

To: David Scott

**CONFIDENTIAL REPORT ON MEETING WITH THE ARCHBISHOP AND
REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ANGLICAN SCHOOLS IN THE
DIOCESE OF BRISBANE**

1. Child Protection Issues

The Archbishop referred to two draft documents (attached) put forward as proposed protocols for dealing with complaints of sexual abuse. One of the documents was a summary of the other document. His Grace requested that those present consider the contents and direct feedback to Gilbert Case, Executive Director.

A working group including legal representatives has been established to manage the development of these protocols.

2. Consistent Approach to Handling Litigation

The Archbishop summarised current situations that exist in relation to sexual abuse claims within the Diocese. He emphasised that the media had exaggerated the number of sex abuse claims and their impact. He spent some time explaining that the comments in the weekend Courier Mail about the possibility of the Diocese having to close schools to cover the cost of litigation were not accurate. He stressed that the Diocese was not being financially challenged by the current child abuse claims.

In relation to the handling of litigation, the Archbishop asked those present to give particular attention to supporting or not supporting the appointment of a Diocesan Protection Coordinator. This proposed person would handle all sex abuse complaints. Schools would refer all complaints of child abuse to the Child Protection Coordinator in the first instance. are to refer all complaints to this person in the first instance. At this point the discussion stalled somewhat while people sought clarification of the definition of terms such as complaint, vexatious and investigation, that is, (i) what is a complaint, (ii) if you know the complaint is vexatious do you refer it to the diocese and (iii) when does questioning become investigation and who carries out the investigation?

It was obvious that there were mixed feelings and opinions about at what level serious claims relating to child protection should be managed.

As an attempt to develop consistency between organisations and the handling of claims on behalf of the Diocese the Archbishop proposed that serious claims could be dealt with at Diocesan level by the Protection Coordinator's office and that moderate situations could be dealt with at the Agency level with punishments being handed out, for example, by the Head of the Agency.

It was envisaged that a Diocesan Protection Coordinator and the required associated support staff would cost the Diocese approximately \$200,000 a year.

3. Uniform Financial Protocols

The Archbishop proposed that organisations should consider the development of a slush fund to cover the cost of litigation particularly in relation to exemplary claims. For example if all organizations were levied 9% of their current insurance premium, a fund of \$130,000 would be accumulated each year. Once again there seemed to be disagreement regarding the appropriateness of such a strategy and organisations were encouraged to comment in writing.

Also in this area the Archbishop briefly discussed insurance borrowings, budgeting for accruals, and budgeting for terminations as matters requiring consideration in the overall strategy for dealing with child protection issues.

Summary

The School is to forward to Mr Gilbert Case by the end of May their position in relation to (i) the appointment of a permanent Diocesan Protection Coordinator, (ii) the development of a slush fund and (iii) opinions about the contents of the Child Protection Policy and Guidelines Proposals.

Brian Douge
29 April 2002