

Roseanne Catt to stand trial on 15 charges Manning River Times, 31st July, 1990

Roseanne Catt has been committed for trial to Supreme Court, Newcastle on a total of 15 charges including two of soliciting to murder her husband, Taree panel beater Barry Catt.

In Taree Local Court last Friday, Magistrate Mr Wayne Evans dropped one of the soliciting to murder charges faced by Mrs Catt, 43, but added two further charges, that of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice and assault with intent to murder.

Mrs Catt's son, Peter Kevin Bridge, 21, was also committed for trial on three charges, including a fresh charge of conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Bail was sought and granted to both Mrs Catt and Mr Bridge. Mr John Foley, for Mrs Catt and Mr Bridge, pointed out Mrs Catt was living with her five children (four of whom are Mr Catt's from a previous marriage) and she had 'considerable obligations family-wise'.

Two weeks

Both received conditional bail, Mr Bridge \$50,000 and Mrs Catt \$100,000 plus \$50,000 surety, and both must report to Dapto Police Station. Also they are not to come within 10 kilometres of Taree

except for court appearances.

The court proceedings had taken three weeks, including two weeks last May, and during that time some 30 witnesses appeared and more than 80 exhibits were tendered, including a five kilogram rock, a kitchen knife, a cricket bat and a hand gun.

In summing up last Friday, Mr Foley told the court he challenged seven of the charges faced by Mrs Catt. These were the Les O'Brien solicit to murder, the 'James Morris solicit to murder', the Lithium poisoning, three charges of the assault occasioning actual bodily harm (regarding Barry Catt's committal to a mental institution on three separate occasions), and a further charge of assault occasioning actual bodily harm (relating to a continued mental assault on Barry Catt over a period of time).

He did not challenge charges of malicious wounding, three charges of assault, conspiracy to falsely accuse Mr Catt and possession of a pistol without a licence, or either charge faced by Mr Bridge, that of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and conspiring to falsely accuse Mr Catt.

Mr Foley said he had not been able to find a reference case that relates to the continuing assault charge and suggested this case may

be breaking new ground in that respect.

He also spoke of sexual assault charges Mr Catt is facing in another court, 'This is not just a rumour,' he said, 'He has been committed on 14 counts of sexually assaulting those children and a date is fixed for trial. Police Prosecutor, Sgt Garry Gilday described Mrs Catt as a 'wicked lady' who set out to take over Mr Catt's business.

He spoke of statements Mr Catt's sister and brother-in-law had presented in court, that alleged Mrs Catt said just before she was to marry Mr Catt: "You might be his next of kin but next week I'll have him committed."

"After he's married-and this is a man who has been able to run his business quite successfully-she has him committed to a mental institution three times." Sgt Gilday told the court, "When she leaves he goes back to running his business".

He likened Mrs Catt's assault on her husband to 'a dripping tap, like a torture.'

'She kept telling him he was mad, she was wearing away at him,' he said.

'Made up'

Sgt Gilday said there was also

the suggestion that Detective Sergeant Peter Thomas had 'made up the case in respect of all these charges', but he said, Roseanne Catt was interviewed (by police), showing Detective Thomas had acted fairly.

In bringing down his decision, Magistrate, Mr Evans said Les O'Brien's evidence should not be considered because partway through his cross examination by the defence, Mr O'Brien chose to exercise his right not to say anything further, on the grounds it might incriminate him.

Mr Evans said in his view, Mrs Catt did not approach O'Brien to murder Barry Catt and there was not sufficient evidence to establish a prima facie case in this matter.

However, on the other charges Mr Foley had challenged, Mr Evans did believe the matter should go to trial.

In regard to the Lithium poisoning charge, where it is alleged Mrs Catt had placed Lithium in Mr Catt's milk and orange juice in his workshop fridge, Mr Evans said there was evidence that Roseanne Catt always drove when she and her husband were in the car.

Mr Evans then asked Mrs Catt and Mr Bridge to stand and he further charged them that with Shane Golds, they did conspire to pervert the course of justice.

This charge related to an incident at Mr Catt's sisters home when Mr Golds, an apprentice panelbeater working with Mr Catt at the time, alleged he was told by Mrs Catt to tell Police it was Mr Catt's sister who assaulted Mr Catt with a rock. The wound with intent to murder charge faced by Mrs Catt also relates to this incident. Both pleaded not guilty to the fresh charges.

Mr Foley told the court Detective Thomas was being investigated by the Ombudsman in regard to a previous matter involving Mrs Catt.

He suggested Detective Thomas' 'motivation' for this case relied heavily on 'Mr Catt's other mates'.

However, Mr Evans, in deciding whether the matter should go to trial or not, said he could not accept that every one of the witnesses were friends of Mr Catt. He said, in fact some made it clear they had little time for Mr Catt.

Julie Banks, for example, made it clear "the last thing (she) wanted to do was to give evidence in this case," she said.

"Or is it that Detective Thomas has been able to influence them in some way to become part of this? - I believe it is a matter for a jury."