

# PUBLIC STATEMENT

22 May 2003

Don and I are deeply concerned that our Church has failed to respond adequately to complaints of child sexual abuse in the Diocese of Adelaide.

Media reports earlier this week about abuse perpetrated by Robert Brandenburg, a former Chief Commissioner of CEBS (The Anglican Boys Society) and Manager of Diocesan Campsites have raised a number of fundamental questions regarding the Church's handling of these matters.

The information we have concerning the seriousness of this abuse is that it is not only extensive – involving a number of Parishes – it has also occurred over an extraordinary period, approaching four decades.

It is our view that our Church's failure to disclose the existence of this abuse has left victims and their families to suffer alone and in ignorance.

We believe that it is no longer appropriate for the Church to control the investigation of the widespread and serious abuse perpetrated by Brandenburg and others involving potentially hundreds of children, with consequent pain and suffering caused to their families.

Only an independent Inquiry, to be conducted by eminent persons having appropriate judicial and child protection qualifications, will have the credibility necessary to satisfy survivors, the community at large, and indeed the membership of the Anglican Church.

Those who will conduct such an Inquiry and its Terms of Reference must be approved by a representative group nominated by survivors.

This Inquiry should be funded by the Church, and provide legal representation for those wishing to give evidence, and on completion its report should be tabled on the first sitting day thereafter in both Houses of State Parliament.

We believe that such an Inquiry should investigate, but not be limited to the following matters:

1. The Church's failure to disclose the extent and seriousness of the abuse by Robert Brandenburg, given that a complaint was made to the Church at least as early as June 1993 – thus exposing further boys to harm.
2. What were the full circumstances surrounding the replacement of Brandenburg by the Church as Chief Commissioner of CEBS in 1981 following the January 1981 National CEBS Camp in South Australia?
3. An investigation of the nature and extent of any network of paedophiles operating within the Adelaide Diocese and links with other Dioceses.
4. The extent to which Diocesan authorities have failed to follow established protocols to disclose and investigate complaints of child sexual abuse.

We have come to this point reluctantly, and have taken this action because we feel the Church has not responded adequately to complaints of child sexual abuse. We believe our Church's lack of appropriate action has caused further suffering that could have been avoided. We further believe that an Inquiry such as this will be beneficial for the Church and the community.

**Rev'd Dr. Donald Owers**

**Rev'd Andrew King**