

22 APR 2016

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Newcastle NSW 2300

13 April 2016

The Most Reverend Dr Glenn Davies
Metropolitan of the Anglican Church in Australia
for the Province of New South Wales
PO Q190
QVB Post Office
NSW 1230

Dear Archbishop

The Right Reverend Gregory Thompson

We write as a group of Anglican laypersons, many of whom have held office in one capacity or another in the Diocese of Newcastle. We wish to stress at the outset that we are fully committed to the Anglican Church, and that our reason for writing arises out of a serious concern for the good governance of the Church and not from personal animus of any kind.

Our concern relates to the behaviour of, and statements made by, the current Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Greg Thompson. A detailed list of relevant matters is set out below.

Matters of Relevance to the Royal Commission on Sexual Abuse

- In a news item written by the journalist Joanne McCarthy, published in the *Newcastle Herald* of 26 October 2015 and entitled 'Anglican Bishop Greg Thompson Sexually Abused by late Bishop Ian Shevill', Bishop Thompson is reported as stating that, at the age of 19, he was 'groomed' by the then Bishop of Newcastle, the Rt. Rev. Ian Shevill and another senior priest of the Diocese. We are gravely concerned: -

- that the name of the late Bishop Shevill, a man highly respected during the years of his episcopate in Newcastle, should be besmirched in this fashion, given that he is not able to deny the allegation or otherwise defend himself and particularly bearing in mind that Bishop Thompson was an adult at the time of the alleged grooming.

- that, if the allegation were correct, Bishop Thompson apparently took no action at the time, and until recently, to report the supposed abuse, thus potentially exposing younger members of the Diocese to the danger involved;

- that no detail is given as to the nature of the 'grooming' involved, such that it is possible that any

statements or behaviour on the part of Bishop Shevill may well have been misinterpreted;

- that the unsubstantiated claim that another, unnamed, 'senior priest' of the Diocese was also involved in sexually improper behaviour has created a climate of suspicion and speculation within the Diocese as to the potential identity of such a member of the clergy. That other 'senior priest' could have been one of three or four senior priests, mostly now deceased yet only one is the person to whom improper conduct is imputed;

- that the spouses, children and descendants of the persons alleged to have been guilty of grooming or other abuse must live with and are unable to adequately respond to the unsubstantiated claims made.

- that, if the allegation were correct, Bishop Thompson was apparently not a child at the relevant times and was apparently engaged in tertiary education and therefore was by definition a consenting adult.

- In a report dated 17 June 2015 broadcast on ABC Radio, Bishop Thompson is quoted as saying that anyone wishing to make a complaint of sexual abuse by a Diocesan officer should come forward, adding: 'the Church will believe you.' We are personally aware of a number of cases in which a claim of sexual abuse has been falsely made, for reasons of malice or personal enmity. Any innocent person wrongly accused of such a crime, knowing that his or her accuser will be believed by the Church, is clearly being denied natural justice. At the very least, Bishop Thompson should have clarified his statement, perhaps indicating that what he meant to say was that the accusation would be taken seriously by the Church and fully investigated.

- Our concern is heightened by the fact that, at the time when he was being considered by Diocesan Synod for election as Bishop of Newcastle, he failed to disclose the fact that he had been seriously affected by the behaviour mentioned above. The election process, in our view, is meant to cover issues such as problems of a personal or medical nature which should, at the very least, be disclosed to senior officers of the Diocese if relevant to the candidate's potential performance of his duties.

Matters relating to the Good Governance of the Church

- At the time when he was being considered for election, he failed to indicate to the Synod or its senior officers that he would refuse to live in Bishops court, that he would demand the provision of alternative housing in a new residence in an

unknown location, and that he would demand a substantial increase in his stipend to bring it to the same level as that of the Archbishop of Adelaide.

- A matter of concern to many lay people of the Diocese is his absence from the usual episcopal duties at Christmastide in 2014 and 2015. In particular, he was not present at major Cathedral services such as the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, the 5.30 p.m. Youth Service on Christmas Eve, Midnight Mass or the services of Christmas Day. So far as we can ascertain, he did not attend services held at other Diocesan churches on these occasions.

- Similarly, in 2015 he discontinued the long-standing practice of the Bishop attending annual Speech Days at Church-related or Diocesan Schools (Newcastle Grammar School and Bishop Tyrrell Anglican Grammar School).

- He has behaved in a derogatory manner towards members of the Diocesan clergy (at least one senior member of which has left the Diocese in significant part for this reason), and towards senior members of the laity.

- He has failed to meet directly with clergy and laity upon request for substantial periods of time (e.g. 8 months in one senior clergyman's case from first request) or failed to do so at all.

- It is regrettable that Bishop Thompson's health appears to be impairing his performance as Bishop. His *ad clerum* letter of 7 December 2015 suggesting from then to the end of January 2016 would be a 'good time' to be on what he termed 'light duties' or on annual leave, this being in a context of the Assistant Bishop being on previously planned leave from 11 December 2015 to 18 January 2016, leaving the newly appointed Archdeacon Sonia Roulston from June 2015 to act as Commissary for him in his absence. It has been evident for some time that the Bishop has been delegating most of his duties to the Assistant Bishop and that his health problems may significantly predate December 2015.

- Bishop Thompson's announcement that he will not attend further Bishops' conferences on the footing that this would give the impression of a united Church (see Newcastle Herald articles by Joanne McCarthy of 23 and 25 February 2016, copies attached). These announcements have not been endorsed by the Synod of the Diocese.

- He has failed to attend the Clergy Conferences for two years within the Diocese.
- All of the collective experienced legal minds of the Diocese have been lost from Diocesan positions. The Bishop has refused to meet with any of these persons. This in the circumstances where such people have been Trustees of Church Property for the Diocese of Newcastle, members of Diocesan Council, Board members of AnglicanCare, Chairman of Committees and the like. This has represented a huge loss in corporate knowledge.

We seek your advice as to whether these matters together establish examinable conduct within the meaning of the Episcopal Standards Canon 2007 and should be referred to the Episcopal Standards Commission (Board).

Alternatively, we seek your advice as to what other course of action might be open to us.

We should mention we have written to the Primate in similar terms.

If that advice is to the effect that the Episcopal Standards Board should be invoked then it is noted that the Board may require a medical, psychiatric or psychological examination under clause 47 of the Canon. If such a reference were made, in view of the apparent complex history of health problems, possibly beginning over 40 years ago when he alleges he was the subject of abuse, as well as later medical problems, any practitioner appointed would need to be provided with complete medical records from all practitioners to fairly assess his condition. Perhaps Bishop Thompson could be asked to assist any such investigation and authorise the release of all such records including records generated for any claim against the Diocese of the Northern Territory (however described) and against any sickness and accident insurer or fund of the Diocese of the Northern Territory or the Diocese of Newcastle.

It is acknowledged that many of these matters are deeply distressing to the Bishop however the good of the Diocese must be an overriding concern.

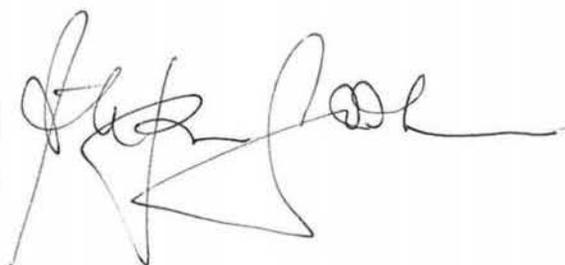
The names below appear in alphabetical order and those who have not signed have authorised their names to be subscribed. It has been despatched in this way to expedite its receipt by you.

Yours faithfully,

Simon James Adam
REDACTED



Stephen Booker
REDACTED



Robert Norman Caddies
and Jocelyn Caddies
REDACTED

Robert N Caddis
Jocelyn Caddis

Pamela Dowdell
REDACTED

Pam Dowdell.

Suzanne Joy Evans
REDACTED

S.J. Evans.

Gregory Hansen
REDACTED

[Handwritten signature]

John McNaughton AM and Margaret McNaughton AM
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Margaret McNaughton
John McNaughton

Lyn Scanlon
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William James Scott
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David and Mary Stewart
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Laurie Tabart
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Virginia Wheeler
REDACTED

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