

Doc 21.

Dear Ian,

Thank you for your telephone call the other evening to Christa and again to me yesterday. I am much reassured by your comments to the ABC acknowledging I was keener than you were to have a public statement made concerning Brandenburg back in 1999. Unfortunately I can find no record of your remarks having been reported.

As you would no doubt understand, the family was distressed following the newspaper articles questioning my role in the handling of paedophilia complaints when your assistant.

I recall advising at the time that we should have gone further and urging an open, public and pastoral response. I recall underlining that acknowledgment is important in the healing process for victims. I also recall advising that if we didn't deal with the matters they would not go away, but would re-surface at some point probably with anger intensified. Unfortunately, that now seems to be happening.

I was, frankly, relieved and grateful to see your preparedness to publicly record that fact I had urged a proactive, pastoral response. I similarly appreciate the courage that must have taken, given the media swirl you currently find yourself in.

These are difficult times for all involved, including abuse victims, people in leadership positions and for ordinary church members. But I believe the foundations we have laid in Brisbane provide the best basis for moving forward.

These matters must be confronted and addressed. If the church doesn't do it then they will be addressed through ceaseless media stories. It's vital that the truth of what has happened be acknowledged. If there have been mistakes made in the past then they should be acknowledged too and an apology given. Then action should be taken to set things right as far as is possible. If these steps aren't taken then the matters will keep on resurfacing with increasingly destructive effects.

Experience here has shown the value of having people independent of the Church involved. That both avoided the allegation that Church was once again covering up and provided an independent assessment that some of the media's reporting was unfair and sometimes wrong.

If the matters are not addressed cleanly and openly then the bleeding will continue. Doing so is very tough, but the alternative is much worse. We have found a lot of goodwill in the wider community here as well as throughout the church for facing the hurt and acknowledging past shortcomings.

It might be worth revisiting the proposals put forward by Don Owers back in 1999 and asking what would prevent these steps being taken now. I think the Toowoomba Prep judgement clearly changed the ground rules and the conservative advice of insurers and lawyers should no longer hold the sway it once did.

I am sorry I am not available this afternoon to participate in your meeting due to prior commitments. I am happy to offer what assistance I can as the next steps are taken and if you wish to liaise about media matters my media officer is Mark Nolan (REDACTED) who will be happy to assist.

My prayers are with you as you move through these difficult times and seek to find an appropriate solution.

Yours sincerely,