

MEMBERS DEMAND ANSWERS



Larry Sebastian in action and (right) on stage with his famous nephew Guy Sebastian, who is not accused of any wrongdoing.

City Church, including some employees who have dual roles with other programs and areas of the Church," he said.

Mr Wood said he was unaware of the terms of the grant or if Mr Sebastian, who he denied was a friend, drew a wage but understood the grants were to support things like coaches and equipment.

One of the main concerns of the group was an alleged failure to report the rape of a 12-year-old girl at a church youth conference in Kew in 2013.

The woman, who is now a 23-year-old university student, who this newspaper has chosen not to name, told The Sunday Telegraph the rape committed by a male church member was not reported to authorities.

She claims she told Mr Sebastian, who she has known since age four and once called "Uncle Larry", about the alleged attack at the time.

She says the church also did

not offer any counselling or support, alleging Mr Sebastian asked her to keep the rape secret. She eventually told her mother in 2022 but not before the assault saw her spiral emotionally and psychologically, triggering mental health issues which manifested in suicidal thought. She and her mother eventually quit the church. "No one reported it ... nothing happened. Eventually the boy and his family left the church," she said.

The woman, who has worked in childcare and is studying to become a teacher, said it wasn't until she began working in the field of child protection and became a mandatory reporter that she realised what level of support she should have been offered.

To date she has not brought rape charges against the alleged perpetrator, fearing to do so would be to inflict further harm upon herself.

Mr Sebastian said Casey

City Church was "unaware of any complaint of a child-related incident being brought to the attention of the Senior Pastors or any other member of staff or member of the leadership in 2013".

"No complaint was made at that time, however, an allegation was made in 2023 by a small number of the church who were seeking to remove the Senior Pastors from their position for other reasons," he said. "To date, this allegation has not been made directly to the Senior Pastors of the Church from any alleged victim. Casey City Church understands that the complaint has been reported to the relevant authorities."

Also troubling the directors is the recent elevation within the church of a registered sex offender. The man, a former teacher from Narre Warren South, made newspaper headlines in 2017 after pleading guilty to a charge of grooming

a 14-year-old girl for sex.

Sentenced to a 24-month community corrections order, he was placed on the sex offenders register for eight years, however last year he gave an Easter sermon.

Mr Sebastian yesterday said all church workers required to have Working With Children Checks had undergone them.

Calling himself a "pastorpreneur", Sebastian came to his religious vocation some 30 years ago after first turning his back on a career in banking in his native Malaysia and joining Portland Bible College in the US.

After claiming to have had a holy "vision" while visiting Disneyland in 2001, Sebastian opened his own Pentecostal church in 2002.

Guy is the son of Larry's brother Ivan, who is not associated with the Melbourne church but who, with his family, worshipped at Adelaide's Paradise Community Church.

Rise of the poor, young landlord

New face of property owners

Aidan Devine

Real estate editor

Australia's landlords aren't as old or rich as you might think.

The public image of investors is often older Aussies building a nest egg for retirement or cashed up institutional buyers, but turns out they're increasingly 20- and 30-somethings who are also tenants.

New Commonwealth Bank research indicated those born between 1981 and 1996 were the most active group buying investment properties, accounting for 46 per cent of investor purchases in 2023.

And about a third were buying their properties alone, without the help of a partner.

CBA said investors were getting younger because of a growing inclination to "rent-vest". This involved the investors buying where they could afford, while continuing to rent in locations they deemed more desirable to live in.

Others, spurred by social media, saw property investing as a way to create wealth and retire early.

"It's a generational thing," said buyer's agent and investment adviser Lloyd Edge. "Younger investors don't want to work their whole life and do what their parents did. They want to retire early. It's not uncommon for us to get clients wanting to buy property at 21, 22, even as low as 19, despite them being in university and not having a lot of money. I find it quite inspiring."

CBA manager home buying Michael Baumann said rent-vesting gave Australians the chance to get their foot on the property ladder sooner.

"(They) purchase a property

in a lower cost area without having to give up the lifestyle they have become accustomed to when renting," he said.

Many employing this strategy were hoping their investment would become a stepping stone to their dream home.

The hope was they could capitalise in a few years by selling and diverting the funds to a new residence.

Property Investment Professionals of Australia chair Nicola McDougall said it wasn't surprising more millennials were investing given improved access to financial data.

"Their generation has probably been more exposed to property investment strategies than any generation before them because of the proliferation of content readily available," she said.

Among the new generation of investors who have clawed their way into the market is Lachlan Vidler, who bought his first investment property aged 22, while serving in the navy.

Now 28, the Sydney-based investor said his plan when he was 22 was to focus on where he could afford, which meant looking at the Ipswich area southwest of Brisbane.

He said he gained much of this investment knowledge through podcasts and by age 25 he had three properties.

Sanjay Parasher, 29, started investing in his mid-20s and said he got educated about the topic from YouTube. He now has 37 properties.

"I literally learnt it all off YouTube," he said. "I think more people should invest because trying to buy (a home) is becoming too expensive."

REAL ESTATE P87

It's a win for everyone

NSW's Little Athlete stars will enjoy some extra exposure at this month's Little Athletics Championship in Adelaide, which will be livestreamed on Community TV.

The streaming partnership between Little Athletics and Community TV was introduced for last year's festivities, but this year will feature enhanced production, including more content.

The national

championships will include more than 12 sports and over 600 athletes from across Australia. Viewers will be able to toggle between three streams to follow the action.

"Not only will those within the Little Athletics community be wanting to watch ... we can bring Little Athletics to a broader group of people," said Little Athletics CEO Myles Foreman.



Little Athletics stars.

Fee-free TAFE plan paying off

Mitch Fink

As a crime scene fingerprint technician in Western Sydney, Stevie-Lea Hoffmannbeck longed to swap her career in forensics for something on the front lines of health care.

Thanks to a government-funded TAFE initiative, she's made it happen without paying a cent.

Ms Hoffmannbeck, a 25-year-old who is studying a Di-

ploma of Nursing in Kingswood, is one of the 182,124 NSW students who enrolled in Fee-Free TAFE in 2023, a free program that offers certificates and diplomas in a range of disciplines facing skill shortages, like education, health, construction and IT.

"I think it's a great initiative," she said. "It gives young people the opportunity to kind of decide what they want to do without locking into some-

thing, and then later down the track deciding they absolutely hated it and now they're stuck with this debt and this degree they don't want to use."

Enrolments are prioritised for those in groups under-represented in the labour market. Some 62,925 of the enrollees identified as part of a priority group.

The program is being jointly funded by the Albanese and Minns governments.