before she was likely to run into the Dobbs daughter at school and be expected to know.

On some date or dates around this time: Rebecca Clarke told her parents, Bruce and Cathy Clarke three lies (as reported by Bruce Clarke to Ken Taylor): the first was that the bathrooms in the Dobbs' home did not have doors on them; the second, that one of the Dobbs daughters was cutting herself; and the third, that the eldest Dobbs daughter had said that what her Dad had done was PG rather than R rated. The first could have been easily checked as numerous people in the congregation had been guests for Thanksgiving dinner in November 2006 and others were frequent visitors, as well as the fact that the home was approved accommodation for homestay students: all this meant that bathrooms would need to have doors on them and everyone could see that that was the case. And yet, this lie raced through the parish and Mrs. Goodhew said that everyone seemed to know about it. Rebecca retracted her lies much later in the year, particularly saying that the one bathroom she was talking about had a sliding screen door, but the damage had been done.

Surely, the second lie would have best aroused a response to a perceived need for care and concern for the Dobbs' children? But it didn't. When Rod Irvine was asked what arrangements he was making for the pastoral care of the children, he just replied, "Let the parents look after them." The third lie was in the circumstances rather witty, except what he had done was no more than G rated, and such as there was, was involuntary and do not involve anything remotely like the sexual interest in her that Emma.

This became part of what I call 'the clandestine lie'. Bruce Clarke and Yvonne Gunning were assiduous in spreading it throughout the parish: what it said was that the Dobbs' daughter(s) had been sexually abused by Dr. Dobbs and that the home was a place of inappropriate nudity. Both Bruce Clarke and Yvonne Gunning made complaints to the Department of Community Services as it was then known, and to the Police. Neither acted upon the complaints.

Both also admitted to contacting other Christian churches in the area to warn them against allowing the Dobbs family to worship there.

On Saturday 10th February 2007 Yvonne Gunning held a staff and clergy meeting to inform them all that a complaint had been made presumably with full details. It seems that Harry Goodhew, former Anglican Archbishop of Sydney and now parishioner, also came to help the staff deal with this information.

At this stage, the clergy and staff ALL knew all the details; it is likely that Rebecca Clarke knew the details; Scott did not know the details and no documents had been served on him; and Mabelle did not know anything at all about it, but she and the children were suffering from the commencement of shunning.

It was a day or so after this meeting that, according to Yvonne Gunning, a part-time staff member Mrs. Faye Brampton came to her and said that her husband Des had been in conversation with Dr. Dobbs while serving coffee at the church during the SummerFest that was held at the church from 22nd January to 25th January 2007. In this conversation, according to Mrs. Brampton according to

Yvonne Gunning, Dr. Dobbs told Mr. Brampton that he was 'thinking of starting an affair'. Much later when Ken Taylor tried to track this down by interviewing Mr. Brampton and then Mrs. Brampton both said that Dr. Dobbs did not say such a thing and nor did Des Brampton say that he did. Somewhat surprisingly, Ken Taylor concluded in his report that Yvonne Gunning had been 'mistaken'. But this 'mistake' was made the foundation of another allegation of dubious probity, about a hug that shifted location from in the church lounge during SummerFest where Dr. Dobbs was serving coffee to alone in the Dobbs' home after staying overnight, despite Emma having said in one of the draft statements that Mabelle would not let her stay overnight during SummerFest (which was true).

Saturday 10th February 2007: The younger Dobbs daughters were participating in Leadership-in-training sessions at Figtree church. These were attended by their friends also. Mabelle was waiting outside in the lounge having brought them to the church and the session had only just started when Camille de Roy, assistant to Yvonne Gunning, hounded them out of the session. They ran weeping over to Mabelle. Camille de Roy would not talk to Mabelle about what was happening.

Week 3:

On Sunday 11th February 2007 Mabelle rose early, took fresh milk and coffee beans and her son who was a trained barista and the pair of them went to Figtree to the early service, set up the coffee machine and prepared to serve the parishioners after each of the three services, two in the morning and the evening one.

What happened in the church lounge? First, Harry Goodhew asked her what she was doing there. She said that she was making coffee for the services because Dr. Dobbs was away on a working trip.

Harry Goodhew said that he thought that was alright then.

Then Mabelle noticed that some people would not meet her eyes or turned away from her, while others were effusive about how good it was to see her at church. She was confused and saying that she always came to church. Some were sympathising with her, and she was saying, no, it was good, Dr. Dobbs had a permanent job now.

Obviously at the meeting no-one had thought to mention that Mabelle did not know, and that Dr. Dobbs had not been given any details.

Early the following Monday or Tuesday 12th or 13th February 2007: Mabelle tried to see Yvonne Gunning to complain about what had happened to her daughters. Yvonne 'smirked' and said Camille de Roy was just being over-zealous. Mabelle tried to talk to Bruce Clarke who kept walking away from her and saying only that he could tell her nothing, when she was crying out asking what was happening. This was the church she loved.

On a date around this time, one of the younger daughters was playing in a corner of the church lounge with her best friend Sophie Clarke, daughter of Bruce and Cathy Clarke. Suddenly Cathy appeared, lifted her daughter up and hustled her away and into the car, saying something like, "You are not to have anything to do with that girl." Both girls were shocked and weeping as Cathy Clarke drove her daughter away.

Thereafter, Mabelle noticed that people were crossing the road to avoid her; she and the children were warned by one of the TIGS teachers not to come any closer when they met on the beach, because he was not allowed to talk to them. Parishioners (including long-standing friends), members of Parish Council, Figtree clergy and TIGS staff were actually turning their backs on them or avoiding talking to them, saying that they were not allowed to talk to them. It appears that a decision was made in Parish Council to shun the whole family.

Week 4

More of the same. Dr. Dobbs was still away and Mabelle was frantically trying to contact him about what was happening.

20th February 2007: Bruce Clarke telephoned Jenni Woodhouse, chaplain to the PSU, and asked whether they could go ahead without Emma Nicholls being involved as she did not want to make a complaint 'at this stage'. She said, "no".

- That evening for 3 hours Emma Nicholls was forced to give a statement for a complaint that she did not want to make.
- Yvonne Gunning telephoned Margaret Fuller in the PSU to make a complaint.
- Yvonne Gunning faxed the statement to Phillip Gerber. There were amendments required, even to basic information within Emma's knowledge (but not Yvonne's) that prompted Phillip Gerber to take issue with Yvonne in an email to which she replied that she was just writing down what Emma said.

21st February 2007 (or the next day): Lee Nicholls telephoned Margaret Fuller and also made a complaint.

Emma Nicholls never did make a formal complaint.

One has to look at Yvonne Gunning's notes of her two interviews with Lee Nicholls (who did not make a statement or statutory declaration at this stage) and read the transcript of Yvonne Gunning's interview with Ken Taylor to imagine what fabricated details they each gave to Margaret Fuller. Both Lee and Yvonne fabricated sexually explicit touching, on Emma's bottom and thigh up under or down under whatever it was that Emma was wearing, and touching her on the bottom when she was hanging around the coffee machine on 28th January 2007. They also fabricated stories about hand-caressing and kisses on the back of Emma's neck, and hugs of herculean difficulty for a middle-aged man to commence let alone maintain (as explored in "A Cautionary Tale" and "The Evolution of a Lie" on www.churchdispute.com).

But Emma Nicholls explicitly and strongly denied both of their versions and gave a tame one that in reality did not involve any inappropriate touching, except when she was being forced to demonstrate to Ken Taylor in Yvonne Gunning's presence. Even so, she managed to give three different versions, undermining any suggestion that what she was saying and demonstrating was anything like drawn from her real experience.

The problem with credulousness and first story syndrome among certain professionals: *as Margaret Fuller apparently still maintains that it was an appropriate complaint one has to assume that she was not allowed to know the real details contradicting what she had first heard, and that she has refrained from reading the articles published on my page on the then website www.anglicanfuture.com and the handouts delivered around the parish during the time challenging these malicious versions created by the two women, Lee Nicholls and Yvonne Gunning. Their motivation in doing this is discussed below.*

Her clinging to this viewpoint is an example of the power of the first story, a syndrome that one might expect her to know about: it is that when the first version of the story is accepted it is very difficult (unless certain professional precautions are taken) to approach it critically and to accept that

a later opposite version that is put forward could possibly be true. There is a quantity of learned articles available on the subject.

It may be of course that due to her training as a counsellor rather than mediator or other of the many kinds of Alternate Dispute Resolution Practitioners she simply accepts whatever the 'client' says without applying the litmus test of hard reality, and adopts that story as credible. Dr. Richard Schloeffel said to Ken Taylor that that was how he treated whatever story his patients would come out with without contradicting them. This approach made his 'evidence' rather credulous as he just accepted whatever Ken Taylor inappropriately and incorrectly told him. See more about his evidence in "A Cautionary Tale" on www.churchdispute.com

23rd February 2007: in the Figtree church office with Yvonne Gunning, Emma Nicholls signed a re-drafted statutory declaration after even more amendments were made.

Shortly after that two Figtree personnel delivered a copy of Emma's statutory declaration to Dr. Dobbs in Mabelle's presence.

1st March 2017: In defiance of Phillip Gerber's assessment that "criminality is not obvious in this case", Yvonne Gunning took Emma Nicholls to report sexual abuse to the Wollongong Police. It makes no reference to the age 14 and age 16 hugs. The only complaint that was recorded was said to have taken place on one date in November 2006 (Emma was aged 20) occurring, apparently, in the house next door to where the Dobbs' family lived. The report is riddled with similar errors, and also contains things that only Yvonne Gunning knew, but not Emma Nicholls. The report says that Emma met the family through Figtree Anglican church which was not true, and which Yvonne Gunning knew was not true, because Emma had insisted that the first draft of her statutory declaration was altered to say that she met the Dobbs family through the home schooling community.

One has to conclude that Yvonne Gunning was trying to tie the complaint to the sex abuse in churches scandals, perhaps to try to get money from the diocese to fund Emma's removal from her family's home? Emma Nicholls signed this with all its inaccuracies and information she did not know personally. In any event, the report is marked "No action taken."

12th March 2007: Dr. Dobbs signed a statutory declaration in reply dealing with all the various and trivial allegations in comprehensive detail, denying all allegations of a sexual interest in Emma and denying all alleged sexualised actions, hugs and particularly kisses. He sent it to Phillip Gerber.

On an unknown date after this: Rod Irvine told Parish Council that Dr. Dobbs had admitted 70% of the allegations. This was not true. But, as Dr. Pratt wrote (see later) it gave him a strong reason to try to push the case through despite its' manifest weaknesses because he would then have to confess to the members of staff and Parish Council that he had misled them.

17th March 2007: Mrs. Pam Goodhew, wife of the former Archbishop of Sydney Harry Goodhew prepared and signed a written statement of her contact with Emma Nicholls and what Mabelle Dobbs had said about her and gave it to someone in the Figtree Anglican church leadership. Much later, she was interviewed by Ken Taylor and said much the same, in more detail:

First, that in her only meeting with Emma Nicholls Emma had raised her fears that she had committed a sin against the Holy Spirit.

Second, that Mabelle and Scott told her about Emma going into one of the son's bedrooms when she was staying the night and remaining there until morning. Mabelle was very angry with Emma Nicholls for this and said that Emma had crossed the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

Third, that Emma left a phone message asking Mrs. Goodhew to contact her. However, three attempts to do so were unsuccessful because she was asleep and unable to come to the phone.

Fourth, when in one of those attempts to return Emma's call, she spoke to Lee Nicholls, Lee was adamant that Mrs. Goodhew could help Emma. And -

Fifth, that although Emma was aged 29 she had never worked or been able to attend any courses because of health problems.

If only the leadership had listened to Mrs. Goodhew – the only sane voice among all of their voices shouting down Dr. Dobbs and Machele – instead of haring off after spurious and sexed-up complaints by Yvonne Gunning and Lee Nicholls in concert with each other, and Helen Irvine and her unforgivable behaviour, bringing the fabricated 'informal' complaint of Corinne Cortese into Figtree.

22nd March 2007: Phillip Gerber wrote to the parish that there was insufficient evidence that Dr. Dobbs was a serial abuser of children and women. He advised that a conciliation meeting should be set up between Emma and Dr. Dobbs with their support persons and he would facilitate it. Bruce Clarke arranged the meeting for *24th March 2007*. The Dobbs' were not consulted and as it was election day they had a prior commitment to assist the Christian Democrat candidate Dr. Clarrie Pratt. Due to work commitments, among other considerations, Dr. Dobbs was unable to make an appointment for a meeting until *2nd May 2007*.

28th March 2007: despite Phillip Gerber's assessment Jenni Woodhouse drafted and he approved the following letter that Rod Irvine sent to Dr. Dobbs setting conditions on him worshipping at Figtree as follows:

1. You are not to talk one-on-one with women or girls in the congregation, other than your wife and daughters.
2. You are not to meet with female congregational members one-on-one.
3. You are not to have Figtree Anglican Church activities at your home.
4. You are not to have FAC members or children of FAC members sleep over at your home.
5. You are not to attend the FUSE service where Emma Nicholls is currently worshipping.
6. You are not to be involved in any formal ministry at FAC.
7. You will meet with one man, mutually agreed with FAC, on a monthly basis for the next twelve months for personal mentoring on the issues of relating to women and being accountable to this man for the keeping of these boundaries. In the course of the mentoring you would go through Faithfulness in Service with him on personal boundaries.
8. You will be part of an all-male Bible study group or a Bible study group with your wife.
9. You will attend mutually agreed counselling for yourself **and your wife** (*my emphasis*) for six to ten sessions in order to talk about issues raised following the complaint raised against you.'

This is an incredible over-reaction to one man making and serving espresso coffee. There was no complaint from any of the many girls and women that attended Figtree services, as both Yvonne Gunning and Bruce Clarke were forced by Ken Taylor reluctantly to concede.

Dr. Dobbs reacted angrily to it, calling it only applicable for the worst kind of paedophile which he was not.

On 17th April 2007: Dr. Clarrie Pratt wrote to Rod Irvine, Bruce Clarke and Phillip Gerber complaining about the terrible injustice done to the family.

The first point he made was that Emma suffered from OCD and therefore her interpretations and recollections could be delusional. He sent them a copy of a letter she had sent to a 'health professional' Garry. A copy is at the end. He and the contents of this email both reinforced what Mabelle had been trying to get the leadership and others to know and acknowledge: that they could not rely on Emma's reports because of her OCD.

Secondly, he went through her statutory declaration and pointed out the inconsistencies.

Thirdly, he listed their abuse of process and denial of natural justice to Dr. Dobbs by their actions.

Fourthly, he told them this:

'Having carefully read what Miss Nicholls has written and what Scott has written in reply, it is my professional opinion that what Emma has written most likely represents delusion with no basis in reality.'

He goes on to say, quite appropriately:

'I consider it negligent of FAC to have accepted this statement from Miss Nicholls without seeking an opinion from her treating psychiatrist as to the believability of what she has written.'

Fifthly, he wrote that even in a 'straight-laced, conservative evangelical church such as FAC there is an awful lot of hugging and kissing going on!!' and even more 'at less conservative churches' such as the local Wollongong Lighthouse charismatic church. After giving examples of hugging and kissing among parishioners he goes on to say, 'The Dobbs family just happens to be very "huggy" – all of them, not just Scott. As Emma herself says (Para. 3 ...) "I didn't think it was inappropriate as all the family hugged like that."'

What did the Figtree leadership do about this? Rod Irvine did not withdraw the letter of conditions, and it remains in operation to this day. This is despite there being terms of settlement agreed when the PSU case fell apart in front of the tribunal that the present senior minister would withdraw it.

The rev. Ian Barnett has refused to do this even though the then Archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen, travelled down to Wollongong to ask him to do this as well as make an announcement clearing Dr. Dobbs' reputation and that of his wife and children.

Intervening to the detriment of truth was the operation of various motivations behind Lee Nicholls' false complaint.

Lee and Greg Nicholls: both Emma's parents and her doctor, Dr. Schloeffel, wanted her to get out of the family home and go and live on her own, and make her own life within the parameters dictated by her various illnesses. Her parents wanted the Dobbs to accommodate her and after Mabelle Dobbs refused to do this when asked in about October 2006, Emma Nicholls then went into one of the Dobbs' son's bedroom, fell asleep on the bed and remained there all night. Mabelle and Dr. Dobbs found her there the next morning and they were both very angry. Mabelle banned her daughters from inviting her to stay overnight and she did not do so ever thereafter.

Therefore, Lee Nicholls was looking for some other way out. Only a woman who was extremely malicious could possibly have thought that making a complaint against the Dr. Dobbs, and therefore his whole family, was an appropriate thing to do when they had been

kind and forbearing of her difficult and very unwell daughter. Dr. Schloeffel identified Lee Nicholls as similarly affected by OCD and her husband Greg as very easy-going.

None-the-less, Lee Nicholls had attended Yvonne Gunning's 1-day child protection course five times, and there can be no doubt that that was where she got her idea from, and it gave her contact with the person to get advice from, no later than mid-December 2006, and to make the 'formal' complaint to on 1st February 2007.

Emma Nicholls and her adolescent fantasy of love for Dr. Dobbs and her delusion, against all the evidence, that he loved her in return: the first incident that survived the PSU process was the one initiated by Emma herself, in the grip of OCD-fuelled delusion, when she invaded Dr. Dobbs' study while he was working there. She continued to try to place herself in his way. But she was never allowed to stay overnight after going into the son's bedroom and staying there overnight, and Mabelle and the Dobbs daughters acted to protect Dr. Dobbs from Emma's unwanted attentions. Not only did she want to replace Mabelle in Dr. Dobbs' affections (and break up the family she said she loved), she wanted to leave her parent's home but, as she told Dr. Schloeffel in November 2006, she hadn't any money.

Yvonne Gunning: this was the big break, when she could get the attention she craved as child protection officer by reeling in a 'live one'. Her monumental ignorance of the law; her incompetence in understanding the provisions and the operation of the Discipline Ordinance 2006; her hatred of Dr. Dobbs, Mabelle and all the children; her malice in spreading unfounded accusations around the parish and into other Christian churches warning them off allowing even Mabelle and the family to attend Christian worship; her lies to the PSU, Ken Taylor the investigator, and through her signed statement, to the PSC and the tribunal; her lies in reporting what Emma was supposed to have said to her, sexing-up the complaint with details which Emma denied from the start; her over-fertile and sleazy imagination; the many lies she told Ken Taylor, making up answers to his questions as if Emma had told her something, which she had not; her lies about the Des Brampton incident, when she attributed to this elderly memory-challenged man a conversation with Dr. Dobbs which he did not have: all of these things are on full display in her handling of the matter.

In particular, her lies about for how long she had been involved in Lee's complaint support the strong suspicion that she had been orchestrating the events of the complaint for months before.

Also, there is her story, contradicting that of Helen Irvine, about when she first heard from Helen the story of the UOW student(s) who, Helen said, had complained about Dr. Dobbs. This is discussed below.

Helen Irvine, wife of Figtree's senior minister Rod Irvine and former colleague of Dr. Dobbs in the Business Faculty of the University of Wollongong (UOW) along with another Figtree parishioner *Anne Abraham*. She was the one who brought into Figtree Anglican church the lies concocted by Mary Kaidonis with Corinne Cortese, with the cooperation of the director of the UOW Employment Equity & Diversity Unit (EEDU) Robyn Weekes, which were specifically, and admittedly, devised to stop Dr. Dobbs being employed permanently in the Faculty, because he had evidence of corruption by and soft marking for the benefit of overseas students. She says she did this even though her husband begged her not to.

Rod Irvine and **Bishop of Wollongong Al Stewart** both gave public approval of the way in which the parish had handled the matter. Did they really approve of the denial of the presumption of innocence and preservation of Dr. Dobbs' right to defend himself? Did they really approve of Bruce Clarke's creation and dissemination of the clandestine lie based on his daughter Rebecca

Clarke's lies? Did they really approve of the Figtree campaign of shunning Mabelle and her children in the streets, on the beach and at the Anglican church school, throwing them out of church and all children's and youth activities and telling other Christian churches in the area not to let them worship there? *If so, then they are a disgrace to their Christian vocation.*

In Part 2 we will look at what happened after Dr. Pratt had written his letter to Figtree's Rod Irvine, Bruce Clarke and the PSU's Phillip Gerber and see more abuse of the Dobbs family at the hands of Figtree leadership, Phillip Gerber, the diocesan Chancellor Peter Grogan QC, the investigator Ken Taylor and members of the PSC, even the then Archbishop of Sydney.

They say they acted 'in good faith'. I think not.

People and organisations that appear in the story.

The Dobbs family:

Dr. Scott Dobbs and Mrs. Machele Dobbs, and their children Christopher Dobbs, Nathan Dobbs, Ellesha Dobbs, Charis Dobbs, Tiara Dobbs, and Cheyenne Dobbs



The Dobbs Family at the conferral of the degree of PhD, June 2003
(Source University of Wollongong website)

Figtree Anglican Church



Our Core Values

Commonly held values are the key to unity. At FAC, they are the foundation to which everything we do is aligned and define what makes us unique as a church community:

Faithful at all times.

Adventurous in all things.

Compassionate to all people.

This was the mission statement published by the parish on the website in 2009.

Clergy and staff of Figtree Anglican church who take part in this story.

The rev. Dr. Rod Irvine: Senior Minister of Figtree Anglican Church until he left in January 2008, and his wife, Helen Irvine returned to live in Brisbane.

The rev. Dr. Rod Irvine was Senior Minister of Figtree Anglican church from 1987 to Jan 2008. He went straight to the parish after ordination.

The rev. Bruce Clarke: Executive Minister of Figtree Anglican church until November 2008.

*Bruce Clarke was second-in-command minister at Figtree Anglican Church. His first ministry appointment was to Figtree Anglican church, where he was under the ministry training and supervision of Rod Irvine. He was promoted to the position of Senior Minister at Manly Anglican Church on 15th November 2008. His wife **Cathy Clarke** and elder daughter **Rebecca Clarke** were both implicated in spreading lies about and abusive of the Dobbs family. All three were the source of 'the clandestine lie' referred to in the body of the article.*

The rev. Leigh Roberts, Associate Minister until mid-2007.

Leigh Roberts was one of the Associate Ministers at Figtree involved in the early part of the case until he left and took up the position of Senior Minister of Bulli Anglican Church in mid-2007.

Yvonne Gunning: Children's minister at Figtree Anglican church.

Yvonne Gunning trained with Church Army and worked as a church army officer in a number of parishes for 18 years. She holds the Church Army 'rank' of Captain. She then acted as a consultant

and trainer for Anglican Youth and Education before joining Figtree Anglican church as Children's minister in 2003. In the intervening years since the collapse of the case against Dr. Dobbs and the exposure of the clandestine lie based on Rebecca Clarke's lies, she has left Figtree Anglican church.

Faye Brampton: Pastoral Care Worker and wife of Des Brampton.

Faye Brampton is part of a team which is 'committed to providing for additional spiritual emotional and physical needs of FAC members. She is also part of 'Caring in the Community' ministries, such as 'Meet N Eat' and hospital visitations.'

**The Disciplinary unit of the
Anglican Church of Australia Sydney Diocese.**

Phillip Gerber: Director Professional Standards Unit (PSU) until June 2009.

Member National Anglican Child Protection Committee, Member Standing Committee (the "executive" of the diocesan Synod) and active in church politics.

Jenni Woodhouse: part-time Chaplain to the PSU, since resigned.

The Professional Standards Committee (PSC)

**Personnel of the Secretariat and the clerical hierarchy of the
Anglican Church of Australia Sydney Diocese**

Archbishop Peter Jensen: Anglican Archbishop of Sydney (including Wollongong) to end 2012.

Philip Selden: Diocesan Registrar and Executive Officer to the Archbishop of Sydney, now retired.

(Bishop) Al Stewart: Anglican bishop of Wollongong (as an assistant bishop to Archbishop Jensen) until 2009.

Others

Dr. Richard Schloeffel: A GP who specialized in OCD and similar disorders.

He had only seen Emma Nicholls since March 2006, and only twice that year, and twice in 2007 before he was interviewed in late 2007 by the diocesan investigator.

Ken Taylor: an investigator, employed by Kelly & Associates, who was instructed by Phillip Gerber of the Sydney PSU to carry out a full investigation which was then submitted to the PSC for recommendations to the Archbishop.

None of Dr. Dobbs, his adult family nor supporters agreed to be interviewed because Dr. Dobbs disputed the validity of the investigation. This was because Dr. Dobbs was not a 'church worker' and therefore none of the director PSU nor any other persons operating under the Discipline Ordinance 2006 in the case had jurisdiction. This was finally proved to be the case.

Helen Irvine: wife of senior minister Rod Irvine. *At the time, Senior Lecturer UOW Faculty of Business and colleague of Dr. Dobbs.*

She brought the UOW lie created by Corinne Cortese (and others) into Figtree Anglican church by telling it to Yvonne Gunning, by trying to use it to stop Dr. Dobbs defending the trivial complaints made by Lee Nicholls on behalf of her adult daughter, and by taking over and destroying a conciliation meeting when it was clear that Lee Nicholls' complaint had collapsed and certain members of Figtree Anglican church, including her husband, had laid themselves open to civil court proceedings because of their abuse of the Dobbs' family.

She also declined to support Dr. Dobbs in his complaints about corruption, bribery and soft marking in relation to overseas students on both the Wollongong and Dubai campuses.

Anne Abraham: Figtree parishioner. At the time, colleague of Dr. Dobbs in the UOW Faculty of Business.

When Dr. and Mrs. Dobbs asked her to support him in his complaints about corruption, bribery and soft marking of international students both on campus and on the Dubai campus declined to do so.

Mary Kaidonis: Senior academic in the UOW Faculty of Business.

She was a signatory to the Record of Interview of the 'informal complaint' made by Corinne Cortese, made the day before Dr. Dobbs' application for permanent employment was to be dealt with. She was also a member of the committee considering his application, yet she made no attempt to let Dr. Dobbs know about the existence of that document which was placed before the committee and discussed behind Dr. Dobbs' back, in breach of UOW Code of Conduct and laws of natural justice.

Corinne Cortese says that Mary Kaidonis was trying to find something 'for or against' Dr. Dobbs' application.

Corinne Cortese: At the time PhD student in UOW Faculty of Business, supervised by Helen Irvine and Mary Kaidonis.

She is the woman who generated the UOW lie with her informal 'record of interview' signed the day before Dr. Dobbs' interview by the Academic Probations Committee in respect of his application for a permanent academic appointment.

Robyn Weekes: At the time, the Director of the UOW Equal Employment and Diversity Unit (EEDU).

She accepted the 'informal complaint' made by Corinne Cortese with the encouragement of Mary Kaidonis in breach of the UOW Code of Conduct and the laws of natural justice, doing nothing at any stage to ensure that a copy of the Record of Interview was given to Dr. Dobbs and that he was allowed time and the opportunity to defend himself.

Dr. Clarrie Pratt: medical practitioner, missionary, one-time candidate for the Christian Democratic Party and friend of the Dobbs family.