

# A MOTHER'S FIGHT against corruption



Mother of two, **Roseanne Catt** was one of the longest serving female prisoners in Australia. Wrongly convicted of attempting to poison her husband (amongst other charges) she spent **ten long years** in jail.

by **Maggie Wilde**

A public inquiry eventually found she was framed by corrupt NSW Ex-Detective Peter Thomas (now living in Queensland) and her former husband Barry Catt.

In jail she was beaten, her rights were withheld and prisoners were contracted to kill her.

Through it all she maintained her faith in God and the strong belief that justice would be done.

The truth took ten long years to emerge. Roseanne was taken away from her children and a loving family... but she is living proof that faith, hope, love and a steadfast belief in God prevails in the end.

Roseanne Catt's incredible journey is now the subject of a best selling book. There is talk of a television mini-series and the book is to be introduced into the NSW university curriculum and become part of NSW Higher School Certificate Legal Studies.

*MW: Wow Roseanne! What a journey for one woman to take!*

*RC: Yes. I felt the need to put my experiences in writing to help make everyone aware of corruption and to help make changes to the system.*

*MW: You lived through the injustice of it. The abominable treatment in jail, the horrendous treatment by the authorities... it is a tale that has to be read to be believed.*

*RC: Most people thought it would be impossible for anyone to withstand what happened. It was my belief in God that enabled me to live through it. In order to be able to change corrupt systems you need someone who has survived then has the courage and strength to speak out. These systems are all funded by public money and they are not doing what people think they are doing. There are billions of dollars of public money being wasted every year on services that aren't in the public interest. Yet there are hospitals,*

*nursing homes for the elderly and schools with no funds. There is so much corruption. Everything I have said is on public record. I sat in jail for ten years on fabricated charges. There were people in authority who knew about it and ignored it.*

*MW: Many authorities were aware you were innocent. They had the authority to free you and didn't. Why wasn't anything done for ten years?*

*RC: They thought 'It's all too hard; if we ignore it she will die and go away.' But what they didn't bargain on was my strength and determination. I don't want to see other people go through what I went through.*

*My book has stirred the possum within the ranks of Corrective Services from the Commissioner down. I understand they are looking at a Royal Commission into Corrective Services. I am more than happy to work with the powers that be to do what I can.*

*MW: Is that definite?*

*RC: Not yet. Members of Parliament are pushing for a Royal Commission. I believe it will be soon.*

*MW: Obviously people are starting to take note.*

*RC: That's right. As soon as anyone reads my book, they say they can't stop talking about it. That's what's needed. It's the ground swell in public awareness that will force change.*

*When the authorities can no longer ignore the facts because of public outcry, then change happens. Lots of people email me and say 'Who do we contact? What do we do?'*





I say contact our Attorney General, the Premier, contact John Howard, the Police Commissioner, the DPP, Nicholas Cowdery QC. Any authoritative body that they wish to ring, email or write to. Make some noise!

*Roseanne's quest is to bring about as much positive change as possible and to bring the three perpetrators of the crimes against her, to justice; Ex-Detective Peter Thomas (the NSW policeman that set Roseanne up, Barry Catt (her former husband) and Adrian Newell (All are part of the corruption trail).*

RC: It is on public record that these people conspired to commit serious crimes and that I was in fact the victim. Four judges have publicly said it in my inquiry. I believed these sorts of things never happened to innocent people.

I believed someone would stand up and say it was all a mistake and get me out. But I was wrong, these things do happen, there is corruption and it is widespread. We can all do something about it now and bring the system into line by speaking up.

MW: *So how did it come about?*

RC: Barry Catt was bankrupt – I fell for his sob story, I looked after his children, I used my money to help because I felt sorry for him. I discovered they and others were involved in abusing children so Barry and Ex-Detective Peter Thomas conspired to do this to me. They believed they were above the law, they believed they were THE law.

*The inquiry has now shown there were many victims before Roseanne Catt and there have been many since.*

RC: While Peter Thomas, Barry Catt and Adrian Newell walk free, they are inflicting pain and suffering on so many others. So many people have come forward since I released my book to say they were threatened, bashed or framed like I was. I find it amazing that with all this evidence these three are still free.

MW: *Yet you got twelve years and served ten for being innocent.*

RC: The reason they got rid of me was the children had named Barry Catt, Peter Thomas, other members of the police force as a group that regularly attended Cornwall Street, Taree. The children had to do things.

Evidence was presented to my inquiry that there was in fact a child prostitution ring operating in Taree and these people and others headed it up.

I simply did what any responsible Australian or parent would do, I stood up. I was horrified that others knew and ran away scared. I guess being very public about it was my death knoll, but it also saved my life. There was no doubt that they would have liked to kill me...

MW: *It would have been the easier for them I imagine.*

RC: Absolutely. By that stage I had been so public, it would have been too obvious to cover up. I made a complaint against Detective Peter Thomas and he was transferred from Taree to Newcastle. He lost all his illegal perks that he had set up.

I reported him because I believe in protecting innocent people. When they transferred him he made plans to take revenge on me and protect the people he needed to protect.

MW: *Newcastle wasn't far enough away?*

RC: Definitely not. Barry Catt began bragging that he was protected. All his life he had been able to hurt people because he was a link in a very powerful corrupt chain.

When Barry was arrested and committed to trial Peter Thomas went into action.



He came back to Taree, set up his own police station in one of Adrian Newell's houses, took witnesses who had already made statements against Barry and he held a gun to their heads until they changed their story. Barry got a fine and was placed on a good behaviour bond. When Judge Davidson heard this at my inquiry he was horrified. He referred to Taree as a lawless country town. Many people such as psychiatrists, psychologists, solicitors and others got up in the witness box at my inquiry and talked about the child prostitution and drugs in Taree.

*MW: Have you ever thought 'Was it really worth it? Should I have shut up?'*

*RC: No I lost so much of my life I agree, but I also got the opportunity to grow and help people from within the system.*

There were long-term prisoners that I was able to help. One, who had been sent to kill me in jail, ended up being my dear friend and her life will never be the same again.

When the system couldn't handle a new Young Offenders Section, I was sent in as a prisoner to sort it out. To the best of my knowledge none of those young girls came back into the system whilst I was there. I was asked how I did it, the place was bedlam. I simply listened to those girls, I gave them time. I gave them compassion and understanding.

A high percentage of women inmates spend their life coming in and out of the system. The system does not rehabilitate.

*Roseanne was bashed, ridiculed and victimised for her faith in God and for speaking out openly about it in prison.*

*RC: There were even prisoners that joined me in chapel eventually. There were long-term offenders that have been forever changed*

and their families along with them. I would be bashed one moment but when one of the prisoners needed help, they would all run to get me. They would ask for my help and ask me to pray for them or teach them to pray.

*MW: There are many different concepts of what God is, but for you, what does it mean?*

*RC: I have an unshakable belief in God; I could never have got through what I did without it. Miracles happened to keep me safe and to eventually set me free to tell my story. I can now make change from the outside, not just the inside. My concept of God is of the One that sustains me, empowers me. This and my faith gave me the strength to survive.*

*MW: Is this your purpose, your divine role?*

*RC: Yes. I believe so. It's not over yet. I am here to see that justice will be done. That these people are finally put in jail and the system is changed.*

*MW: What will bring you peace now?*

*RC: Knowing that these people are finally brought to justice. Knowing they can't hurt anyone else. Knowing the innocent people they have hurt are safe... the children, all the victims of crimes that were carried out by these three people.*

*MW: Even when asked about your peace, it's still about compassion for others. If there is an angel on earth... you would be my first candidate.*

*RC: I did what I believe is the true nature of the human spirit. We all have that within us.*

*To this day Roseanne Catt has not received any formal apology or compensation for her years in jail. Ten years of her life and that of her children and her parents was wrongfully taken from her... yet she still fights for justice for all.*

**'Ten Years' by Roseanne Catt can be purchased in all good book stores. If you wish to add your support to her journey or contact her direct go to [www.justicewillbedone4roseanne.com](http://www.justicewillbedone4roseanne.com) or email: [rosebeck@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rosebeck@ozemail.com.au)**

