

8 May 2003

Dear Parents and Friends of St Paul's,

My letter to you at this time is in response to events of the past week, with which you are no doubt now familiar. The events include the release in State Parliament on Thursday 1 May 2003 of the Report of the Board of Inquiry Into Past Handling of Sexual Abuse in The Anglican Church Diocese of Brisbane. A number of complaints in relation to St Paul's comprise a part of that report.

Mr Peter O'Callaghan QC and Professor Freda Briggs were retained by the Brisbane Diocese to inquire into and report on the handling of complaints of sexual abuse and misconduct in the Diocese according to specific terms of reference. The terms of reference identified five sets of complaints in the Diocese including abuse by the then School Counsellor of St Paul's, Kevin Lynch. Kevin Lynch, now deceased, was employed at the School from 1990 to 1996.

It is not my intention nor would it be considerate of the victims to detail here the nature of the abuse perpetrated by Kevin Lynch, save to quote this statement from the Report: *"With the ruthlessness and amorality of the paedophile, he took cruel advantage of his position of trust..."*

It is important that you know that the meetings and conversations I was able to have last year with the young men who were abused by Kevin Lynch and my apology to them on the School's behalf were touching experiences. I hope my apology on behalf of our current students, staff, and parents was declared adequately enough to each young man and expressed our shared revulsion at their abuse, our compassion and sorrow for their hurt and our promise of ongoing understanding and assistance. My hope then and now is that this will assist them and their families to heal after the betrayal they have known.

From my viewpoint, the School's reputation and that of the church plays no part in such a process – it has been one of openly acknowledging their abuse and extending the School's hand of compassion and understanding to them. Acknowledging the abuse as deplorable and apologising unreservedly for its occurrence is the least that can be done in light of our knowledge that sexual abuse never simply goes away. We know that the damage wrought can be devastating and lifelong.

Since January 2001, and certainly since the Report's publication, I have listened to individuals express a range of emotions concerning the Lynch matter – among them feelings of revulsion, anger, shame, frustration and deep sympathy. Perhaps the public disclosure of the Board's findings will allow a better understanding of the issues and the reasons for those feelings.

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Archbishop Aspinall's decision to table the Report in State Parliament is one I applaud and unreservedly support. The Report has been made accessible to all and is therefore able to illuminate not only specific case details but the individual and institutional injustices that dog our society and for which each of us must assume some responsibility. The ripple effects of the Report which will undoubtedly include additional complaints of child abuse, are certain to continue in the months ahead. Such disclosures and public attention to paedophilia are welcome. They serve to remind us all to change our thinking about sexual abuse and misconduct, to respond promptly and thoroughly in offering pastoral care to those who complain, and to take decisive action in dealing with those found guilty of abuse. It is incumbent on each of us to take steps to ensure as far as possible that this never happens again and certainly not at our School.

I can report to you that the School has been busy since January 2001 compiling better strategies, policies, and operational procedures aimed at protecting our children and catering for their needs in response to the ongoing developments in this area. My participation as a member of the Anglican School Commission Child Protection Working Party which compiled the Sexual Abuse Protocol for Anglican Schools was a significant means by which we could displace the flawed practices of the past and develop better ways of managing abuse in the future.

In addition, the Anglican Diocese of Brisbane has now published its *Protocol for Dealing with Complaints of Abuse*, copies of which are available in all parishes and church institutions, including St Paul's School.

In closing, may I take this opportunity to thank you and your child/ren for the faith you have shown in the School during these difficult times. We all understand that when a member of our immediate family hurts so too do we – the same is true of our School family. In unity we find strength and hope and are better able to assist those around us.

My hope is that we can learn from past events and renew our faith through the hopes, dreams and aspirations of our current and future students. I have no doubt at all that they love their School, with its fine traditions, values and community spirit and that they care a great deal about the people who teach them and work for their benefit. I see evidence of this daily in what students say and do.

Our obligation to these young folk is to remain loyal and supportive of them and the School they love.

My best wishes to you and your family.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs ME Goddard  
Head of School