

Record of meeting in my office with David Gould on Thursday, 12th June from 3 p.m until 3.55 p.m.

David wanted to give me a copy of a Presbyterian newspaper which he had been given by a Presbyterian media officer attending the recently held religious media conference in Hobart. He drew my attention to several articles and praised the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand for its openness and for the way in which it was speaking about and dealing with matters of sexual abuse. He read several parts out to me and gave a quick summary of its contents.

He left it on the table for me but inadvertently packed it away in his bag at the end of the meeting. I have asked my secretary to ring him so that I might obtain a copy.

I responded by saying that I would be happy to read it and that it may help to inform us. In return I gave him a copy of our Clergy Code of Ethics. He had a quick look at this and made some comments about it which generally showed that he felt that it was on the right lines. I encouraged him to take it away, read it carefully and to make any comments back to me if he felt that out of his experience there were things that we could learn which could be reflected in the Code of Ethics.

Further reference was made to the Diocesan Sexual Harassment Response Group and as I had promised last time, gave him a copy of the guidelines which have yet to go out. In relation to that I also gave him a copy of my Presidential Address this year in which the work of that group was launched. I told him that the Chair of the group had gone overseas and that the actual printing, publication and circulation of the leaflets and posters was yet to take place. But that it provided an avenue for people who alleged that they had been sexually abused to make their concerns known in a way however which gave some separation from the authorities of the church and therefore allowed some independence of assessment and hopeful objectivity.

On the whole this seemed to be a fairly relaxed kind of conversation. He revisited some of the hurt occasioned to him and by his desire that something could happen to enable Lou Daniels to be charged. It was at this stage that I made reference again to the Diocesan Sexual Harassment Response Group leaflet and indicated that this may encourage people to come forward and to make their allegations. We discussed the fact that if there was further evidence it may enable the police to charge Daniels. This in itself would be liberating for those who allege abuse as well as for the Parish of Burnie.

He asked me about the parish and I explained that it was divided between those who had heard and believed and those who had not heard and did not believe. It was holding back the work of the church. We also talked about the potential for their being a number of other victims. In that context he asked if I was concerned that there could be claims for damages from such people. My response was that the first concern must always be for the people who claimed abuse and who were suffering because of such alleged abuse. The Gospel demands that we care for them as a first priority. But I did say also that it was of concern in a church which was already struggling to survive financially. He understood the point and agreed with me.

I commented at this stage that I hoped our talks had been of some assistance to him. I said they had certainly been informative for me and it had opened my eyes in a new way. I was much more aware of the seriousness of abuse which had allegedly taken place. I thanked David for his openness with me and his willingness to continue to meet with me. He indicated his appreciation and that he was glad that after so many years he was at least able to speak to an Anglican, especially the Bishop, about things which had affected his life so much. In some ways he felt that somebody or something owed him something. However his wife disagrees with him. She feels that the person who did these things to him owes him something but that he should not blame the church.

I then sympathised with him in this area and went on to indicate that the talks which we had had which had been helpful to me and which he felt had been helpful to him could not have taken place in a context in which a possible damages case was part of the scenario. He agreed with me and again indicated his appreciation for the way in which we had been able to meet together.

I asked him if there were other things that he really wanted to achieve in our meetings and he felt that we had gone as far as we could at this time. I invited him to make an appointment at any time to come and talk to me and that in the meantime I was trying to set in train a process by which we might be able to assist the parish.

We concluded on a warm, personal and I think reasonably happy note.

*Philip James*

16-VI-1987