

REVELATION



ABUSE WAS NOT A FAILURE OF THE SYSTEM
IT WAS THE SYSTEM

'Walkley award-winning journalist Sarah Ferguson has delivered some of the best TV journalism this country has ever witnessed but Revelation might just be the pinnacle.'

- Holly Byrnes, Daily Telegraph

'A searing documentary series.'

- Bridget McManus, The Age

'Extraordinary.'

- Andrew Hornery, Sydney Morning Herald



Sydney Morning Herald



Critics Choice, The Age



Pick of the Week, TV Week

'Astounding television.'

- TV Blackbox

'Hauntingly poetic...compelling, harrowing television.'

- Graeme Blundell, The Australian

'It's taken me until now to get over watching this extraordinary, devastating series. Brace yourself to watch it but watch it you should.'

- Laura Tingle, Australian Financial Review

SYNOPSIS

Revelation is an enthralling and confronting account of the dark forces behind clerical sex abuse in the Catholic Church.

This is the story of a criminal enterprise hiding in plain sight.

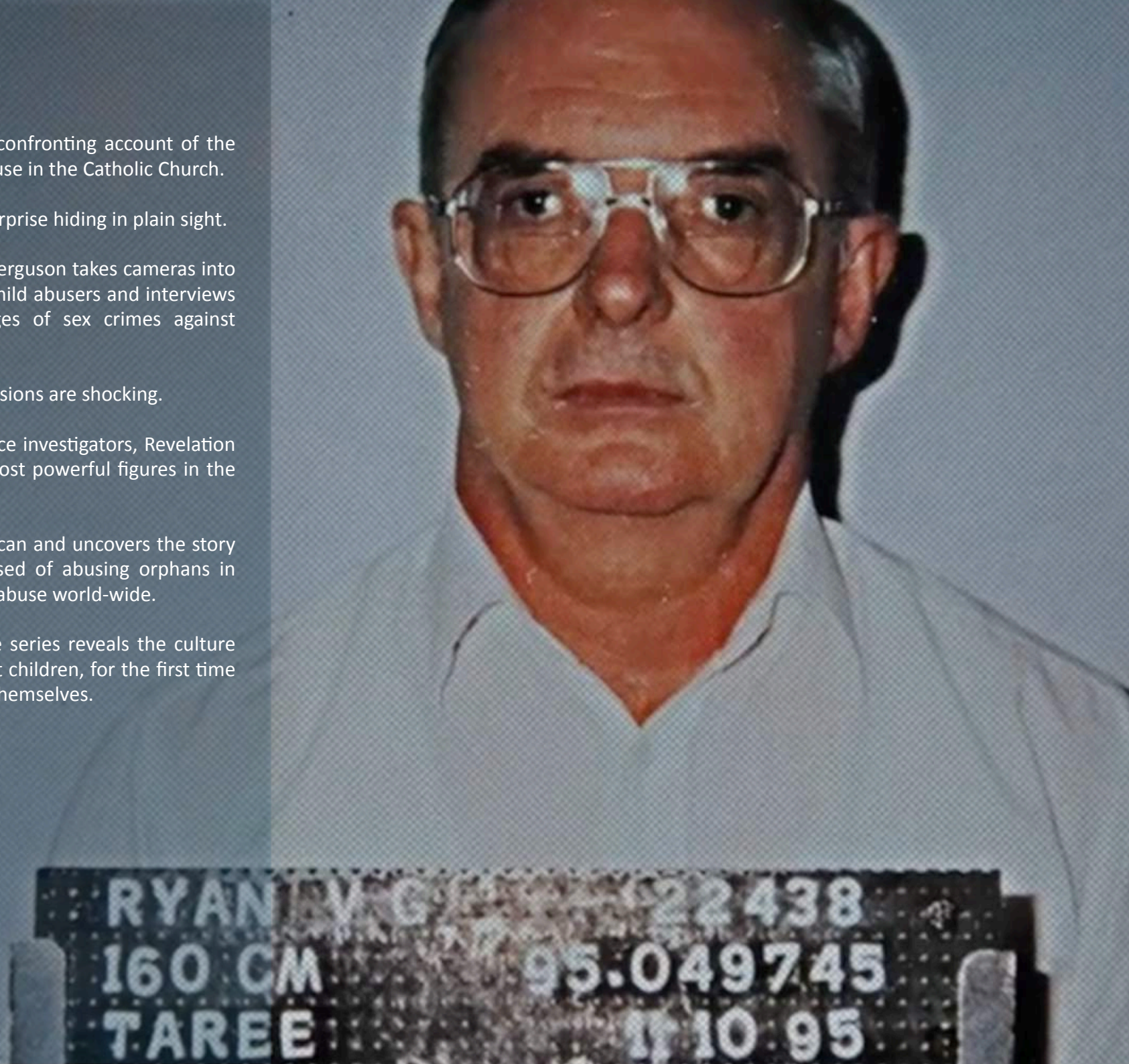
In a world television first, Sarah Ferguson takes cameras into court for the trials of notorious child abusers and interviews the ordained men facing charges of sex crimes against children.

Their disclosures and frank confessions are shocking.

With the help of victims and police investigators, Revelation brings to account some of the most powerful figures in the Australian church.

Sarah follows the trail to the Vatican and uncovers the story of a high-ranking Cardinal, accused of abusing orphans in Ballarat, one of the epicentres of abuse world-wide.

Over three gripping episodes the series reveals the culture that enabled these crimes against children, for the first time in the words of the perpetrators themselves.



KEY CREDITS

Presenter Sarah Ferguson
Producer Nial Fulton
Writer Tony Jones

Directors Nial Fulton
Sarah Ferguson

Cinematographer Aaron Smith
Editors Philippa Rowlands ASE
Lile Judickas

Composer Helena Czajaka

Legal Sandy Dawson SC

Archive Producer Michelle Bourkeris
Graphic Designer Deb McNamara

Colourist Billy Wychgel
Sound Designer Cate Cahill

Executive Producers Nial Fulton
Ivan O'Mahoney

Principal Production and
Development Investment Screen Australia

Financed with the
assistance of Screen New South Wales

Developed and Produced in
Association with The Australian Broadcasting
Corporation

Production In Films

KEY CREATIVES



SARAH FERGUSON

PRESENTER, DIRECTOR

Sarah is one of Australia's most respected and successful investigative journalists and film-makers. Her exemplary and courageous work has secured her reputation, along with her increasing global profile, built on hard-hitting interviews with international figures. Sarah has received multiple journalistic and film-making awards, including the Gold Walkley, six Logies and AACTA awards for Best Documentary.



NIAL FULTON

PRODUCER, DIRECTOR

Nial is an award winning producer of internationally recognised films. His work on investigative documentaries is ground-breaking, putting cameras where access has never before been granted, as seen in the critically acclaimed US series Borderland and award-winning series on domestic violence, Hitting Home. Nial has received many awards, including AACTA and Walkley awards for documentary.



TONY JONES

WRITER

With decades of experience as a political journalist, writer, executive producer and presenter, Tony Jones is one of Australia's most respected media personalities. Tony has covered seminal news events of the last two decades, from the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, through the collapse of apartheid in South Africa to the rise of the Taliban. Tony co-created and presented Q&A, Australia's leading news panel program. He has received multiple awards for his work, including six Walkleys.

MAKING REVELATION

Sarah Ferguson spends her working life wading through murky waters, tackling confronting stories but none has tested her like Revelation, a three-part series on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, in which she comes face to face with some of Australia's most notorious serial paedophiles.

"Throughout the long-running scandal of clerical abuse in Australia, there was one voice we hadn't heard, the voice of the perpetrators. I wanted to ask them how they led their double lives and how the church enabled them, but how do you interview men whose crimes are so vile and disturbing?"

"It was a struggle not to let my revulsion at their crimes drag me off course."

One of the interviews was conducted behind bars in a maximum-security prison where Bernard McGrath, a former brother from the Order of St John of God and headmaster in residential schools in Australia and New Zealand, is serving 39 years for crimes against children.

"A prison warden brought McGrath into a secure room where we'd set up the cameras. He tried immediately to draw me into a whispered private conversation," recalls Ferguson.

"I was prepared for this because one of his lawyers had warned that he would try to manipulate me. I moved back on my stool, making him lean towards me, shifting the power balance. I was apprehensive, not because of who he was but because of the professional challenge of drawing him out."

Ferguson interviewed Vincent Ryan, a priest of the Maitland-Newcastle diocese on the eve of his trial. Ryan had already spent 14 years in prison

and was facing new charges from men who had been altar boys in his church in the 1970s and 1980s.

"The interview went for hours across two days," says Ferguson.

"Ryan looked at me at one point and said whatever I thought of him, he was sure of God's forgiveness."



- Father Vincent Ryan on trial, Sydney, 2019

"I am not easily offended because it obscures critical thinking, but this outraged me. Not because it wasn't possible according to his faith but because he had not earned it.

"He was so far from understanding the effect of his crimes that he was nowhere near forgiveness.

These were difficult interviews because as individuals they've spent many years practised in deception, both deceiving themselves and other people."

"So even though they have been convicted, they don't want to talk about what they did except on their own terms and there is still a strong sense of solidarity towards the church.

"They told me more than they intended. After the interviews I was physically and mentally drained."

Throughout filming, Ferguson was conscious of the confronting nature of the material and its potential impact on the audience.



- Sarah Ferguson interviewing Bernard McGrath, 2019

"There is a risk in putting criminals like this on camera, the material has to justify the affront. You have to be very conscious of what the effect will be on the viewer of hearing and watching a paedophile priest talking about his life, that's right on the edge.

"But the moment of seeing the person themselves, the person who actually perpetrated these crimes, in their ordinariness, it is a revelation.

"This is this ultimate double life, they are standing up in church on Sunday preaching about morals and committing heinous acts before and after, sometimes immediately before and immediately after.

How is someone capable of leading a life like that?"

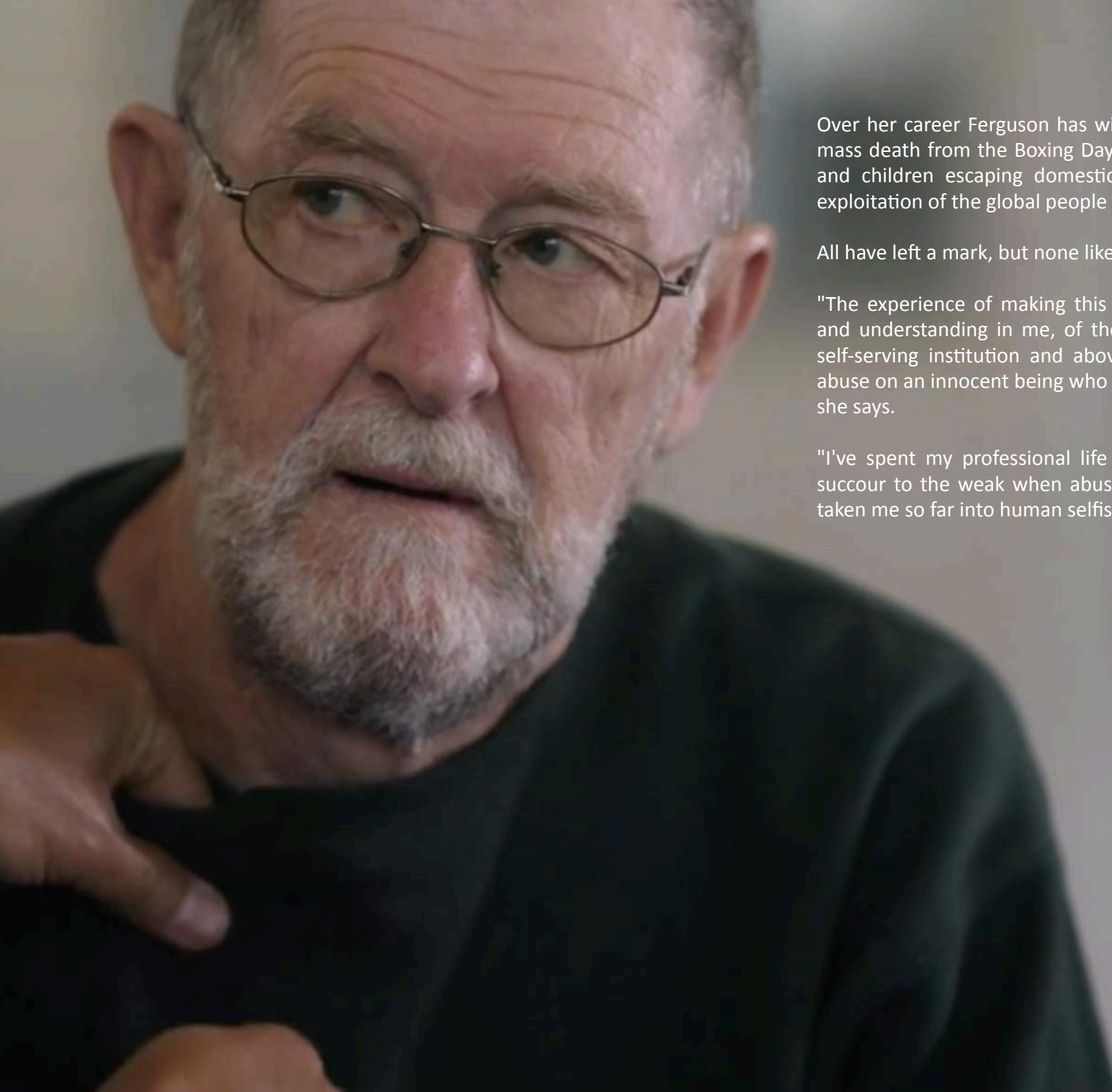
Identifying suitable cases of accused men willing to take part in Revelation and navigating the legal hurdles to get cameras into court were enormous tasks.

"Finding priests or brothers willing to have their trial filmed was extremely difficult," says Ferguson. "This is a new frontier, filming sexual assault trials."

"We had the support of the Chief Judge of the NSW District Court and the Chief Judge of the County Court in Victoria who, to their immense credit, got the arguments about bringing these cases into the public domain.

"The Director of Public Prosecutions in NSW and Victoria and three trial judges were all crucial parts of the process, along with barristers and solicitors. These are heavily protected cases.

"There is great concern in the system to protect the victims of child sexual abuse going to court, there are individuals you can't identify but we found a way to tell the stories."



Over her career Ferguson has witnessed and reported on dreadful things, mass death from the Boxing Day tsunami, the suffering of abused women and children escaping domestic violence and forced marriage and the exploitation of the global people smuggling trade.

All have left a mark, but none like Revelation.

"The experience of making this series has scored deep lines of empathy and understanding in me, of the crime, of the complicity of a powerful, self-serving institution and above all the ruinous consequences of child abuse on an innocent being who is ripped from childhood in that moment," she says.

"I've spent my professional life understanding power and trying to give succour to the weak when abused by power but nothing before this had taken me so far into human selfishness and suffering."



EPISODE 1

THE CHILDREN HAVE BEEN USED BY THE DEVIL

One of the Catholic Church's first paedophile priests to be convicted anywhere in the world, Father Vincent Ryan faces new criminal charges in Sydney's District Court. In a world television first, Revelation films the trial of a clerical child abuser and follows his victims' desperate search for justice.

In a shockingly candid interview, filmed on the eve of the trial, Sarah Ferguson questions Ryan about his double life in the church and how his superiors protected him.

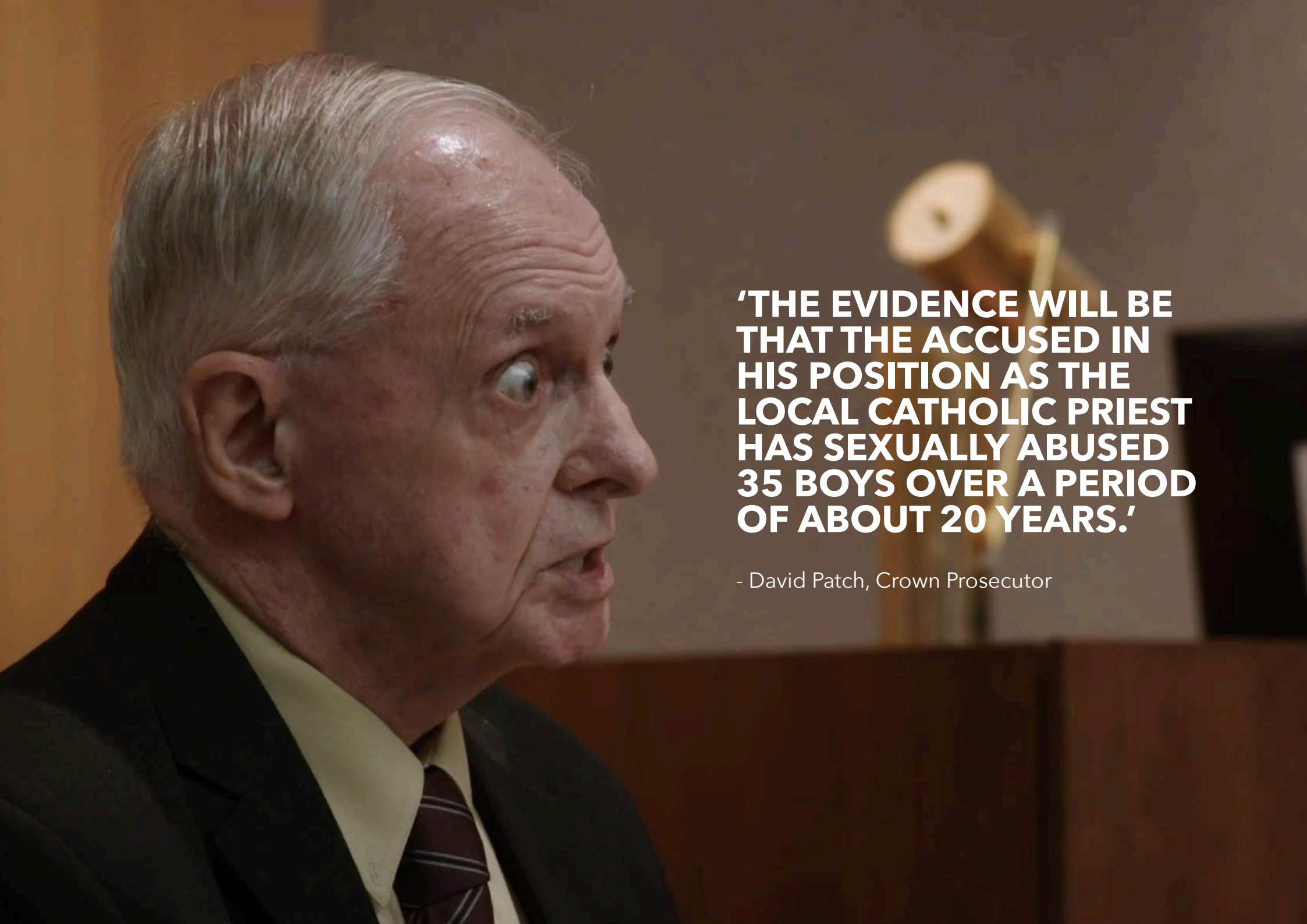
Sent from Australia to study in Rome with George Pell, ordained by the pope in St Peter's basilica, Ryan reveals how the Church encouraged him to believe he was untouchable.

Police open their files of the original investigation of Ryan, revealing how the notorious priest was moved from parish to parish, abusing children in every location.

The church knew for decades he was a child molester, why wasn't he stopped?

The episode's stunning conclusion reveals that despite multiple convictions and decades as a prolific child sex-offender, Vincent Ryan remains a priest of the church.





'THE EVIDENCE WILL BE THAT THE ACCUSED IN HIS POSITION AS THE LOCAL CATHOLIC PRIEST HAS SEXUALLY ABUSED 35 BOYS OVER A PERIOD OF ABOUT 20 YEARS.'

- David Patch, Crown Prosecutor

EPISODE 2

A DANGEROUS PLACE TO BE A CHILD

Newcastle, a beachside city on the stunning New South Wales coast, has one of the highest concentrations of child abusers of any Catholic diocese in the world. The trial of local priest Vincent Ryan continues, revealing the church officials responsible for the cover up of his crimes.

Ryan's former house-keeper, 93-year-old Audrey Nash, tells the heart-breaking story of the night her son Andrew hanged himself. In a desperate bid to cover his tracks, Andrew's abuser arrived at this house looking for a suicide note.

As Ryan's trial reaches the verdict, a new court case begins in Sydney's criminal courts of Bernard McGrath, a religious brother from the Order of St John of God. McGrath's victims describe their experiences in a residential boarding school where McGrath was the headmaster.

During filming of the trial Ferguson gets access to the maximum-security prison where McGrath is incarcerated. In a gripping interview McGrath names the Order's leadership who protected him for decades.

A police investigation shows how St John of God concealed McGrath's abuse by moving him from New Zealand to Australia to the United States. Senior church official Father Brian Lucas is questioned about his role in protecting McGrath and other paedophile priests and brothers.

The episode concludes with the revelation that the men responsible for moving McGrath still enjoy the protection of the Pope.



**'IT WAS HELL. WE JUST
LIVED IN HELL. WE
CONTROLLED BY FEAR.
WE CONTROLLED
THOSE KIDS BY
ABSOLUTE FEAR.'**

- Bernard McGrath

EPISODE 3 GOLIATH

The unmissable final chapter transports you to the centre of power in the global Catholic Church.

Cardinal George Pell, Australia's most senior Catholic, was until recently one of the Pope's closest advisors. Now a man comes forward saying Pell groomed and abused him in a Ballarat orphanage in the 1970's.

Bernie had kept his secret hidden for decades, intimidated, he says, by Pell's growing power and authority in the church.

An investigation unfolds in the remote parishes of the vast outback of Victoria, as Sarah Ferguson searches for evidence of Bernie and Pell's parallel histories. Former residents of the orphanage come forward, some with their own stories of abuse.


Ballarat priests talk for the first time about the institutional cover-up and the way paedophilia was handled by their church. "In those days abusing children wasn't the desperate thing it is now," said Father William Melican.

Steve Blacker tells how the cover-up put him in harm's way as a nine-year-old boy. His parish priest, a known and notorious child abuser, raped him in the confessional.

Steve brings a civil case against the church which results in a landmark decision for victims of clerical abuse.

Bernie has the final word, speaking for victims everywhere when he asks for the shame he has carried for decades to be taken away.



A close-up, profile shot of Bernie Sanders speaking. He is looking upwards and to the right with a serious expression. He is wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket over a white t-shirt. The background is dark and out of focus, with some colorful bokeh lights.

**'IT'S NOT MY SHAME
ANYMORE, GEORGE
HAVE IT, GEORGE IT'S
YOURS, DEAL WITH IT.
I'M GOING TO WAKE
UP TOMORROW AND
I'M THE BERNIE I
WANT TO BE MATE.
YOU HAVE THE SHAME.
I DON'T WANT IT
ANYMORE.'**

- Bernie

REVELATION

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SCREEN NEW SOUTH WALES

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AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

An **IN FILMS** production

Production Contact

Producer - Nial Fulton

IN FILMS

+61 400 707 176

nial@in-films.com

