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## 'I exploited them': Ex-priest and ALP official 'ashamed' of child sexual abuse



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A former Labor party official and Catholic priest told a Sydney court he feels guilty and ashamed for exploiting vulnerable boys in Vietnam and the Philippines for his own sexual gratification and said he never doubted that what he was doing was criminal.

Peter Andrew Hansen, who has also practised as a lawyer, gave evidence during a sentence hearing in the NSW District Court on Tuesday after he pleaded guilty earlier this month to 31 charges, including one of engaging in sexual intercourse with a child under 18 in the Philippines and 15 counts of producing child abuse material.



Peter Hansen has pleaded guilty to a raft of offences involving child sexual abuse. FACEBOOK.

He said he feels guilt and shame not only for breaking the law but for “contravening my own standards of morality” in his exploitation of the boys he abused.

“The record of my life says I did work for people who were in difficult circumstances and yet here with these victims, these boys, I exploited them.

“I didn’t only exploit their age, I exploited the fact they came from a poor Asian country,” he told the court. “I not only contravened society’s standards... I also used and manipulated to my own advantage, a power imbalance between me and them.”

“I never doubted the criminality of my action and I understand that exacerbates my culpability,” he said.

Prior to his arrest at Sydney Airport in 2018 on his return from a trip to Vietnam, Hansen had been the president of Labor’s Cabramatta branch. He had also run as a Labor candidate in the 2016 Fairfield Council election. He was a Catholic priest in Melbourne from 1996 until early 2011 and, before that, a lawyer.





A photo from Peter Hansen's Facebook account. FACEBOOK

The court heard Hansen's offending commenced in 2014, four years after he received psychological treatment for his use of pornography while he was a priest.

Forensic psychiatrist Olav Nielsen told the court that, during two interviews with Hansen, he did not ask what kind of pornography use he was treated for. But he agreed with Crown prosecutor Jennifer Single that the fact he committed the offences after this treatment was "highly relevant" to his chances of reoffending.

The court heard Hansen had meticulously filed his child abuse material under categories including the location in which the images were taken, the names of the children, and the types of acts depicted.

Dr Nielszen said that was “quite telling as to what Mr Hansen found exciting” and that “having that kind of fixated interest would obviously increase the probability of pursuing that interest again.”

He said Hansen had claimed during their first interview that his involvement was “purely voyeuristic” and denied performing physical acts of abuse. It was only after further charges were brought that Dr Nielszen became aware his offending also involved the physical sexual abuse of boys and producing child abuse material.

Dr Nielszen admitted he was unaware that Hansen’s in-person sexual abuse involved boys not only in two Philippines cities but also in Vietnam, where Hansen had an adopted son he also failed to mention.

He said Hansen told him he had lost sexual function following a prostate operation in 2010.

Asked by Crown prosecutor Jennifer Single if Hansen could have lied to him, Dr Nielszen said “yes”.

Nevertheless, he said, as a category, child sex offenders “have a lower probability of reoffending” and that “the probability decreases with age – you lose the drive.”

Hansen told the court that when he thinks of his sexual fantasies, his subconscious now “flips” to the image of being taken in handcuffs through the busy concourse of Sydney Airport on a Saturday morning to a police van with people “gawking” at him.

He said that moment was not the most shameful of his life, but “it was the moment when I felt most ashamed”.

The hearing is set to resume on Monday.

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