

Report to the Diocesan Council from the Sexual Abuse Task Group

Formation and membership

1. In June 2002, the Rev'd. Dr. Don Owers advised the Diocesan Council of his concern about both a minimal and insufficient response by the Diocese to victims and others of predatory sexual abuse of boys by the late Mr Bob Brandenburg.
2. The Administrator and a small group appointed by him considered the matter further and made a submission to Diocesan Council in July 2002.
3. A task group was established by the Diocesan Council with the following resolution "*That all matters connected with the sexual behaviour of the late Bob Brandenburg and its ramifications be referred to a committee appointed by the Administrator to consult expeditiously with such persons and bodies, including the DRG, as they consider necessary and to make recommendations to the next meeting of Diocesan Council and thereafter from time to time as may be necessary, about any action that should be taken by or on behalf of the Synod or any agency of the Church in connection with that behaviour and its consequences.*"
4. The Administrator appointed a Sexual Abuse Response Task Group to examine the implementation of this resolution comprising the Ven John Collas (Diocesan Leaders), Mr Peter Casson (Diocesan Administration), Mr Mark Pickhaver (legal expertise), Mr Paul Kassapidis (psychological expertise), Mrs Margaret Chittleborough (adult/child development expertise) and the Rev'd Peter Stuart (Ministry Development Council). Subsequently, the Administrator invited Ms Jan Horsnell (Anglicare) to join the Task Group.

Process

5. The Task Group met on 16, 25 July, 6, 15 and 28 August 2002.
6. The Task Group has interviewed six people. The interviews covered the area of the behaviour of Mr Bob Brandenburg, the impact on primary and secondary victims of this behaviour, the operation of CEBS and the diocesan response to allegations of sexual abuse. Dr Owers was among the people interviewed.
7. The Task Group did not interview any primary victims. We have received a paper written by a victim.
8. The Task Group provided an interim report to Diocesan Council on 14 August 2002.

Opinions formed by the Task Group

9. **Allegations of Predatory Abuse** – We have heard credible allegations of incidents of sexual abuse and sexually inappropriate behaviour by the late Mr Bob Brandenburg in the period from the 1960s through to the late 1990s. We believe the victims advocates who indicate the abuse occurred. The period of abuse and the number of complaints over a long period indicate predatory behaviour.
10. **Many victims** – We have formed the view that ^{there} are a significant number of victims who have not yet disclosed to the church the abuse they suffered. Alongside these victims is a significant number of secondary victims including immediate family, extended family, and the Christian community.

11. **Relationship to the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Inc.** – Bob Brandenburg was an employee of the Diocese through Anglican Community Services from 1 October 1981 through to 31 July 1998 when he retired. Anglican Community Services was not separately incorporated until 2000 when it was incorporated as Anglicare SA. As an employee of Anglican Community Services Brandenburg was an employee of the Synod.
12. **CEBS** – We have been advised of allegations of sexual abuse and sexually inappropriate behaviour by Bob Brandenburg only in connection with his involvement with CEBS. There have been no allegations of abuse arising from his involvement with Anglican Community Services. CEBS officials have told us that, prior to his death, they were not aware of any allegation of abuse by Bob Brandenburg. The representatives thought that the abuse could have been confined to the Magill Parish. It was disconcerting to discover later that correspondence from one representative showed attention being given in June 2002 to activities in the Plympton Parish in the late 70's and early 80's, even though they had asserted there was no indication of other sexual abuse within CEBS in this Diocese. We believe that if CEBS had had better detection and disciplinary processes then events reported in the 1970s would have limited ^{the} access ^{to} Bob Brandenburg ^{to} young boys. The Task Group was advised that National CEBS camps do not have a good name among survivor groups.
13. **Diocesan Response Group** – We have been told that the only contact with the DRG relating to Bob Brandenburg occurred after his death in June 1999. We were informed about the current processes for responding to claims of sexual abuse and/or harassment. We were told that offenders do not have confidence in the Diocesan complaints system. We took note of the following matters -
- Complainants are reluctant to report directly to the body through which the perpetrator has operated. The victims are even more reluctant to be interviewed by bishops and clergy whose trust has been lost by central association.
 - In circumstances where a complaint is not made in writing, the complaint is not proceeded with. Records of the conversation are kept by the Contact Person.
 - The DRG processes seek to honour the wishes of the complainant. Where the complainant is a child, mandatory reporting occurs.
 - DRG membership does not appear to have been reviewed by the Diocesan Council for some time.
 - The DRG relies on voice mail which is available on a 24 hours/7 day basis from which the Contact Person returns calls.
 - The DRG makes its recommendations to the Bishop who is responsible for deciding on and implementing further action.
14. **The Archbishop** – We understand that the Archbishop was first aware of allegations of abuse against Brandenburg in April 1999 when a police investigation had begun and Brandenburg was no longer an employee of Anglican Community Services.
15. **Prior Knowledge of Brandenburg** - While there is some confusion about particular dates of contact with diocesan personnel, we have been told by a victim's advocate that a diocesan official (now retired) received a complaint some years prior to Brandenburg's death. We felt that the responses made to use by that diocesan official were not entirely satisfactory or consistent with other information provided to us. The group was of the view that there was significant dissembling and withholding of information.
16. **Expectations of the Church** – Victims need to hear that the Church recognizes the abuse occurred. They want realistic acknowledgement and genuine engagement with the church, some mediation process, and in some cases compensation.

17. **Education** – We believe that there is room for improvement in educating clergy and laity to ensure a culture of awareness and an arena of safety for children and young people.
18. **Screening Processes** – We acknowledge the work being done to ensure that the criminal history of people ministering with children and young people is checked. We believe that there is room for extensions to the processes used for screening people who seek authorization for ministry with children and young people.
19. **Counselling and other support for victims** – Survivors of sexual abuse may need assistance in a number of ways, including counseling on a number of occasions throughout their lives. Survivors need to be able to ensure their privacy and do not necessarily want to be involved with the institution they believe has failed to protect them. We believe that the process for enabling counselling needs to be handled by appropriate people who are at arm's length from the Diocese on a fee for service basis. We further believe that the initial recording and analysis of a complaint should be handled in the same way.
20. **Legal liability and obligations** – On the basis of the information put to us it is not clear whether any victim of the late Bob Brandenburg would be entitled to any right of legal redress against the Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide Inc. If a person does wish to make a claim against the Synod, it is important that expeditious processes are established such that anyone who makes such a claim receives prompt and compassionate assistance. In circumstances where the Synod is not legally liable we would urge that it opt for a compassionate stance at least in regard to the provision of counseling and other support.
21. **Initial Contact with Victims** - The Task Group believes that the present system of initial contact and follow-up action is flawed. We recommend that these processes be independent of the church. Investigation is now undertaken by a committee rather than executive judgement and action. There is no formal register of complaints and there are gaps in record keeping.
22. **The Archbishop** - The Archbishop's role should be clear, i.e. as Chief Pastor he should be seen by the community to have set in place a fail safe system but he should be at arm's length for most of its activities. He is the shepherd of the victim, the protector of the church, and the carer of the perpetrator. He needs to know of complaints, but the system should be able to act promptly and effectively on his behalf.

Recommendations

1. **That the Archbishop and Synod of the Diocese of Adelaide, noting that there has been an insufficient response to the victims of abuse by the late Bob Brandenburg and as part of its accountability to them and to the Adelaide community**
 - a. acknowledges that boys were abused by the late Mr Bob Brandenburg and others while participating in activities organized by the Church of England Boys Society (CEBS) or by people associated with CEBS.

And noting that our systems have failed to properly address this abuse

- b. extend to the victims and those associated with them our sincere regret and apology that this abuse occurred.

- c. extend to the Adelaide community our sincere regret and apology that this abused occurred.
 - d. reiterates its commitment to ensuring that all children and young people can participate in activities associated with the Anglican Church in safety. Sexually abusive and harassing behaviour is not acceptable.
 - e. expresses its commitment to better processes of care and support of victims of sexual abuse
 - f. expresses its commitment to meet its proper obligations in receiving and responding to complaints of sexual abuse
2. That the current DRG processes, personnel and guidelines be amended so that the initial contact process and provision of counseling and other ongoing support is managed by external, professional experts on a fee for service basis.
 3. That the Diocesan Council appoint a senior person to be a liaison with the DRG, the external providers and the Archbishop. Each group should be responsible for reporting progress to this person who will maintain a confidential register in Church Office. This person will
 - a. inform the Archbishop, the Diocesan Response Group or Diocesan Council if the requirements of relevant diocesan ordinances, policies or protocols have not been observed.
 - b. provide an annual report to the Synod
 - c. report to the Diocesan Council from time to time.
 4. That the Executive Officers of the MDC and Anglicare be requested to advise the Diocesan Council in November of
 - a. Proposed changes to screening processes for people seeking authorization for ministry with children and young people
 - b. Proposed educational programmes that will enable existing and future clergy and lay leaders to have a good understanding of their responsibilities and boundaries
 - c. Proposed educational programmes that will enable people throughout the Diocese to assist the generation of a culture of awareness about the protection of children and arena of safety which ensures children are protected.
 5. That the Task Group or the Diocesan Secretary should by the November meeting of Diocesan Council -
 - a. undertake such consultations with Diocesan Insurers as will enable these recommendations to be fulfilled.
 - b. engage an appropriate agency to establish a process whereby victims of sexual abuse by Bob Brandenburg can be advised of the Diocese's acknowledgement, apology and commitment to provide them with support.
 - c. develop guidelines and protocols for outsourcing the initial complaints contact, victim assessment and support services.
 - d. formulate recommendations for the revision of the Diocesan Response Group guidelines, processes, personnel and recording keeping
 - e. prepare a diocesan document of apology and invitation to those who have been abused by Bob Brandenburg to make a complaint.