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Bishop of the Diocese of Grafton

Tuesday, 10 July 2007

Dear Richard and CA

As I do not know your surname, CA nor your address, I am sending this letter to Richard, but it is a letter to both of you.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you last week, to hear some of your story, and to try to understand something of the pain of your experience at North Coast Children's Home. I valued the way in which you gently and yet forcefully shared your stories and your particular feelings and questions, recognising that I did not cause these things to happen to you whilst at the Home but that I happen to be the bishop with whom you have been able to share your story.

I recognise from our conversation that there were a number of things which you asked me to consider further:

One of these was the possibility of some form of compensation package. I will need to confer with the members of Bishop-in-Council with regard to how we might proceed in this matter. This will take some time as the Bishop-in-Council does not meet again until 6 September. Various Dioceses have different Pastoral Care Packages which they offer according to the resources which they have available as a Diocese. Better resourced Dioceses are usually able to offer better packages. We, as a Diocese are presently giving consideration to the range of the Packages that we are able to resource. Once that decision is made then we would intend to use an objective transparent Panel to which you could make representation. The Panel would then make a recommendation to the Diocese as to the amount of compensation.

The second point you raised was in relation to other possible claimants. Regarding Pastoral Care Packages that will hinge upon the decision which Bishop-in-Council makes in September.

As I indicated I am happy to meet initially with people to hear their stories. I personally think that the initial conversation can be directly with the Bishop, and I am happy to do so. I recognise, of course, for many people it is not easy to come forward and share with the person who is seen as being in authority;

but I also recognise that such a meeting is important. It is not necessarily about monetary compensation, but about the need to be heard, to receive care and an apology. I suspect the style of conversation that we had last week – what I would call a 'round-table conversation – is the best mode of communication for all parties concerned.

At another level, I sensed in our conversation that both of you were keen to assist in helping to develop a better way of dealing with claimants. Maybe what I am beginning to outline above is the outline of a new approach. It may even be that some method of mutual support could be established. I am not thinking in monetary terms but in opportunities for people to have mutual support.

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