

**Statement of The Most Reverend Phillip John Aspinall,**  
**Archbishop of Brisbane**

1. I am making this statement in regard to allegations in respect of events that occurred in Tasmania before I became an ordained minister, but while I was involved in lay youth ministry in Tasmania.
2. I am aware that a friend, BYF whom I met in Tasmania during my youth ministry days, has made certain allegations and I respond to them in this statement.
3. I first met BYF in the late 1970s, probably about 1977 or 1978. At that time, I was living in Hobart at home with my parents and BYF lived in Launceston. I believe our first contact was as members of the Youth Synod of the Diocese of Tasmania in the late 70s. I was 18 or 19 years of age and BYF was three to four years younger.
4. I continued to meet BYF from time to time in youth ministry activities in the Tasmanian Diocese, including CEBS and Youth Synod activities and Diocesan camping. BYF was a musician and we frequently visited parishes together with others when there was a youth ministry visit to that parish.
5. I recall going to the East Devonport parish of the Church and visiting the rectory of that parish during one of these youth ministry visits. My recollection is that it was in or around 1979 or 1980. I became a part-time field officer with the Church of England Boys Society in 1980 – I can't recall whether this visit was before or after that appointment. A handful of people, I can't remember the exact number, visited the

rectory including myself and [BYF]. The rector of the parish was Garth Hawkins. I knew Garth as a member of the clergy who had been involved to some extent with CEBS and had a number of CEBS leaders in his circle of friends. I do not recall whether he ever had any formal role. I am aware that a Church Tribunal in Tasmania has this year deposed Garth Hawkins from his Orders as a Clergyman, but at that time I had no suspicion as to his sexual misconduct.

6. Our group stayed overnight at the rectory – I can't recall what the sleeping arrangements were. I do recall that on the next morning, [BYF] told me that he thought there was "something funny" about Garth Hawkins. He said he thought Garth must be gay, as he had approached [BYF] "ruffled" [BYF]'s hair, and made sexual advances towards him. I said to [BYF] words to the effect "don't be silly". I did not take the allegation seriously. I thought that [BYF] was making an issue of what was a light-hearted approach. His conversation with me was short and did not extend beyond that comment – I did not take it to be a complaint of any kind. It was more a comment made from one friend to another.
7. Garth Hawkins moved parishes, and in 1981 or 1982 was in the Triabunna Parish. In 1981, I was appointed Youth Education Officer for the Diocese of Tasmania.
8. I recall visiting Garth Hawkins' rectory some time about 1981 or 1982 in the company of a number of friends who intended to spend some time over a weekend on a boat which Garth had. I don't recall that this was an official Church visit to the parish, but it certainly involved a

group of people who knew each other via Church Youth Ministry. Those I remember attending on that weekend were [BYF] Russell Judd, Stuart Day, Geoff Clifford and the Reverend Lou Daniels. There may have been others but those are the ones I specifically recall.

9. We were to sleep overnight at the rectory and then go out on the boat the next day. When we travelled to rectories on Church Youth Ministry business, we frequently slept on the floor of the rectory or were billeted. I can't recall the specific sleeping arrangements for that night for either myself or anyone else in the group.
10. I understand that [BYF] has said that Garth Hawkins had offered for someone to share his bed if there was not enough room for all to sleep on the floor. I also understand that [BYF] suggests that I encouraged or "pressured" him to do that. I have no recollection of doing so. I do not believe that I was in any position of "authority", such that I would have been able to pressure anybody as to their sleeping arrangements that night. I would regard directing or suggesting to anyone that they sleep in another person's bed to be objectionable and I would not do it.
11. I do recall that [BYF] did not come out on the boat the next day and that he either left early that morning or had left by the time we all awoke. I did not take much notice of this as [BYF] was sometimes a moody person and I just thought that he had changed his mind about coming out on the boat.

12. Some time after the incident at the Triabunna Rectory, [BYF] and I were both attending a Church camp at Montgomery Park.
13. [BYF] has since said to me that one morning at that camp, I commented to him that he had called out in his sleep – words like “no no”.
14. [BYF] recalls that he attempted to respond to my comment. He said that he wanted to tell me that he had been abused by Garth Hawkins on the night we stayed at the Triabunna Rectory, but that I did not pick up the drift of what he was saying, that the conversation didn't proceed and that in the end he did not disclose the abuse. I would not listen or wasn't listening as he reports it. I have no recollection of raising the issue of [BYF] talking in his sleep, or of the subsequent conversation which [BYF] says occurred.
15. I remained friendly with [BYF] and his wife following their marriage in Launceston. I recall having dinner with him and his wife in 1988 or 1989 just before he and his wife left Tasmania.
16. I have had no contact with [BYF] until February 2002 when I took up my position as Archbishop of Brisbane. Shortly after issues involving sexual abuse within the Church were aired on television, [BYF] telephoned me.
17. He said that he had seen me on television and raised the fact that my predecessor, Archbishop Hollingworth, had been criticised for allegedly not taking allegations of sexual abuse within the Church seriously. [BYF] told me that he had been the victim of sexual abuse within the

Church and he had tried to talk to me about these matters but that I would not listen.  told me that he had spent time in a psychiatric hospital and had been suicidal.

18. I told  that I was not aware of any situation (other than the conversation at the East Devonport Rectory when he had raised sexual advances by Garth Hawkins) when he had made me aware of the fact that he had been sexually abused and I had failed to listen.

*Phillip Aspinall*

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Phillip John Aspinall

Dated: *10th* December 2002