

Diocese move swiftly on sexual abuse suspicions

The Diocese of Adelaide of the Anglican Church of Australia has rejected a claim that it failed to disclose the extent and seriousness of the alleged sexual abuse of boys by Robert Brandenburg, a layperson.

The Diocese was responding to claims made by two churchmen, the Reverend Dr Donald Owers and the Reverend Andrew King, in Adelaide earlier today.

The Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide, the Most Reverend Ian George, said he had no inkling of how serious the abuse might be until recently and, when this was suspected, the Diocese had moved swiftly.

Archbishop George said "Although we believe that we have acted promptly and appropriately, we intend to consider all aspects of the allegations at a meeting of the Diocesan Council on June 11^h"

He said the independent enquiry sought by the two churchmen was not necessary to investigate any failure to follow Church protocols because it had always followed its protocols for the disclosure and investigation of complaints of child sexual abuse.

Archbishop George said there was no evidence of any network of paedophiles operating with the Diocese of Adelaide or, as had been suggested, linked with other dioceses.

He said that the circumstances surrounding Robert Brandenburg's departure from the post of Chief Commissioner of CEBS (the Anglican Boys' Society) in 1981 were known. Brandenburg left the post because CEBS had run short of funds.

Responding to earlier claims, Archbishop George said that actions to address claims made against the Church in respect to specific allegations of sexual abuse have been moving forward as speedily as possible.

He said "All our efforts have been aimed at achieving a satisfactory outcome for victims and this must not be compromised through undue haste.

"My concern for anyone who has suffered sexual abuse is heartfelt and, like them, I wish to see outstanding matters finalised as soon as possible.

Archbishop George said "This situation became formally known to the Church in late November last year. Since then, solicitors representing all parties have been engaged in ongoing communication to resolve the matters.

Legal claims against the Diocese have been lodged on behalf of three individuals.

Three years ago the Diocese learned that Robert Brandenburg allegedly had subjected young boys and teenagers to sexual abuse. He was charged but died before he came to trial.

This had spurred the diocese into reviewing its procedures.

Archbishop George said the Diocese of Adelaide had taken a number of other internal measures to ensure that its protocols and procedures were effective and appropriate for handling complaints of sexual misconduct. All clergy and laypeople working with young people have since been required to have a police check.

A special hotline had also been established to assist any person who wished to make a complaint of sexual abuse with respect to the Church.

Last year a task group was set up in the Diocese of Adelaide to find ways to specifically support and offer assistance to the victims of sexual abuse within the Anglican Church in South Australia.

“Our primary concern at this stage is to encourage any victims of sexual abuse in the church to contact our hotline at 8305 9383,” Archbishop George said. “This phone number is professionally staffed and is independent of the Anglican Church.”

For more information: Archbishop Ian George **REDACTED**