

04 JUN 2002

1st June 2002

Right Reverend John Harrower
Anglican Bishop of Tasmania
Church House
Macquarie Street
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Bishop Harrower

I am writing in reference to your letter to Michael Longbottom about my claim against the Anglican Church of Tasmania.

I am appreciative Bishop that you have acknowledged in writing that you accept that priests of the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania sexually abused me. I am also glad to see the acknowledgment that you made in your address to Synod this year, of your opposition to child sexual abuse by priests and your resolve to see the Church protect the children in it's care.

What I want to see from you Bishop and your diocese now, is acceptance of a moral duty to compensate me for the massive pain and damage inflicted on me by diocesan priests.

I have given you testimony Bishop of the damage caused by those priests to me as a boy, and the resultant damage into adulthood caused by post traumatic stress disorder. You have had testimony – expert testimony from Desiree Taylor regarding the damage done to me. You made no mention of that expert clinical assessment in your letter.

What happened to me Bishop was multi-faceted assault and abuse: physical and emotional and sexual violation; psychological rape and spiritual abuse. Those priests used the confessional to not only procure my silence. They used it to make me feel morally and spiritually responsible for what had occurred. They knew my conscience and feelings inside out. They knew that their manipulation of the sacraments was procuring my silence.

I cannot believe Bishop that you cannot see the connection between the actions of the priests, and the responsibility that the Diocese bears for those men. They were priests of the Anglican Church of Australia. They were priests of the diocese. One of them fell from being one of Bishop Newell's right hand archdeacons to being a convicted pedophile. They were, whatever your lawyers say, employees of the Church. Would any layperson in the pews, or the parent of a Collegiate student believe the morally indefensible contention that priests of the Diocese of Tasmania are independent contractors?

You meet their annual leave and sick pay, their insurance and superannuation, and they are somehow still independent legally of the Diocese? It is a legal fiction. Even if this was tested in court and held up, the moral contempt that your faithful and the community would be massive.

In the eyes of my parents who entrusted me to those men, I was being entrusted to the Church of God. In their eyes, I was under the protection of Holy Church. In their eyes, they expected your predecessors to have employed men of sound moral and spiritual character, not profligate and immoral pedophiles. How could the Church have got it so wrong about its priests – and not just one – but four? Can you honestly say Bishop that I was the only victim of those men?

Bishop I do not feel morally guilty about insisting that the Church owe me for its failure to protect me, nor for condemning the immorality of denial of responsibility – and indeed denial of the truth of my sexual abuse by your predecessor. How do you think it felt to see Bishop Newell shed tears for me, and then deny in writing the truth of what had happened to me?

It is not enough Bishop to say that then was then and now is now, and “the Church is doing so much better now with the issue of child protection, and abuse”. I am interested in hearing that you accept in good conscience – in conscience before your God, that the Church at the very least has a moral debt to me, for its massive moral failure towards me.

I am not interested in the alleged financial weakness of the diocese, or of the pain that payout to victims could cause to parishes.

I am interested Bishop in moral principle being put before the interests of your investment brokers or lawyers. I am interested Bishop in seeing this Diocese put the pain of me – and all other survivors of clergy abuse ahead of your own vastly less consequential embarrassment caused by this issue. I am hoping Bishop to see conscience put ahead of the unconscionable defense of the morally indefensible.

Bishop, had you been sodomised in the way I was, tortured psychologically to take on the ‘sin’ of criminal clerics and treated as I have been treated by the Church when I ask for justice, then I think that your outlook would be markedly different. If you had been that boy sexually violated by a priest in between church services, or on the way to or from church services, just maybe you would see a connection between the crime of the individual and the church.

I would hope if I were the Bishop of Tasmania that I would see that fidelity to the gospel demands that one make amends to victims of pedophile priests. I would hope that I would seek out all victims of abuse, and accept the burden of supporting their healing. I would not remain silent in the face of clear evidence of massive hurt and damage. I would not hope that the problem would just go away, or die with the victims.

Nothing you can do or not do can give me back the innocence of growing up free of the degradation, the physical pain and emotional agony that was my sexual abuse. Money cannot alleviate the shadow of posttraumatic stress disorder. It can't instantly end marital dysfunction caused by my abhorrence of sex, again, caused by my abuse.

Money can give me choices, to help me with therapy costs and to give me options to help me heal, recover and help me rebuild my life. Nothing can be as it was before Lou Daniels first violated me, and changed my life irrevocably. It can though be better. Therapy is incredibly expensive and hugely draining emotionally. I need to be able to see my therapist weekly, and to put time and money into undoing some of the damage that self-harm has wrought in my life, post abuse.

I don't need anyway to justify what I will do with compensation. Give me back my life without the abuse. To expect the Church to employ morally sound priests is every parent's right. It was my right to grow up without the perverted sexuality – the sodomy, the living pornography that was my abuse and the evil of those “men of God”. Those priests violated the trust of my family, and the community – and most of all me. No therapy will make me psychologically or spiritually, the same as if I had not been abused.

I expect appropriate financial compensation – acknowledging that without a civil action, I cannot prove legally that the Church has an obligation to me. I am asking you Bishop to accept the undeniable moral truth – that the Church owes me for the abuse, which I suffered at the hands of pedophile priests.

Before you recoil in horror at a sum that you will say is preposterous and that the Church cannot afford, bear in mind those successful litigants here and overseas have received much larger compensation. In the Toowoomba case, the settlement reflected the abhorrence felt at the Church's mishandling of the victim's right to justice.

If the Catholic Church can offer \$50,000 to victims that it accepts were victims of serious pedophile abuse, why should you not offer a similar or greater amount?

It is not my moral responsibility to feel guilty about asking – about demanding just compensation, even if it financially hurts.

I also understand Bishop that the Church does not want to see a floodgate of claims made for compensation. Bishop, do you honestly think that I was the only boy abused by those priests? You know of at least 1 other victim of Lou Daniels through the police prosecution of Daniels. Whether 10 people or 250 people come forward, all of them deserve compensation, compassion and justice, if they are genuine victims of pedophile priests and church employees.

In the parishes where known pedophiles have been active – Moonah, Glenorchy, Devonport, Burnie, the whole youth movement of the church – including CEBS suffering victims need to be drawn out of their pain, and into the hope of healing. This will not be done without your proactive seeking out of these people.

I am determined Bishop to speak out for victims of clergy abuse, and to demand a morally appropriate response from the Church. Nothing short of the Church compensating victims, creating systems and a culture in which children are safe and assisting the police to investigate and prosecute when appropriate, will satisfy me.

I said in my meeting with you Bishop that if I had not knocked at the door of the Church or gone to the media, nothing would have happened. Deafening silence in the face of so many acts of criminal atrocity against children entrusted to the Anglican Church in Tasmania. Even now, if I do not state my case again and again, the silence of the Church towards me is loud and clear.

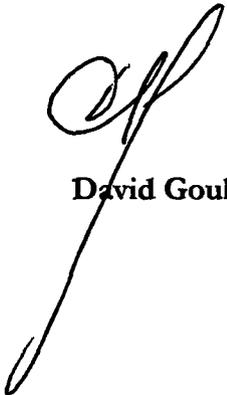
That message of silence – of hoping that I will let this matter go, or stop hassling will get the Church no where in dealing with me.

Bishop, you do not have to be a moral theologian to see that morality is on the side of genuine victims of clergy abuse. It does not lie with incompetent, indifferent or negligent prelates, clerics and authorities of churches whose failure to right undoubted wrong is a clear message of moral bankruptcy to the community, to victims, and to the pedophile priests who caused so much harm.

The contempt held for the former Archbishop of Brisbane, and for Archbishop Pell is history's fate for men of that calibre.

I hope that the good work that you have done, will encompass justice for not just myself, but all victims of clergy abuse in this diocese.

Yours sincerely,



David Gould