

tele conference poc freda bishop wood 2.4.03( see report)

**POC: Peter O'Callaghan QC**

**F: Professor Freda Briggs**

**B: Bishop Wood**

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POC: Yes we are now being recorded.

B: Right.

POC: I hadn't pressed the button when I said that.

B: O.K.

POC: I'd better preface this again, we are now having a conference with Professor Briggs and the Chairman of the Board of Enquiry with Bishop Wood and Bishop Wood is about to say something in response to the fax that had been provided to him today.

B: O.K. I've made eight points. And I don't have what I wrote to you in front of me but I believe that I pointed out that I did not know the family and at that time didn't even know what their name was. However when making decisions about John Elliot's removal from Dalby several things I thought were clear. First of all that there appeared to be no doubt that he had behaved inappropriately. Secondly that more than one boy was involved. Thirdly, that the allegations made against him were of a very serious nature and that if they were tested perhaps in a Court there would be no doubt that John Elliot would be proved guilty. Next that if we did not act, and if it all were to be made public we, that is the diocese, would be in

serious trouble. Next that what the family wanted was absolute clarity that Elliot would be removed from a position where he could not offend again as a representative of the Anglican church. Therefore it was necessary for us at the first appropriate opportunity for him to be removed from Dalby and that he not be again allowed to act for the Anglican church in the diocese of Brisbane. The final thing therefore that I would say is that Peter's decision to grant Elliot a PTO after he left Dalby, was I thought, totally incomprehensible. I would therefore add that I would be rather surprised if what had happened that brought all this about was an isolated incident. End of what I drafted.

POC: The, I gather that you were told about what had occurred with Elliot via what source, that is who told you about it first do you recall.

B: From memory we were not given any precise information, what we were given in our Bishop's meetings was a clear understanding that allegations had been made of inappropriate behaviour by John Elliot against a number, or more than one boy. That the allegations made were very serious ones indeed and that we were required to take action.

POC: Having had that though is it not the case that Dr Hollingworth decided to continue him in the ministry until his what as I gather what you say, until his retirement at 65.

B: Yes.

POC: Did you demur to that.

B: Yes.

POC: What did you say.

B: Well the decision that was made at the time with which I must have agreed.

POC: I'm sorry you may have misunderstood me. You didn't disagree with that decision that he continue until he was 65.

B: No I didn't no.

POC: Yes.

B: That seemed to be a reasonable way forward at the time.

POC: Yes.

B: And my understanding was and it may be incorrect that the family were prepared to see that happen.

POC: Well if I might say from what we know now that does not appear to be the case and but be that as it may can I also say that what Dr Hollingworth through his Solicitors says that he did not understand or did not recollect there was a situation of where Elliot would not be given any permission to officiate after he turned 65 but he emphasises that you were in no way a party to the decision to continue him, to give him a permission to officiate.

B: Yes. Um, my clear understanding was that once he left Dalby that would be it. Because that was the only way we could respect the wishes of the family.

POC: Mmm.

B: And so I, my own recollection is quite clear that once he left Dalby he should not be permitted to act again.

POC: But that involved him continuing in Dalby for whatever period was between then and 65.

B: It was a period of months.

POC: I don't think that's right in terms of actual age it was something like two years.

B: O.K. well, I,

POC: I think he was 63 at the time.

B: Yep.

POC: And his retirement age was 65 when as I gathered one of the reasons for Dr Hollingworth's decision was that he would then have the pension, that is the old age pension.

B: That is correct, yes.

POC: Mmm.

B: Well I accept that I may not remember the timing of it well.

POC: O.K.

F: Bishop are you saying that this would not have been your choice in terms of action but in fact it was Archbishop Hollingworth's idea if you like.

B: I'm not sure what you're saying Professor.

F: I'm wondering whether you would have preferred that it was your wish that Elliot finished immediately and you were persuaded by the Archbishop to let him stay on until he was 65 for humanitarian reasons or

whether you actually went along with it because you thought it was the best thing to do.

B: I think it was probably the latter. I wouldn't want to say categorically one way or the other,

F: It isn't that you were persuaded.

B: I honestly can't remember.

F: No.

B: I'm not being evasive, I honestly can't remember.

F: I'm not surprised.

B: I think I would say that I agreed that he could go on to retirement that for the sake of him and he would need to have an income, people have to live, and I think from memory I was persuaded by the fact that what the family wanted to know was that this would come to an end.

POC: Mmm. But going back to the other point is that you didn't really understand the detail of whether it was protracted or isolated but do I gather from what you say that you certainly regarded it as a very serious offence.

B: I don't believe that in our Bishops' meeting we were ever told precise details.

POC: Mmm.

B: But I still would be prepared to say that we were led to believe that we were not dealing with what might be called trivial sexual harassment or something,

POC: Right.

B: We were dealing with very serious allegations that appeared to have some real basis in fact.

POC: O.K. Well look what I'll do Bishop is to get the facts working though you'll be back in Toowoomba after tomorrow will you.

B: We go back later tomorrow afternoon, come back here on late Saturday. I have a fax at home.

POC: Yes well perhaps I was going to ask you that. What's your fax number at home.

B: It's the same as our ordinary phone number **REDACTED**

POC: And all I do is to ring and say put it on to fax.

B: Yes.

POC: O.K.

B: And we hope that will work. And that will be safer than sending a fax to an office that all sorts of people have access to.

POC: Understand. O.K. That's what we'll do. Now Freda, anything else.

F: No I think that's very clear thank you.

POC: O.K.

POC: Thank you very much Bishop.

B: As I said at the beginning I think what you're doing is very important and have tried to be frank open and honest and fair.

POC: Thank you very much.

B: O.K. Well bless you and what you're trying to do.

F: Thank you very much.

POC: We need a lot of that.

B: Yes I'm sure you do.

F: Bye.